



A champion for distance education and open learning

Mr. Wesley Barrett, who has been president of the Jamaican Association for Distance and Open Learning (JADOL) since its inception in July 2000, stepped down as president of the association that he helped to found, as required by the JADOL constitution that limits the term of office to two terms of two years each. Ms. Vilma McClenan was elected as the new president at the JADOL Annual General Meeting, held on Monday, October 25, at 3 p.m. at the offices of Jamal Foundation. JADOL will still benefit from Mr. Barrett's input in his capacity as Immediate Past President on the Executive.

Recognizing the importance and growth of open and distance learning, utilizing a variety of media for the delivery of educational programmes at various levels, the former Chief Education Officer spearheaded the establishment of JADOL, in 1999 mobilizing a steering committee and working groups of persons involved in distance education to carry out the necessary ground work. JADOL was launched in July 2000, during a conference on *Distance Education in Small States*, which was organized by the UWI Distance Education Centre. As part of the celebration of its fourth anniversary this year, JADOL will be hosting a seminar on *E-Learning: Institutional and Student Preparedness* on October 27 and a workshop on *Open Source Software* on October 28 at the Terra Nova Hotel.

A veteran educator, Mr. Barrett moved from classroom teacher (1965-67) and principal (1967-1973) to the Ministry of Education, where he rose through the ranks from Education Tutor (1973-1974), Education Officer (1975-1981), Senior Education Officer (1981-1988), Assistant Chief Education Officer (1988-1989) to Chief Education Officer, from which he retired earlier this year, after serving from 1989.

Mr. Barrett has been involved in open and distance learning from the 1970s when he was a member of the team that trained pre-trained teachers in the In-service Teacher Education Thrust programme (1973-1982), which used the distance education modality. His other activities in the field include coordination of a degree programme in Computing and Information Systems delivered online by Athabasca University (Canada) for 30 teachers; he worked with a team on upgrading teachers from the certificate to diploma level by distance education. Since 1989, he has worked closely with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in implementing projects in open and distance learning in Jamaica, including a feasibility study on open schooling in Jamaica, the report and recommendations of which are now being used by the Ministry of Education in a joint project with UNESCO for upgraded high schools.

A graduate of Mico College and The University of the West Indies [BA, MA(Ed)], in addition to various specialized project and management training, Mr. Barrett participated in a UNESCO programme in Planning, Design and Management of Distance Learning, held in Paris in 1996. He has also attended several training workshops and seminars sponsored by COL, including an attachment to the Canada-based institution in 2001.

In addition to his membership in JADOL, Wesley is affiliated with the Association of Caribbean Chief Education Officers, which he chaired from 1996-2004, and is a Vice President of the recently established Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning (CARADOL).

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