The
Advance
Experience

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Advance
Regional Workforce
Development Program

fhi360
THE SCIENCE OF IMPROVING LIVES

CONTENTS

On behalf of The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), I want to thank the Advance Program Staff, local higher education partners and private sector representatives for their support of the Advance Program and their commitment to empower young people in Jamaica. I also want to thank the amazing students that participated in this program, without their commitment all these collaborations would not have been possible. USAID believes that education is a foundational driver of development, and when youth receive training in skills they can use in the workforce and to navigate life, they are able to build more hopeful and prosperous futures for themselves, their families, and communities. In the past decade, USAID has made youth employability an important component of its higher education initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean, to support youth in finding new or better employment opportunities, and Advance is an example of how we are making that a reality in the region.

Thank you all again for your commitment to young people's education and professional development.

↗ **JAMIE SALAZAR**
Youth and workforce development specialist, USAID

The Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ) commends the Advance Program for its outstanding efforts in addressing the critical issue of workforce development. The PSOJ is proud to have contributed to the ongoing dialogue and work to strengthen Jamaica's approach to workforce development, particularly in the private sector.

In today's rapidly changing global market, it is crucial for companies to invest in workforce development to remain competitive and to thrive continually. This is particularly important in Jamaica, where there is a skills gap that needs to be addressed. We believe that the success of local businesses depends on the skills and productivity of their workforce.

Therefore, private sector entities should invest in training and development opportunities to enhance the skills and knowledge of their employees, making them more efficient and effective in their roles.

During the implementation of the Advance Program in Jamaica, workforce demands and opportunities, including the existing skills gap in the country, were identified. Identifying solutions is critical to meeting the needs of the private sector, ensuring continued growth and development of the country.

The PSOJ remains optimistic that by investing in employee training and development, companies will inevitably improve productivity, retain talent, and foster innovation, ultimately driving economic growth and prosperity.

↗ **IMEGA BREESE MCNAB**
Executive director, The Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica

MESSAGES

MESSAGES

Since 2015, Advance has improved access and opportunities for disadvantaged youth in the region. We worked closely with our partner institutions in Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic to improve the quality of technical education and provide scholarships and support to students, helping to close the skills gap in growing sectors. As we reflect upon and celebrate the accomplishments, I am confident that some of the innovations and changes will be sustained. We already see evidence of Advance's lasting impact. In Guatemala, Advance helped create the Office of Internationalization to sustain scholarships, career and other student services at Universidad Panamericana (UPANA). Advance fostered nine innovative partnerships between Honduran partner institutions and private sector partners such as Manpower, to strengthen the career services department at Universidad Cristiana Evangélica Nuevo Milenio (UCENM). In the Dominican Republic, we worked with partners Instituto Tecnológico de las Americas (ITLA) and Instituto Tecnológico Superior Comunitario (ITSC) to develop new remedial courses for first year students, helping to improve their competencies in Spanish and math, easing their transition to higher education. In Jamaica, Knockalva Polytechnic College has already developed its own scholarship program for disadvantaged youth, similar to Advance, and other partner institutions are pursuing similar avenues to continue offering scholarships.

I applaud the work of the Advance Jamaica team, our partners The Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica, Vocational Training Development Institute and University of Technology, Jamaica, private sector partners, and of course, our talented and resilient scholars who have seized the opportunity to study and seek new and better employment.

↗ **KIRSTEN GALISSON**
Regional director, Advance Program

For over 60 years, FHI 360's Global Education experts have worked to ensure that all children and youth have equitable access to a quality education that equips them to become productive and empowered citizens. In 2022, we reached nearly 6 million children and youth through our programs, as well as worked with over 53,000 schools and 68,000 teachers.

Our programs and technical scope span the formative years from early childhood into young adulthood, working in both developing and fragile contexts. When designing and implementing programs, we ensure our programs have a learner-first approach, are evidence-driven and evidence-generating, promote smart partnerships with real people, and demonstrate technical excellence and creative integrity. In Jamaica, this approach is best exemplified through our work on the Advance Program, which is centered around providing disadvantaged young people market-relevant, high-quality tertiary-level training.

The impact of FHI 360's Global Education programs differs by context. In Ghana, FHI 360 – through the USAID Ghana Partnership for Education: Learning Activity – supports Ghana's Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service and affiliated educational institutions to improve reading performance for students in public primary schools. The program demonstrated one of the largest effect sizes of any early grade reading program worldwide. In conflict-affected Northern Nigeria, FHI 360 and partners founded 912 Nonformal Learning Centers to reach over 100,000 learners and transition over 8,000 children and youth to continued learning. In Rwanda, the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) officially approved the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework developed with support from FHI 360 implemented USAID-Tunoze Gusoma as the guiding document for SEL interventions at pre-primary and lower primary levels in Rwanda.

We celebrate the work of Advance in Jamaica and commend the employers, industry leaders, higher education partners and other stakeholders for their support in helping more Jamaican youth to succeed.

