

SPISE encourages youth

A HOLISTIC program – the Student Program for Innovation in Science and Engineering (SPISE) – is the educational tool being used to increase the number of engineers in the region.

“Engineering is something that doesn’t have a lot of prominence in the region. So there is a lot of room to bring engineering into the region because there is so little of it and that is what we try to teach these students,” said Interim Executive Director of the Caribbean Science Foundation, Prof. Cardinal Warde.

Confronting the issue presently faced in the Caribbean, he blamed myopia. He said, “We think of Engineering in Barbados mostly as civil engineers, but there is mechanical, chemical, aeronautical, biological, systems engineering, nuclear and on and on. These are areas of engineering that we don’t talk a lot about in Barbados but they are important and there are lots of jobs in those areas.

“I always use the cell

phone as an example. It’s got optical engineers to make the liquid crystal display screen. It has got chemical engineers that design the mixtures of the crystals. It’s got mechanical engineers to make it so strong that when you drop it, it doesn’t break. Material scientists, gorilla glass is probably on the glass used on the cell phone. Your keys don’t scratch so easily and on and on, and communications engineers of course to get the signals from here all the way to Australia and back so that you can communicate.

“So I think that if our people got into these fields, we could get into the design business where we might design electronic circuits that maybe are much lower power so your battery lasts longer. We don’t have to make the phone here. We can sell those circuits or license them to other companies.”

However, the program is not based solely on the electronics, chemistry, physics and robotics aspects. It is aimed at producing well-rounded stu-

dents. Urging that the Caribbean like all other places is talking about innovation and entrepreneurship, Warde therefore asserted, “So we teach entrepreneurship. We have an entrepreneurship class. We even have a business plan competition.”

In addition, with students from Guyana, Antigua, Jamaica, Grenada, Trinidad, St. Vincent, Nevis, St. Lucia, Dominica and Barbados at this year’s staging, the students get a chance to interact with the cultures of the various islands.

“We have a little UN of the Caribbean here, our students come from as far West as Belize and as far South as Guyana and we have a class called Caribbean Unity, taught by Orlando Marville, and the students claim they get more out of the bonding between them in terms of what Caribbean unity means through interaction than in the class, but they get both, which is one of the strong assets of the programme as well,” he said. (KG)