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“I would do it all over again” – Mrs. Debra Brathwaite says of her inspiring 40-year journey at UG

“The experience has been very heart-warming and I would do it all over again if I had to.” These were the words of Mrs. Debra Brathwaite, who has served the nation’s premier educational institution, the University of Guyana, for over forty years.

Mrs. Brathwaite, who rose from the position of Typist Clerk in 1981 when she first joined the institution to her current role as Assistant Personnel Officer, in an interview with UG’s Department of Events, Conferences and Communication (DECC) detailed her journey at the university which she noted “was all worth it”. For over four decades, Mrs. Brathwaite has been an integral part of the UG team. Her journey, marked by steady progress and loyalty, is an inspiring tale of personal and professional development.



Mrs. Debra Brathwaite, Assistant Personnel Officer (Leave and Training), Human Resources Management, UG

Mrs. Brathwaite began working with the University of Guyana on November 9, 1981, as a Typist Clerk in what was then the Faculty of Arts, now known as the Faculty of Education and Humanities (FEH). Fresh out of school, she embraced her role with enthusiasm, driven by a desire to learn and grow.

The UG culture in the 1980s, as Mrs. Brathwaite fondly remembers, was exciting and engaging. “It was a very positive culture, much like the culture today. Staff clubs and various activities kept the university community united and motivated. Unlike today's tech-dominated environment, people found time to interact with each other,” she said.

Encouraged by her mentors and colleagues, Mrs. Brathwaite enrolled in courses that would pave the way for her career advancement. “I took a good look at where I was and where I wanted to be, and I was determined that I had to make a big impact in my career. I knew that as soon as I moved past Typist Clerk, I would be able to achieve anything I set my mind to.”

Balancing work, studies, and family life was no small feat for Mrs. Brathwaite. As she pursued her studies in Public Management in the late 80s at UG, she faced the challenges of being a wife and mother. Her classmates' support was invaluable - they recorded lectures on cassettes and sent them to her, ensuring she stayed on track despite her absences from some of her classes. This camaraderie and support network, she explained, were crucial to her success.

Mrs. Brathwaite’s diligence and hard work led to her receiving a promotion to Admin Assistant in the Recruitment department within the Personnel Division in the late 80s. Reflecting on this period, she said; “There was no way a person could be working at the University of Guyana and not develop himself or herself.”

In addition, she pursued studies in Human Resource Management from the University of the West Indies Cave Hill. Mrs. Brathwaite’s career trajectory continued to ascend as she took on the role of Assistant Personnel Officer. With much pride, she noted the small but significant moments that made her journey at the university rewarding. Celebrating team achievements, witnessing colleagues' growth, and contributing to their success are memories she cherishes. “I am proud of the performance of the staff who have studied and gained their Master's or Doctoral degrees and returned...I am proud to have been a small part of that,” she said.

In 2022, Mrs. Brathwaite received the longstanding award for her forty years of dedicated service at a ceremony held at the university. This recognition was a testament to her commitment and the impact she has had on the university community. “This experience has been heart-warming and I would do it all over again if I have to. The University of Guyana is indeed a wonderful place to work. Not only does it help with one’s professional growth, but the fact that we are playing our own small role in seeing our students achieve their dream of acquiring their degrees and go on to lead successful lives, this gives personal satisfaction,” she said with much pride.

Mrs. Brathwaite's story is not just about professional achievements but also about the personal connections and support systems that have fuelled her journey. The University of Guyana is proud to have team members like Mrs. Brathwaite, whose dedication and spirit continue to inspire and uplift the community.

As she nears retirement, Mrs. Brathwaite shares that her guiding principle has been: "Whatever I do, I do it unto God with the understanding that in pleasing God I will please man." She eagerly looks forward to new endeavours. Her plan is to work with women in prison, contribute to hospital services, and engage more in various church projects. She expressed heartfelt gratitude to her mentors, team members at UG, pastor, church community, and her family, especially her husband and children, for their support throughout her journey:

"I will continue to serve my community and country the best way I can, and UG has given me a good platform to build on to do that," Mrs. Brathwaite said. *(Feature by the Department of Events, Conferences and Communication (DECC), Office of the Vice-Chancellor, University of Guyana)*

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