↗ **JULEE ALLEN**
Director, Global Education, FHI 360

MESSAGES

MESSAGES

THE STORY

The Advance story reflects a complex and meaningful journey to help youth from disadvantaged circumstances to access new or better employment. In Jamaica, this journey included three higher education institutions, including a community college council with multiple member colleges; six associate degree programs, four of them new; and over 200 scholarships distributed to disadvantaged youth. There have been a myriad of achievements and lessons learned among a network of higher education partners; all of whom are poised to continue to build on the work done for Jamaican youth.

In 2016 with USAID support, the Advance Program embarked on an ambitious journey in Jamaica. The program, also implemented in Honduras, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, elevated conversations on technical tertiary education and the need to increase more demand-driven higher education training programs.

How could tertiary programs help the next cadre of employees to develop the market-relevant skills? How could employers participate in the training process to help improve youth work readiness? How could disadvantaged youth access and complete tertiary education?

Based on a labor market sectors assessment in Jamaica, Advance partnered with three higher education institutions to deliver associate degree programs aligned with agribusiness, wellness tourism and creative industries.

These were three of the industries that were poised for growth, with the promise of employment or income generating opportunities for youth.

Advance also used the findings from the Study of Barriers to Access and Completion to better understand the needs of Jamaican youth in terms of accessing tertiary education. Advance was further directed by an institutional landscape analysis to help guide the selection of the higher education partners best positioned, at that time, to provide associate degree programs aligned with these industries.

The Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica and its network of member colleges built on their collective expertise in agriculture and hospitality and focused on offering two-year programs in Agro-processing and Business Management and Health and Wellness Tourism. The University of Technology, Jamaica pursued new programs aligned with the cultural and creative industries by rolling out Entertainment Production, Design and Technology and Image Consulting and Fashion Styling. The Vocational Training Development Institute focused on event planning and management, and its goal of expanding its animation program.

It was clear very early in the program that higher education institutions had to do more intentional engagement with employers. By including them early in curriculum design/revision, schools could tighten course content to better reflect the needs of the job market. Better employer engagement also included more access for students and faculty to observe work processes, test equipment and move from theory to practice with greater ease.

There is something special about seeing a student try out a piece of equipment for the first time. Seeing something discussed in class, and getting a chance to touch it, test it and declare "this is so cool!"

Advance established learning labs that added a layer of hope to so many career dreams. Agro-processing and wellness tourism students made plant-based products for spas, and nutritious jams, jellies, and sauces for excited stakeholder palates. Animation students sketched and developed colorful characters nuanced by creative

About
Advance

storytelling. Entertainment production and design students lit their way to conveying various moods and elevated their stagecraft abilities using their mini lighting lab. These learning labs increased students' enthusiasm and grounded their belief. These careers were real and possible!

Students bonded on Spark Days during bus rides to companies like Walkerswood in St. Ann and Scientific Research Council in Kingston. Spark Days meant their career aspirations were seen in real life.

From entry level staff to chief executive officers, the students saw that they too could have jobs in their industry of choice.

With the World of Work e-course and the employability guides, students also learned about transferable skills, preparing their resumes, and doing more effective job searches.
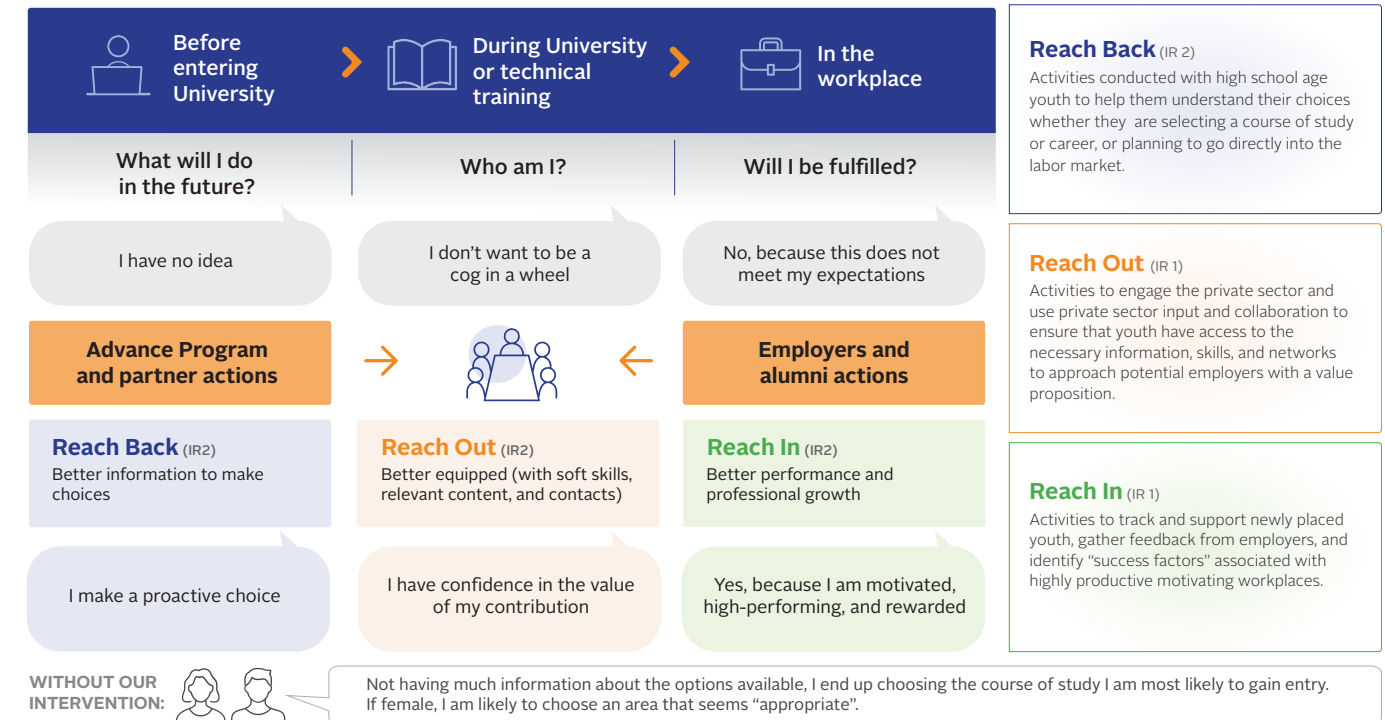
Disadvantaged youth participation in tertiary education is often stymied by finances. They often could not afford it. Therefore, USAID provided over 200 scholarships. However, even then, Advance learned the students needed more than money. They needed customized coaching,

