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UG Launches Robust Gender Policy Aimed at Advancing Equity, Equality, Non-discrimination and Diversity Among all Staff, Students and External Stakeholders

The University of Guyana, on Thursday, January 25, 2024, officially launched a carefully-designed robust Gender Policy aimed at ensuring that all staff, students and external stakeholders, irrespective of gender, have equal rights, responsibilities and development opportunities at the University.

In launching the policy, the University notes that it is committed to the implementation of sustainable strategies and programmes toward the advancement and implementation of equity, equality, non-discrimination and diversity among all staff and students and with its external stakeholders.

The creation of the Gender Policy was supported by the University's local and international development partners - the European Union (EU), UNICEF, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC).

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana, Prof Paloma Mohamed noted that the University was very proud to be leading the way in ensuring that a carefully-designed policy was written and noted that a strong institutional framework is in place to ensure it is effectively and fully implemented. The VC explained that a rigorous process was followed by the University before the policy became final. "The university's procedures are quite rigorous, going through four committees whenever a policy is to be made," she noted.

The VC further explained that the Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy, a Mental Wellness Policy and an Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Policy will also complement the Gender Policy. She thanked the EU, UNICEF, UNDP and the Women and Gender Equality Commission for their support in ensuring the policy was finalised.

UN Resident Coordinator in Guyana, Ms Yesim Oruca in her remarks noted that the Gender Policy is as a result of previous collaborations and partnerships between the UN, EU and the University. Ms Oruca said: "This product stands alongside other related outputs developed through various Pillars of the Spotlight Initiative in collaboration with the Government of Guyana, the Private Sector and other key stakeholders."



(From L-R): Representative of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, Nicole Cole, UN Resident Coordinator in Guyana, Ms Yesim Oruca, European Union Ambassador to Guyana, Rene van Nes, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana, Prof Paloma Mohamed Martin and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement, Dr Melissa Ifill holding up a copy of the Gender Policy.

The Resident Coordinator added: “I encourage the University of Guyana to quickly and fully implement the Gender Policy being launched today. A policy on paper is a remarkable product which is the culmination of the countless efforts of countless people. But even better than a policy on paper, is a policy in action - one that is so inextricably woven into the fabric of campus life that it becomes a defining characteristic.”

The European Union Ambassador to Guyana, Rene van Nes noted that the EU was very pleased to support the initiative noting that the Gender Policy will help to ensure that the University of Guyana promotes gender equality, equity, non-discrimination and justice, and equal opportunities within the academic community for all staff and students.

The Ambassador said: “Ensuring equal rights for all individuals, regardless of gender, serves as a powerful catalyst for the progress and prosperity of our societies. It makes our nations not only richer but also more peaceful and more secure.”

“This policy is a commitment to breaking down barriers and building bridges. It's a promise to create a university where every one of you, regardless of gender identity feels empowered, respected, and ready to conquer the world. Let this be the beginning of a transformative journey within the university, radiating its positive influence into the wider Guyanese society,” the Ambassador encouraged.

Deputy Representative Officer-in-Charge (OIC), UNICEF Guyana and Suriname, Mr Javier Cordoba, in his virtual presentation, congratulated the University and its partners for the efforts they have made in ensuring the policy was finalised and noted that it is a step in the right direction.

UG’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement, Dr Melissa Ifill in her brief overview of the policy noted that “the purpose of the Gender Policy include; to create a work and

academic environment to ensure students, job applicants and staff members receive the same treatment irrespective of gender or gender identity; to create a safe environment that is free from all forms of violence for all regardless of their gender; to end discrimination based on gender and gender identities; to raise awareness of gender equality, gender equity and gender justice; and to mainstream gender awareness in the University's operations."

DVC Ifill outlined that among the objectives of the policy are: 1) To promote working and learning environments in which all staff and students are treated with dignity and respect; 2) To prohibit gender, gender identity and gender expression being used as a criteria or requirement to disadvantage any staff or student; 3) To outline guidelines to report, and procedures to investigate, allegations of discriminatory behaviours or attitudes; 4) To promote a zero-tolerance policy for any form of gender-based violence that emanates from gender inequality; 5) To provide guidelines for responding to all reported incidences of gender-based discrimination or violence; and 6) To provide guidelines for responding to all reported incidences of gender-based discrimination or violence.

Dr Ifill explained that the policy allows for data collection and the promotion of gender diversity, and mainstreaming gender in the curriculum. In this regard, the Institute of Gender Studies will work with Faculties, Schools and Colleges to review their course/programme content to eliminate gendered value judgements and to appropriately integrate gender in all taught courses and research to promote a fair and inclusive gender environment in the classroom.

According to DVC Ifill, the University is also utilising the Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy that was approved in 2021, to hold perpetrators of gender-based harassment and violence accountable. This policy includes both preventative and disciplinary measures and is a complementary policy to this Gender Policy.

The DVC noted training and educational materials will be made available to the University community and the public on the University of Guyana's website.

Director of the Institute for Human Resiliency, Strategic Security and the Future, Mrs. Debbie Hopkinson, said that the policy provides the guidelines on the actions that are critical to ensure continued efforts are made towards gender equality and empowerment.

Head of UG's Institute of Gender Studies, Dr Lisa Edwards, whose Unit will play a major role in the implementation of the policy noted that gender is one notion that cannot be ignored if we are committed to promoting the wellbeing of people. She further highlighted the policy sets a strong foundation for stakeholders to work together on achieving the objectives laid out in the document.

Please see Gender Policy here:

<https://uog.edu.gy/sites/default/files/documents/University%20of%20Guyana%20Gender%20Policy.pdf>

Please view the launch of the Gender Policy here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGGf-5CQF3I>

The University of Guyana in Brief

The University of Guyana, the national University of Guyana, now in its 60th year, was founded in October 1963, three years before Guyana became independent. “UG” as it is fondly referred to offers over 160 distinct programmes in over 60 disciplines from certificates, Bachelor’s degrees, Master’s Degrees to Ph.D.’s. These programmes are offered online, face-to-face or in blended formats. UG delivers through a Guyana-based system across eight campuses. This includes its 35-year-old community-based institute for Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE) and the second major campus at Tain in Berbice celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2025. The University of Guyana’s student population is over 11,000.

Through its 8 Faculties, including an accredited College of Medical Sciences, School for Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation and the School for Earth and Environmental Sciences which is ranked # 5 globally, “UG” has provided education, training and research for over 60,000 alumni over its 60-year history with significant national and global impact. Other faculties include the Faculty of Engineering and Technology, The Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, The Faculty of Natural Sciences, The College of Behavioural Sciences and Research, The Faculty of Education and Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences. The University is also home to 10 Research Institutes including the internationally important Centre for Biodiversity, The Institute for Food and Nutrition Security, The Institute for Innovation, Research and Entrepreneurship, The Institute for Energy Diplomacy, The Green Institute, The Institute for Human Resiliency, Strategic Security and the Future, and the International Centre for Excellence in Early Childhood Education. The mission of the University of Guyana is to discover, generate, disseminate and apply knowledge of the highest standard for advancement of communities, the nation, and mankind within an atmosphere of academic freedom, transparent accountability, pragmatic innovation and universal respect.

UG’s forward-thinking Blueprint 2040 is currently setting the course for the University’s future design and institutional response to the changing needs of Guyana, the region and the world. UG is currently celebrating its 60th anniversary with renewed focus on becoming the leading teaching and research University in Guyana. Visit UG at www.uog.edu.gy