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of the CAYMAN ISLANDS

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Inaugural Address

To Chairman Ritch and Deputy Chairman Scotland, the Honourable Minister Juliana O'Connor-Connolly and the distinguished UCCI Board of Governors, thank you for placing your trust in me and for your abiding counsel and support. I am honoured beyond all measure to lead this fine institution through the next phase of transformation and believe we will do so together in a profound way.

We are privileged by the presence of dignitaries of government, leaders of industry, present and former Board members, President Emeritus Mr. J. A. Roy Bodden, alumni, students, parents, faith leaders and members of the community at today's inauguration. Thank you for your long commitment to this beloved institution and attendance here today.

I would like to acknowledge my best friend, love of my life, and husband of 32 years, Terry and my children Nick, Alex and Reagan who said pursue this dream, all have made sacrifices to allow me to serve in this capacity. I am grateful to my sister, my son Alex and friends who are with us today. Your love and regular encouragement is deeply appreciated. Thank you, Pam. In so many ways, thank you or your friendship and abiding support.

To my wonderful new family here in the Cayman Islands who warmly received me into your home. You might have noted, that I have my visiting family and friends cloistered in the front of the room so that I can keep an eye on them and monitor the personal stories they are sharing about me with all of you.

In all seriousness, I am overwhelmed by the outpouring of support. An important responsibility of a president and CEO is to remove barriers so that talented employees can accomplish what they are able to do. Upon my arrival at UCCI, I received a rare gift. I want this nation to know that UCCI has incredible faculty and staff who tirelessly dedicate their time and talents to this institution and the students we serve. This beautiful inauguration happened because of their vision, devotion, and inspiration. They have remained faithful and dedicated to UCCI and influenced my vision and make me excited about what is possible. Please join me in acknowledging what a gift they are to this nation.

We are especially privileged to be joined by Sir Vassel Johnson's family including his wife Lady Johnson and their family assembled here today. Namely, their children Tessa Bodden, Juliet DuFeu and her husband Chris, Zillah Isaacs, and Bradley Johnson and grandchildren Michelle and Richard Isaacs and Justin Bodden.

Would they please stand?

If you haven't already done so, please take some time today to enjoy the recently installed tribute to Sir Vassel Johnson, a man who taught us what is possible with determination, intelligence, and leadership. His vision

transformed this nation into a premier offshore international financial centre. It is only fitting that today's discussion about the future of tertiary education in the Cayman Islands takes place in a hall named in his honour. Thank you again for honouring us with your presence here today and for helping us to create this long overdue tribute to an amazing husband, father and grandfather and iconic leader, Sir Vassel Johnson.

In his book, *As I see it*, the visionary Sir Vassel Johnson described the integral importance of education to economic development. I am inspired and encouraged by Sir Vassel Johnson's wisdom. He said, "if one wishes to achieve a goal and toils diligently and awaits patiently the results, he will succeed." Words to live by.

We gather today in the presence of God, friends, family, and neighbours to consider, what is a life well lived. More specifically what is the role of tertiary education in guiding people in their pursuit of a well-intentioned and meaningful life.

Possibly, you define a life well lived as a life where a person feels not only a sense of obligation but also joy that she has been brought to a professional opportunity that makes her heart sing and where her daily work is a form of service.

Or, maybe she views a life well-lived is as one where she holds humble appreciation for her unique God-given gifts and talents in service of something bigger than self-interest.

Possibly, she sees her work as a calling rather than a job and seeks no reward other than knowing that life is better for others because she is there.

Or, maybe a life well lived might be characterised by allegiance to a set of core values and a faith that guides vocation and measures of success in a country that welcomes and celebrates the role and expression of faith publicly and privately.

These reasons and more influenced my decision to serve as UCCI's President and CEO and I believe also influenced why you selected me.

My faith, my family and higher education fundamentally shaped how I learned who I was, what my responsibility was to the world and to others and what gave me the confidence and competence needed to dream of the future I desired and to achieve it.

I chose this opportunity because I was inspired by the values you treasure that mirror my own, faith, family and belief in the power of the human spirit. In my short time here, my husband Terry and I have encountered some of the kindest, most generous, and thoughtful people that we have known. Your abiding care for one another, patience, and dedication to higher ideals are role models for the world. Thank you for your warm welcome!

Tertiary education played a formative role in shaping who I became despite challenging life circumstances, allowing me to pursue a meaningful life, and instilling in me this insatiable desire to ensure that EVERY person has the same opportunity to realise the life-changing potential of tertiary education that I experienced.

We are at an inflection point where the decisions that we make regarding tertiary education within the Cayman Islands will have ripple effects for generations to come. In so many ways, the history and heritage of the Islands have prepared us for navigating this future.

The Cayman Island's history and heritage suggest, that it was the isolation of the Islands that led Caymanians to become expert shipwrights and to thrive against all odds.