mentoring, academic guidance, psychosocial support, and other wrap-around services. They needed to build their self-esteem so they would complete their programs. Some were successful, but unfortunately others were not able to complete their studies. This was difficult for their peers, their teachers, and the program on a whole. But it showed this valuable lesson: wrap-around services were essential to the students' success and are essential to school operations.

With USAID support, Advance was able to include positive youth development and social and emotional learning. This included working with existing faculty and pre-trained teachers to facilitate inclusion of these concepts in the classroom. The additional program activities also allowed the Advance team to collaborate with secondary schools teachers and guidance counselors to strengthen career guidance.

Nearly seven years later, the lessons prevail, the achievements can be celebrated, and future workforce development programs can build on the Advance experience.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Before entering University	During University or technical training	In the workplace
What will I do in the future?	Who am I?	Will I be fulfilled?
I have no idea	I don't want to be a cog in a wheel	No, because this does not meet my expectations

| Advance Program and partner actions | → | ← | Employers and alumni actions |

| Reach Back (IR2) Better information to make choices | Reach Out (IR2) Better equipped (with soft skills, relevant content, and contacts) | Reach In (IR2) Better performance and professional growth |
| I make a proactive choice | I have confidence in the value of my contribution | Yes, because I am motivated, high-performing, and rewarded |

Reach Back (IR 2)
Activities conducted with high school age youth to help them understand their choices whether they are selecting a course of study or career, or planning to go directly into the labor market.

Reach Out (IR 1)
Activities to engage the private sector and use private sector input and collaboration to ensure that youth have access to the necessary information, skills, and networks to approach potential employers with a value proposition.

Reach In (IR 1)
Activities to track and support newly placed youth, gather feedback from employers, and identify "success factors" associated with highly productive motivating workplaces.

WITHOUT OUR INTERVENTION: Not having much information about the options available, I end up choosing the course of study I am most likely to gain entry. If female, I am likely to choose an area that seems "appropriate".

Curriculum
Development

→ The curriculum development process is like the roots of a plant. They provide anchorage and transport nutrients to the leaves. Similarly, the curriculum development process forms the structure to deliver quality education and prepare students for the workplace and society.

The Advance Program collaborated with its partner institutions to develop and strengthen six technical degree programs aligned with the health and wellness tourism, agribusiness, and creative industries. The program engaged industry specialists to review the curricula to ensure they are in line with industry needs, fostered partnerships with the private sector to further strengthen the delivery of the curricula, and developed resources to support the development process. Partner institutions already had a robust curriculum development framework; however, Advance helped them to elevate their connections with industry experts and leaders.

THE EXPECTED RESULT: students demonstrate increased market-relevant skills.

PARTNER INSTITUTIONS AND SUPPORTED ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

THE COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF JAMAICA (CCCJ)

Associate of Applied Science in Agro-processing and Business Management

Associate of Applied Science in Health and Wellness Tourism

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, JAMAICA (UTECH)

Associate of Arts Degree in Image Consulting and Fashion Styling

Associate of Science Degree in Entertainment Design, Production and Technology

VOCATIONAL TRAINING DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (VTDI)

Associate Degree in Animation

Associate Degree in Events Planning & Management

How Advance's support impacted the Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica curriculum development process

ABOUT CCCJ

The Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica (CCCJ) is a governing body responsible for supervising and coordinating the work of community colleges, also referred to as its member colleges, in Jamaica. The CCCJ seeks to determine and implement common standards in all colleges to ensure the integrity of courses from one campus to the next.

PARTNERSHIP WITH ADVANCE

In collaboration with the Advance Program, the Council developed two new market-relevant associate degree programs: Agro-processing and Business Management and Health and Wellness Tourism. These industries were selected based on findings from a labor market sectors assessment (LMA) conducted by Advance. The LMA revealed that based on the needs of the labor market, Jamaica's agribusiness (with a focus on agro-processing) and tourism (with a focus on health and wellness tourism) industries would be on a growth trajectory for several years and therefore, needed well-trained youth to help drive these sectors.

