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ANOTHER ECONOMIC PILLAR NEEDED TO COMPLEMENT TOURISM

Science and engineering the way to go

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The Caribbean Science Foundation is working to ensure that more youth in Barbados get involved in science and engineering, key aspects of the STEM disciplines, recognising that Barbados needs to build another economic pillar to complement tourism.

Professor Cardinal Warde, Interim Executive Director of the Caribbean Science Foundation (CSF), acknowledged the above as he spoke to The Barbados Advocate on the sidelines of the Students' Project Showcase for the CSF Computer Coding Workshop, held in Lecture Theatre 4 of the CLICO Building at the UWI Cave Hill Campus recently.

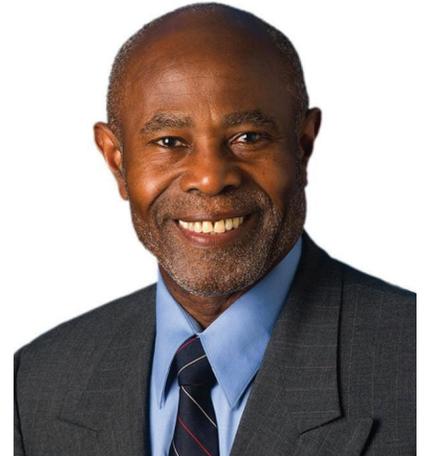
"What we are about at the Caribbean Science Foundation is encouraging more youth to get involved in the STEM disciplines – that's Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths – partly because we have tourism from most of the countries in the Eastern Caribbean. Trinidad has oil and natural gas, and so does Guyana (but we are dependent on tourism). However, engineers create more jobs than doctors and lawyers. That's the reason why we think the youngsters should consider this field and we are encouraging them to," Warde pointed out.

"This might be considered difficult by some of the youngsters, but the fact is that we need to build another economic pillar to complement tourism and we think that Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and the science and engineering disciplines is the way to build that new economic pillar," he maintained.

He added, "We have a lot of bright people in the Caribbean and we can actually excel in those disciplines. The Caribbean Science Foundation's goal is to groom more and more leaders for the future from the Caribbean in science and engineering, to create these jobs and hopefully create the next Google right here in the Caribbean."

In terms of the Students' Project Showcase, participants had the opportunity to publicly display what they learnt during the Computer Coding Workshop, which focused on website creation and development and also gave them an introduction to mobile apps. The first half of the syllabus helped them to develop basic coding skills in html, CSS and JavaScript. In the second half, the participants formed teams and the teams focused on the development of simple Websites and mobile Apps, that addressed specific problems of interest to the teams.

The goals of the CSF Computer Coding Workshops, which will continue next year for a new batch of participants, are to one, stimulate more interest in science and engineering careers; two, help address the challenge of increasing the low numbers of skilled ICT workers in the region; three, help train the technology workforce of the future and especially assisting with the retraining of retrenched workers; four, stimulate more technology-based entrepreneurship by encouraging the formation of more globally competitive ICT companies; five, help get more students interested in going beyond programming into the field of computer science, and six, help prepare students for university study, in the STEM disciplines.



Professor Cardinal Warde, Interim Executive Director of the Caribbean Science Foundation (CSF) and professor of Electrical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).