There has been a faithful devotion to creating a better life for the people who call the Cayman Islands home. While other nations have faltered, the Cayman Islands thrived because we understood that a vibrant economy, a rich quality of life, strong Christian faith, education, and rewarding work were fundamental building blocks for individual prosperity and national pride.

As our nation has changed, so too have the demands for tertiary education and predict how it must evolve.

The vision that I will share today represents OUR collective, hopes, dreams, and realities for tertiary education. My vision is naturally shaped by who I am, my experiences as an executive in tertiary education, but more importantly it was influenced by you.

So many wonderful people spent time with me sharing thoughts, advice, hopes and dreams for yourself, your family and friends and this nation. I have internalised your wisdom within my vision which at its core affirms that now, more than ever, UCCI is key to national prosperity and must be an engine for inclusive economic development and social mobility.

I invite you to join me on a narrated journey of the future of your UCCI.

UCCI provides a student-centred education. Each student experiences an individualised learning pathway that maximises personal development by providing the right experiences at just the right time and unlocking different types of learning.

At UCCI, we recognise that reaching a destination in life is no different than reaching a destination at sea. No two people start their journey into education at the same point.

Caymanian sailors learned that reaching a destination required a carefully constructed plan, meticulously mapped, and that any planned route must anticipate and respond to changing winds, weather, and include the right provisions for the journey. Through various experiences seaman learned to think critically and respond assuredly to achieve various goals including returning home safely with their precious cargo. Each map was different, constantly in flux by wind and the sea and life's forces.

So too, UCCI will chart an education that is responsive to the specific needs of each student-preparing each one for a meaningful life and career.

A student-centred UCCI education provides:

- World-class teaching from a diverse and seasoned faculty
- A first-year experience that anticipates and addresses the complexities of college transition and instils behaviours that lead to lifelong success
- Leadership development, community service, spiritual life, clubs and activities
- Engagement with industry on and off campus
- Personal and professional mentorship
- Career exploration through guided pathways into TVET and degreed careers
- Guided self-assessment to achieve personal and professional goals

- A personal education and career plan that outlines specific goals and actions and the personal support to achieve them
- Experiential learning utilising cutting edge equipment, software and simulations.
- Online and on campus support services including writing and math labs and learning resources both on campus and online.
- Varied curriculum and methods of instruction keyed to the needs seasoned and young adults
- And friendships that last a lifetime

A student-centred education is needed around the world, but it is particularly suitable and achievable within the Cayman Islands because of our beliefs. When Daniel Jervis of Cayman Brac built the CatBoat, it was because he was dissatisfied with the relatively cumbersome, unstable and heavy dugout canoes that he had been using as part of a turtle-catching team attached to the schooners around Grand Cayman. The catboat was more flexible and agile and facilitated greater levels of success. Similarly, UCCI will build a new model for student centred education.

As we continue our exploration of the future of your UCCI you find that through the strategic engagement of the UCCI campus community with external stakeholders, the institution has secured the resources and relationships needed to fulfil its mission and purpose.

The numbers of faculty and staff have grown significantly to serve the needs of students and support national priorities. UCCI has expanded its Brac campus and offers classes at locations throughout Grand Cayman. Students also access a variety of helpful services online and many are pursuing online learning.

Adults in the Cayman Islands can work a full day, have dinner with family, assist children with homework, tuck them into bed and go to UCCI's online campus to pursue an education from home whether it be a degree, course or certificate that allows them to advance in their career and pursue new professions.

All UCCI students study in modern, technology enabled classrooms and immerse themselves in activities including clubs, sports, and community service activities gaining confidence and cognitive and social skills.

Students have transformed campus life at UCCI. Students were instrumental in identifying the need for programmes like financial planning, effective use of social media, personal branding, managing stress, and developing healthy relationships essential building blocks for our vision that every student leads a healthy and satisfying life. We are addressing the diverse learning, health and wellness needs of all students.

UCCI now offers several dual degree and semester abroad baccalaureate degree programs with universities like Harrisburg and others in the U.S., Canada and UK. A UCCI student can now earn two degrees simultaneously (one from UCCI and another from the partner university) or simply spend a semester or year abroad moving seamlessly between studies in the Cayman Islands, and abroad, spending their final year at UCCI in innovative

cooperative learning experiences with local employers ensuring clear pathways to local employment and enhanced workforce readiness for young Caymanians.

Annually, students and faculty from around the world come to UCCI for a month-long performing arts experience. Sir Vassel Johnson Hall is now a multi-purpose performing arts, athletics, and conference centre that regularly showcases local and international performing arts, athletic events, and has become the gathering place for important national dialogue.

Buoyed by the success of UCCI business students and faculty in 2019 who secured the top prize for CFA challenge, all business students at UCCI now undertake capstone projects working with a faculty and industry mentor to develop and pitch a business they created to a panel of industry experts.