The Health and Wellness Tourism and Agro-processing and Business Management programs were developed to train students to fill the skills gap that exists in these industries.

"Through the [partnership], we were able to develop two curricula at the associate degree level. The programs are in keeping with the University Council of Jamaica guidelines for an associate degree because we believe in the quality we offer, and we [have to] maintain that. "

-Donna Powell Wilson, executive director, CCCJ

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The partnership with the Advance Program gave the Council the opportunity to strengthen its curriculum development process and institutionalize it across its member colleges. The curriculum development process included using guidelines from the University Council of Jamaica and the Council's rigorous curriculum development process. Additionally, four phases of the curriculum development process were used as a guide in developing the curricula: planning, content and methods, implementation, and evaluation.

"FHI 360 provided us with technical assistance in getting the consultant to write the program and provided capacity development for our lecturers. We had many discussions with industry specialists from the

different areas [and] back and forth meetings to refine and ensure what we were doing was aligned with what the labor market needed."

-Paul Williams, former curriculum officer, CCCJ

ADVANCE'S SUPPORT

Advance observed that there were two specific areas where the Council needed support: frequent industry feedback and standardization of the curriculum development process across all community colleges. As a result, Advance took the following steps:

1. **ENGAGED INDUSTRY SPECIALISTS/CONSULTANTS TO REVIEW THE CURRICULA.**
   One consultant per curriculum was engaged to review the draft curriculum and identify areas for improvement. Consultants presented strategies/approaches to improve each curriculum. The consultants also helped CCCJ to identify gaps and redundancies in the curricula and develop training materials and resources. The consultants' feedback was informed by private sector and public sector stakeholders. For example, stakeholders for the Wellness Tourism program included spa managers and directors, medical doctors, wellness coaches, complementary and alternative treatment practitioners, etc. Meetings with stakeholders gave insight into the needs, shortfalls, and preferred skills.

2. **EXPLORED AND FOSTERED PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT THE COUNCIL.** For example, a partnership between the Council and the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ) was formed to

identify where the BSJ could provide support to the CCCJ in integrating spa standards in the Health and Wellness Tourism program as well as facilitate trainings for students, along with other opportunities. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the CCCJ and BSJ.

3. **DEVELOPED A CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT MANUAL** that addresses the issue of inconsistent application of principles such as equality and inclusivity to the curriculum development process.

"FHI 360 has done a fantastic job. It is quite refreshing when you are a part of a program that is so dedicated to building capacity based on the needs within your society and not just training people for export. It is important that we take those things into consideration and recognize the efforts from FHI 360."

- Dr. Cliff Riley,international consultant on food safety, product innovation and agro-production, International Trade Centre, Geneva

RESPONSE TO COVID-19

COVID-19 disrupted the education sector and institutions had to adopt rapid responses to engage their

students, while maintaining the teaching and learning process. One of CCCJ's responses included facilitating learning beyond the traditional classroom setting by using digital educational tools. Some courses were adjusted to be more suitable for an online learning environment. Advance supported the CCCJ efforts by converting 23 of their in-person courses to online courses. Ten Health and Wellness Tourism courses and 13 Agro-processing and Business Management courses were converted for remote learning.

Advance also worked to explore and foster private sector partnerships, and developed a manual aimed at reducing inconsistencies that exist across the community colleges and Council when it comes to the curriculum development process. Advance also worked to explore and foster private sector partnerships, and develop a manual aimed at reducing inconsistencies that exist across the community colleges and Council when it comes to the curriculum development process.

Additionally, Advance also collaborated with the Vocational Training Development Institute and the University of Technology, Jamaica, in developing new and strengthening existing programs.

LESSONS LEARNED

→ Curriculum development requires collaboration between external industry stakeholders and academic faculty to ensure relevance and currency of content and evaluation method.

→ Technical industries require that employees receive competency-based training; therefore, technical degree programs must be developed with a competency-based approach

→ Labor bridging activities should be embedded in curriculum content and delivery.

→ Curriculum development is an ongoing process that does not end when curricula are rolled out. Monitoring and evaluation are key elements to the curriculum development process that must be undertaken and must include industry insights.

→ Classroom observation is a key monitoring method to observe the delivery of content and the student experience. Classroom observation is also the best way to see the transference and development of soft skills in the classroom. Observation should not be limited to assessment of teachers.

→ Classroom instruction and pedagogy for technical degree programs must be heavily informed by the industry. It is more than transferring skills and knowledge, it is preparing students to work, survive and thrive in the field. Elements important to an industry, such as problem solving and working in a team, must be simulated within the classroom to effectively prepare students.

Professional
Development
for Faculty and Administrators

→ With new curricula came the need for faculty to be equipped with the necessary technical knowledge to deliver the new or revised courses. Throughout the life of the project, Advance hosted professional development (PD) activities for teaching and non-teaching staff at the partner institutions. These activities helped to build the capacity of the staff to deliver new and strengthened curricula content. The activities also equipped staff with skills to engage private sector stakeholders and exposed them to key concepts in positive youth development, including social and emotional learning.

Teachers welcomed the activities and said they were given opportunities to build their capacity to implement effective pedagogical approaches, while developing relevant industry knowledge and skills. Additionally, the teachers and other staff obtained resource mobilization strategies to sustainably engage private sector stakeholders as well as observe and adapt best practices related to curriculum delivery, labor bridging for students and customized recruitment for technical degrees.

