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CODING SKILLS KEY

By Regina Selman Moore

RECOGNISING that the knowledge-based workforce of the future will be heavily dependent on computer coding skills, the Caribbean Science Foundation has been hosting a number of Computer Coding Workshops, designed to stimulate more interest in science and engineering careers and to help increase the number of skilled ICT workers on the island.

Just recently, the Caribbean Science Foundation (CSF) hosted a public Students' Project Showcase for participants who completed the Foundation's latest Computer Coding Workshop and this was held in Lecture Theatre 4 of the CLICO Building at the UWI Cave Hill Campus.

Speaking to The Barbados Advocate about the Project Showcase, Professor Cardinal Warde, Interim Executive Director of the CSF and professor of Electrical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) indicated that participants were able to choose their own teams to 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.

"We started the computer coding workshops in Barbados as a pilot in 2018, because we felt that computer coding was one way that certainly Caribbean Countries could inspire the youth to create more IT companies and to create a company in this space, you don't need a lot of upfront capital. So it made a lot of sense for us to be paying a lot more attention to this in our schools and so we have been



Students working in teams showcased what they learnt during the Computer Coding Workshop, which focused on website creation and development and mobile apps.

INSET: Professor Cardinal Warde, Interim Executive Director of the Caribbean Science Foundation.

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encouraging CXC to do more also and to get our students tested on more modern (programming) languages, other than the ones that they use at CSEC. I think they are still using Pascal and we have been trying to invite them and encourage them to use Python as the language," Warde explained.

"So we started these computer coding workshops in 2018 and this is the fourth offering of this in Barbados. Currently as I speak, the same coding workshop is running in St. Lucia, with about 21 students and it is going to start in Dominica in January of 2020," he added.

"So we run two sessions a year, January to March and September to December and as you can see, the students here are from 15 years and up. There are some who have full time jobs and are working and have been in the workforce for a while and there are some who are still students in high schools and they work in teams and they pick their own projects and we have very competent instructors teaching them the nuts and bolts of HTML, JavaScript, CSS which are the tools for building websites, but also the tools for building cellphone apps. So the students learn very fast and you can see from the quality of the projects, that some of them are putting their websites to use. So I am very pleased," Warde said.

The students presenting their projects, showcased websites and cellphone apps they developed designed to increase the public's knowledge about food products, upcoming sporting and motorsport events, as well as to book reservations at guest houses and to find specific vehicles online in a much easier fashion, amongst other things.

More workshops are slated to come on stream from January to March 2020 and later during September to December.



A section of the audience gathered for the Students' Project Showcase for participants who completed the CSF's Computer Coding Workshop.