The UCCI coding academy launched in 2019, has grown each year and is regularly evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of the technology sector, now a top economic sector. There is heightened demand for a Caymanian STEM-trained workforce. Resultantly, the STEM Centre for teaching and research at UCCI was established to provide research and state-of-the-art labs, simulations, and educational experiences.

Through a public private partnership, UCCI established the TVET Centre of Excellence and led the development of a national TVET framework that identified TVET labour force needs at every level within the nation and clearly identified the opportunities within technical and vocational professions and the specific technical and soft skills required at each level of the workforce. This collaborative effort between UCCI and industry led to the development of new education and training programmes, apprenticeships, and cooperative learning arrangements between UCCI and employers significantly increased the number of people prepared for entry and advanced level employment in TVET occupations. It has become a model for increasing local employment at every level of the workforce.

UCCI alumni are proud of their affiliation with their alma mater helping students secure jobs, serving as student mentors, and suggesting new programmes. Alumni also generously contribute to a foundation that was established to provide new sources of support for UCCI students. In fact, many alumni personally contributed to the establishment of the Caymanian Promise Program (CPP) a comprehensive tuition assistance and retention program for Caymanians attending UCCI who have demonstrated the potential for academic achievement, leadership, and campus and community involvement.

The UCCI is broadly seen as a cornerstone for prosperity and integral to accomplishing national priorities.

The student-run UCCI Television station showcases and attracts world-class local and international talent supporting a thriving creative economy and making our nation even more desirable to tourists.

At UCCI, art, music, and technology have come together to provide world-class storytelling and entertainment. A group of UCCI students studying

computer science, history, and media developed stories about the Cayman Islands' culture, history and heritage. They created an immersive 3D experience that appeals to all ages. The history of the Cayman Islands comes to life through a virtual reality, multi-sensory experience that chronicles the people and events that shaped our identity. Primary school teachers incorporated these UCCI produced stories in their history lessons. This was the first of many projects UCCI students undertook that built national pride and honed important digital literacy skills for students of all ages. UCCI's expanded Brac campus regularly hosts international students and faculty to conduct joint research, convene conferences, and share expertise on issues ranging from oceanography, climate, diving, and marine biology.

Now, UCCI is foremost contributor to knowledge exchange within the Cayman Islands convening our faculty, industry, government and the broader community in dialogue around the most pressing social and economic issues of the day. We marvel at how sponsored research at UCCI has yielded new technologies, products, firms, and industries fuelling economic growth and business creation.

Undergraduate students join faculty in research and learn about the important social and economic issues related to issues like the destruction of the coral reefs and are inspired to remain advocated throughout their lives. External forces affecting small island nations, heightened the partnership between UCCI and the government and led to the reinvention of the Civil Service College which is known for providing world-class locally relevant education that enables innovative solutions to contemporary public sector challenges.

It seems that the UCCI has truly become an engine for economic development, innovation and social change leading to broad prosperity within the Cayman Islands.

You have just been on an illustrative journey of how your UCCI might look in the future. It is a bright and compelling vision that illuminates a world of possibilities for the entire nation and our students. The choice to realize this vision is at hand. We must begin today if we are to realise the broad promise of tertiary education within our nation.

Building world class, student centred education is expensive, but the cost to build this type of education is a veritable bargain compared to the alternative. Throughout human history, no other investment has yielded such broad returns including improved health, civic leadership, safer communities, enhanced economic development, and fuller employment.

I would like to close by addressing our amazing students and their families. You are the reason that I chose to lead UCCI. The reason our faculty and staff have chosen a profession in education, and fundamentally why the work we do matters.

There is no greater privilege than to serve as your President and CEO and set a course that can provide each of you with an opportunity to live out your dreams, love deeply, and achieve anything your heart desires.

If you have within you a burning desire to be an engineer, a musician, a teacher, an attorney, social worker, musician, or an accountant, then you also have within you the means to achieve that dream. It may not be easy, and on many days, you will feel like giving up.

But, I for one, will always believe that you can... My greatest hope is that you will live meaningful lives.

Friends, colleagues and dignitaries, you have been offered a vision for a new UCCI. You have had a glimpse into the wealth of possibilities that exist for our nation when world-class tertiary education supports the needs of a world-class nation.

So, I ask you to continue to show your support and commitment for UCCI, not just today but each day in the future. Industry, government, faith and community leaders must agree that tertiary education is the strategic priority of our nation. In doing so we must commit to providing UCCI with the requisite investments of time, talent and resources, starting today.

As your new President and CEO, my promise to you is that the success of our students will be the stars that guide us through the night sky and the sun for navigation through each day. Our commitment is to provide an education that prepares citizens for meaningful lives and careers, recognising and celebrating each person's God-given gifts and talents.

Within this nation which was founded upon the seas, today we are embarking upon a sea change. At the UCCI, we are building new boats and charting new voyages as is our heritage and responsibility.