The Advance Program also shared manuals and other resources with its partner institutions to support the institutionalization of PD activities.
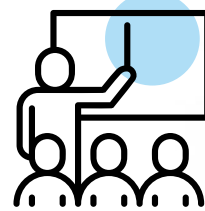
Over
133
133 teaching and non-teaching staff trained

RESOURCES

→ Resource Mobilization Manual

→ Customer Service Toolkit

→ Product Development for Agro-processing and Business Management Manual

→ Product Development for Health and Wellness Manual

✓ LESSONS LEARNED

1. Industry immersion or simulated industry immersion is needed to aid faculty's ability to write lesson plans and to deliver content. Faculty must gain in-depth knowledge of how the industry operates and must be able to demonstrate industry skills. Exposure to the industry must be done in a train-the-trainer format to build the capacity to transfer knowledge to their students.

2. Institutions should develop a professional development plan for academic and non-academic staff to ensure continued growth in their technical expertise. The strategic plan should be monitored yearly.

3. Institutions with multiple campuses must have standard and institutionalized manuals to guide development activities for staff.

"The Advance Program has offered us at Knox a whole lot of opportunities. One that stood out in my mind is the one that we did at the Scientific Research Council where I got an opportunity to do tissue culture, something that I've wanted to do for many years. Another would be the nutraceutical training. It was a three-day training, and we got a lot of practical activities in, which for me made the experience more interesting. I have to say the product development training was wonderful as member colleges could work together making soaps and scrubs. In delivering our courses, these activities empowered teachers and lecturers to be a little bit more hands-on with the students. It gave us the opportunity to be more immersed in the industry when we are teaching our students."

↗ **DENO DALEY**
Lecturer, Knox Community College

Professional Development Activities

→ Entertainment Design, Production and Technology Workshop

→ Professional Development - Externship for Agro-processing and Business Management Lecturers

→ Financial Literacy Webinar Staff Session

→ Grant Writing and Private Sector Engagement Workshop

→ Nutraceuticals Teacher Training Program

→ Image Consulting and Fashion Styling - Fashion Photography Training

→ New Product Development Training for Agribusiness and Health and Wellness Tourism

→ Virtual Product Development Training

→ Student Services and Online Media Workshop

→ Study Tours (Mexico)

→ Externship-Teacher Training in Food Processing, Product Development & Biology

→ Soft Skills Workshop

→ Marketing Workshop

→ Resource Mobilization Series-Pathways to Partnerships: Telling Our Story

→ Customer Service for Admissions and Student Services

A Learning and Sharing Experience in Mexico

MRS. CAROL WALTERS was one of the educators from Advance's partner institutions who got the opportunity to visit Mexico through the Advance Program Study Tour. Educators visited tertiary institutions in Mexico to tour their facilities, learn about their best practices and explore possibilities for partnerships. An output from this trip was the establishment of the Montego Bay Community College (MBCC) alumni. Advance sat with Mrs. Walters to hear about her experience.

Q. How did you feel when you heard that you were going to participate in the study tour?

A. I was excited. We were given the agenda and I saw where we would be visiting several places in Mexico to tour their technical universities. I wanted to see what they were like, to learn about the programmes they offered and to assess the quality resources that they had to deliver their programmes. Of course, I was eager to see and learn about what was being done, especially in the area of technical vocational education and training outside of Jamaica, because as a community college we always want to be on the cutting edge to improve our product offering here at the Montego Bay Community College.

Q. What was the experience like?

A. It was awesome and indeed a memorable experience. There was a lot of opportunity for networking when we toured the different universities. There were participants from other local institutions as well as from different South American countries with whom we interacted and were able to exchange ideas on various situations. I was really excited about the camaraderie and the friendships that were quickly established among group members and our hosts. I was particularly impressed with the hospitality that we received from the staff and students at all the institutions we visited and their willingness to share their strategies and their success stories. Each evening, we were also able to enjoy a little immersion into the Mexican culture which we thoroughly enjoyed.

Q. What were your days like?

A. Based on the program, there were days when we were engaged in workshops and presentations at the hotel where we were staying in Aguascalientes; however, most days were spent travelling long distances and touring these technical universities. Those were very long days. We had to be up very early, especially when we were visiting a university in another state. The sessions at the universities usually began with meeting the administrators and staff, followed by presentations about the institution's product offerings and workshops highlighting the various strategies they used to develop, market, and deliver their academic product. The sessions were highly interactive and informative. Equally exciting and informative were the tours of their facilities. Some institutions did not just show us their resources, but they also had demonstration lessons with us in their state-of-the-art laboratories. The days were long and the tours hectic all because there was so much to see and so much to learn, but we had fun!

Q. What was the purpose of the workshops?

A. The purpose of the workshops was for us to get a good understanding of the technical/ vocational education and training system in Mexico and the strategies that different institutions were using to develop and deliver the different programs that they offer to meet the human resources needs of the various industries across Mexico. Usually when we got back to the hotel after a tour, we were asked to do our reflections and look at what we observed, what we heard and to see how best we could implement some of the things in the institutions we represented.

