

UWI students happy as 20% increase in tuition fees deferred





UWI Guild president Vedanand Hargobin

CARISA LEE REPORTER CARISA.LEE@CNC3.CO.TT

University of the West Indies (UWI) Students Guild president Vedanand Hargobin says thousands of students at the University of the West Indies' (UWI) St Augustine campus are relieved that they will not have to pay a 20 per cent increase in tuition fees come September 3.

The decision to increase the tuition fees at the campus by 20 per cent was made in 2023, after extensive consultation and research through a special fee committee comprising guild-appointed representatives, actuaries and business professionals, UWI said.

The committee had recommended a 25 per cent increase, but after further representation from the Guild of Students, a consensus was reached on April 20, 2023, that the fee increase would be 20 per cent.

The guild also asked that the campus not place students on financial hold if students had paid 80 per cent of their fees, thereby enabling them to register and allowing more time to pay the 20 per cent increase.

In a press release, the UWI said it had obtained permission from the institution's Chancellor to execute a stay of the council's decision on the increase for the entire academic year 2025-2026.

"The students are extremely happy," Hargobin said yesterday.

He said he believes this decision was best because a year would give the student population enough time to prepare for the change.

"Our issue was that it wasn't communicated well enough for students to prepare for such, because you know students have loans and we have a lot of regional students as well and they need to be adequately prepared to handle that financial burden," he said.

The guild president said he understood that no student wanted to see an increase in school fees, but said based on the meetings they had with the university's hierarchy (principal and vice chancellor), the institution needed to earn more revenue.

"The campus needs a lot more money in order to remain afloat," he explained.

Hargobin, who was elected as president in April, said the guild would use this time to help students financially, see what bursaries they could apply for, and also see if they were eligible for the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses programme (GATE).

"Our biggest concern was the time to prepare for such," he said.

At the University of Trinidad and Tobago's (UTT) official handover ceremony for renewable energy science kits yesterday, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training Professor Prakash Persad admitted that the UWI's financial situation was difficult, but said they had a discussion and made the late decision to defer the fee increase.

He said the Government could not direct UWI, but as major stakeholders/partners, they were trying

to build on cooperation.

“I think all’s well that ends well, so it’s been deferred,” he said.