Q. What were some of the things that were implemented at MBCC because of the tour?

A. As an administrator you can well imagine that in addition to meeting the aim and objective of the Advance Program, that I would also be looking out to see what physical resources they had or what creative ideas I could take back to benchmark at my institution. I was most impressed with the quality furniture I saw in the classrooms in Mexico. So, one of the first things I recommended to the principal when I returned to Jamaica was for the purchase of some of this type of combo desks and chairs to outfit the classrooms at the college. Our students over the years had been complaining about how uncomfortable their desks and chairs were, but we were never able to find good quality, comfortable combo desks and chairs for them. I must tell you; we now have those excellent quality desks and chairs like the Mexican students, and our students are very pleased.

One of the critical things however, that really piqued my interest, was the very strong partnerships that the universities enjoyed with the private sector in Mexico. Although the Mexican Government provided significant capital resources for the development and operation of these technical universities, the universities also received tremendous assistance from corporate entities, especially with regards to assisting the institutions with the acquisition of the latest technologies and creating internship and apprenticeship opportunities for students. This kind of tri-partite approach to vocational training and the social exchange between the universities and the corporate entities, account for much of their all-round success; hence the building of social capital for the college is one of the areas we are aggressively seeking to strengthen. This externship experience has proven to me that there is so much mutual gain to be derived when there is that solid connection among the private and public sectors and educational institutions.

When it comes on to the marketing of the universities, I was so very impressed with the energy that was placed into marketing the institutions. Surprisingly what we learned in Mexico is that a lot of their marketing is done through their alumni. All of the universities we visited have very strong past student's associations. At the time we went on this externship we did not have an alumni here at MBCC and so my co-worker and I thought that the establishment of the MBCC Alumni is what we would take on as our project when we got back to Jamaica, and so we did.

Q. Tell us about the Alumni.

A. As soon as we got back to Jamaica, we started to put the machinery in place for the establishment of the MBCC alumni. We started out by identifying all the persons here on staff, who were past students. We then decided that we would have an evening where we bring these persons together for a social event and introduce them to the idea of getting the alumni going. And so, we came together, and while the event was in progress, they invited other past students to come by and that evening we had approximately 30 persons committing to being members. We made good use of the opportunity and went right into selecting persons to serve on a committee. The purpose of the MBCC alumni is to give support to the institution and this support comes in many ways. It comes in the form of creating opportunities for students to do apprenticeship/ internships, for scholarships, for assistance with the professional development of staff and students, for the building of social and financial capital and marketing the institution to prospective students.

Q. What has the alumni committee been up to?

A. Since its establishment, they have registered the association and they are aggressively recruiting members. They have drafted their constitution. They have formerly established an MOU with the Colleges' Board of Management. They have opened a bank account and started a scholarship fund as well. In terms of professional development, they hosted a webinar on resume writing and interviewing skills development for students who will be graduating this year. They have several events planned, for example, they are having a job fair for students who have recently graduated and have organized a medical fair for our present and prospective students. Although the pandemic curtailed some of their plans, I think they have established themselves as a formidable body and are beginning to make an impact.

Q. What did this opportunity mean to you?

A. I am happy for the opportunity that was afforded me, by FHI 360, to visit Mexico to tour these technical universities to observe, to learn about and benchmark their best practices as well as for the cultural exposure and exchange the opportunity presented. I am pleased that having come back to Jamaica, my colleague and I were able to successfully implement something that was inspired by that study tour. Without a doubt, MBCC stands to benefit tremendously having established its alumni.

Positive Youth **Development**

→ Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a productive and constructive manner. It recognizes, utilizes, and enhances the strengths of young people and promotes positive outcomes for them by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and enabling supportive environments to support the youth.

WHAT WE DID

The PYD/ Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program focused on training of trainers (teacher educators) and pre-trained teachers, to equip them with skills and knowledge to strengthen youth prosocial skills. The primary beneficiaries from the program were pre-service teachers, guidance counselors, and other selected stakeholders.

HOW WE DID IT

The mode of teaching for the toolkit and e-course relied on a variety of abilities such as visual and audio information, verbal as well as logic activities, interpersonal and intrapersonal activities, among others. Emphasis was placed on three areas: knowledge, attitudes and skills, in

The program used a framework developed by Youth Power/USAID and was the foundation for the activities. This integrated SEL framework also included aspects of the National Standards Curriculum in Jamaica. It addressed real-world classroom situations as well as the everyday struggles and triumphs of teachers. Additionally, PYD/SEL activities spoke to the empowerment of students. The local activities included a focus on four domains- assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment- that contribute to healthy productive and engaged youth.

order to properly develop training content. Knowledge was addressed by organizing PYD and SEL content through respective frameworks. Attitude (and attitude change) was assessed from the development of discussion questions, Socratic questioning, critical thinking and reflective exercises. Skills were developed by designing applied activities including role play, group collaboration, peer observation, and feedback.

It was important to demonstrate a distinction between content and process. Content refers to the subject material or the "what" is being taught while the process refers to the interpersonal factors of the "how" it is being taught. For prospective trainers to train others in PYD/SEL, they adopted these practices by understanding how they work and how they affect learning in the classroom. These activities involved case studies, roleplay, written tasks, PowerPoint presentations, infographics, relevant video material, and discussion posts.

Training occurred over a 38-hour period. Participants received individual sessions, practical sessions and debriefing sessions. The topics included a background look into PYD and SEL, emotional regulation, cognitive regulation, social skills, identity and agency, and public spirit. There were three cohorts with participants from partner tertiary institutions.
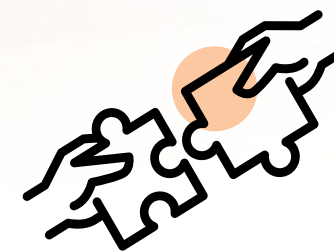
RESOURCES AND TRAINING MATERIALS DEVELOPED

Training materials used throughout the PYD/SEL experience included a SEL toolkit, a trainee workbook, PowerPoint presentations, a coaching plan, an e-course, and an implementation plan for pre-service teachers, existing faculty, and their schools.

38
Training hours

6
Primary resources

RESULTS

At the end of it all, 127 pre-trained educators were trained in PYD/SEL content, 16 lecturers were trained as trainers and throughout the life of the project over 300 people were reached.

16
lecturers trained as trainers

127
pre-trained educators trained in PYD/SEL

over **300**
people were reached

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Online training is most suitable for a large cohort of participants. However, individual sessions should not surpass two hours. Participants' attention waned throughout the session. In-person sessions receive better results in comparison to online training.

2. When there is leadership buy-in, there are better results from participants. Having the support of school leaders allowed participants to schedule and participate in training sessions more efficiently and effectively.

3. PYD/SEL has to be led by a team of people to yield success. Although one individual can implement PYD/SEL in a classroom or community, it requires a team to lead institutional change.

4. PYD/SEL interconnects with psychosocial support for teachers and students. Teachers who were introduced to PYD/SEL found it easier to understand the importance of psychosocial support for students.

Improving Recruitment and Access to Higher Education

Advance worked with its partners to improve access to tertiary education for disadvantaged youth. Some of the factors taken into consideration included (but were not limited to) their places of residence and their socio-economic status. Improved access was achieved via a series of capacity-building practices and sessions.

WHAT WAS DONE

RECRUITMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

The training covered steps for institutions to follow in being more deliberate and strategic in their recruitment efforts. Some of the areas covered included how to create an annual outreach and recruitment plan, monthly monitoring and evaluation to track the progress of the plan and make changes where necessary and then following up with prospects at the end of the process.

Mystery shopper research was conducted to determine the extent to which the institution demonstrated deficiencies in their customer service experience, especially with student services. The study revealed that in-office experience with personnel was pleasant. However, phone and email communication needed improvement. Personnel needed more knowledge about the academic programs and to be more responsive to students. Based on the mystery shopper exercise and personnel interviews, customer service training was done accompanied by a training kit for staff.

RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS MANUAL

A recruitment and admissions manual was made available to partner institutions. This document was comprehensive and covered the importance of recruitment and strategies that institutions can implement to see desired results in their recruitment processes. The manual included information on key recruitment and admissions issues, strategies for recruitment, steps in creating a recruitment plan and ensuring sustainability.

EXPANDED ACCESS (FOR STUDENT SUPPORT) USING DIGITAL MEDIA

A digital media workshop covered the role of student services, a student services map considering the student life cycle and the use of digital media in student service delivery. The workshop focused on integrating digital media and student services' best practices in order to get the most out of strategies being applied during recruitment.

HOW WE DID IT

The Advance Program worked with partner tertiary level institutions to increase disadvantaged youth's access to technical tertiary education and support to complete their studies and join the workforce in supported industries. Focusing on the "reach back" element of the Program's theory of change, the Program scaled-up recruitment and outreach activities to better reach disadvantaged students.

Advance did sessions with guidance counselors and subject teachers in high schools as they influenced students in decision-making for their tertiary education plans. The Program also coordinated with higher education partner institutions, to increase awareness about the degree programs offered as well as career options available to those in the emerging industries.

Advance also executed career awareness campaigns in traditional and digital media about options within emerging industries. Examples include career outreach material in the form of brochures, flyers, and infographic content. The material also highlighted steps to help the youth identify the best routes to take in pursuing tertiary level education within these industries.

RESULTS

The program reached 25 secondary schools, 52 guidance counselors and 271 community-based organizations and groups in Jamaica, while incorporating innovative activities with secondary schools. For example, Advance hosted a Secondary School Luncheon that reached approximately 500 secondary school students. The program reached approximately 3,500 disadvantaged youth in Jamaica.

> "It was the information from the workshop that that made me start thinking of how to make the career development content more accessible, interactive, and engaging for the students. The Advance session sparked the idea to transform our [existing] career development workshop into an online module."
>
> **MAURICE COLQUHOUN**
> Placement and Career Officer at UTech in the Career and Placement Unit

LESSONS LEARNED

→ There need to be dedicated staff responsible for recruitment and marketing. At a few institutions, lecturers and program coordinators are the personnel charged with marketing programs in addition to carrying out their other core functions.

→ Tertiary institutions' recruitment and outreach activities for degree programs related to emerging and/or non-traditional technical industries require an industry-based outreach approach. Promotion of these degree programs must focus on the economic viability, possible career pathways and growth opportunities of the industry. Recruiters cannot simply promote their institution and share cursory information about the degree program to attract new enrollment, it requires more in-depth industry awareness.

→ Communication activities using different forms of media such as radio, digital and newspaper to promote emerging industries and careers are important to increase enrollment in technical degree programs. It is important to consider the best method for each target group. The public are not aware of several technical industries nor the associated earning potential of these industries. This ignorance coupled with perception that technical/vocational skills and careers are mere hobbies negatively affects enrollment.

→ Recruitment resources, that are youth friendly and easy-to-read, that highlights career pathways and earning potential are key outreach tools to develop and use in recruitment activities for both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged youth. This is especially crucial for technical careers.

→ Recruitment and outreach to disadvantaged youth requires a triangulated effort and cannot simply focus on secondary school interventions. For disadvantaged youth, community-based approaches that engage neighborhood associations, churches, youth groups, community service organizations, NGOs and parent associations are equally as important as the secondary school approach. Both approaches must reach and engage not only youth, but youth influencers.

→ Increasing access to student services requires that the perception that student services are siloed from the academic services be broken and must be seen as an augmentation of the academic services by the students. Student support services offered by institutions need to be better promoted by leveraging the value and benefit of the services to the academic career of the student, personal development of the student and the work-readiness of the student.

→ Increased use of information and communication technologies in student support services are key to creating access among students and allow for strengthened institutional capacity to deliver comprehensive student support. For example, with a sophisticated student management system, an institution can identify students who need additional academic support, students who have not engaged sufficient personal development activities, students on the verge of dropping out and students who have not benefitted from key career planning support.

Managing a **Scholarship** Program

A few of Advance's scholarship recipients

Advance's scholarship implementation and outcome in Jamaica

The Advance Program partnered with select institutions to offer scholarships to disadvantaged youth who have completed their high school education and are highly motivated to continue to technical tertiary education.

Scholarships were awarded to qualified students who had an interest in the agribusiness, health and wellness tourism orindustries at the following institutions:

1. CCCJ member colleges- Knox Community College, Knockalva Polytechnic College, Montego Bay Community College, Excelsior Community College, College of Agriculture, Science and Education, and Portmore Community College
2. Vocational Training Development Institute (VTDI)
3. University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech)

PROBLEM STATEMENT:
Disadvantaged youth from Jamaica who have completed secondary education face financial difficulties in the continuation of their education. While these youth may be highly motivated to continue their academic pursuits, their socio-economic background, and other factors, are hinderances.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide scholarships to disadvantaged youth to access higher education
2. To promote career options in viable industries
3. To assist students obtain new and better employment opportunities

TARGET AUDIENCE

Students who completed secondary school who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds and show great potential and interest in pursuing tertiary education. These students were between the ages of 18 and 29.

BACKGROUND

Advance Jamaica offered scholarships to cover tuition and a student-support stipends (i.e., academic incentives) through the partner institutions, as research showed that students also faced difficulties in affording transportation costs for the commute to and from school. Students also struggled to find lunch money. Both full and partial scholarships were offered to select students and scholarships were managed by the schools.

Since the establishment of the Advance Program in Jamaica, a total of 226 scholarships have been distributed across partner institutions.

THE APPROACH

Advance worked with partner institutions to launch the program among disadvantaged youth who pursued associate degree programs aligned with agri-business, creative industries and health and wellness tourism.

Recruitment and selection occurred in all institutions based on the following steps:

1. Customized recruitment for each program.
2. Use of one standard application form for all partner institutions.
3. Short-listing of applicants done in collaboration with each institution.
4. Short-listed candidate interviewed face to face/virtually.
5. Candidates were selected after the completion of the interview process.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

The recruitment of scholarship candidates was executed by the institution scholarship coordinating department with the support of the Advance team and the participation of the local support committees (LSC) with the aid of:

• recruitment plans
• creation of support committees: definition, integration, and orientation

- recruiting and distribution of scholarship application forms
- collection of initial scholarship application forms

OUTCOME

Once a candidate was successful, they would receive a scholarship package which included:

ACADEMIC COSTS

- Tuition
- Examination fees
- Student services
- Insurance

STUDENT SUPPORT STIPEND (ACADEMIC INCENTIVES) TO COVER

- Meals
- Accommodation where applicable
- Transportation
- Books and supplies

CHALLENGES

Recipients often faced difficulties in receiving student support stipends in a timely manner. This affected their school attendance. Advance implemented a card-based disbursement system to help alleviate some of the issues causing the delays. While students would now have the financial means to pursue studies, there were still issues regarding student retention. Advance Jamaica learned that while students would have received tuition and other financial support to obtain their degree, they needed additional help. This resulted in a psychosocial support program being piloted at VTDI and other student retention strategies being explored at the other institutions.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Develop a plan to include the establishment of a committee and timeline to guide the management of the scholarship process.

2. Choose appropriate channels to advertise scholarship opportunities. This can be done through the respective institutions (i.e., their marketing and recruitment departments), traditional media (TV and radio) and new media (digital and social media)

3. Create a clear and comprehensive application form (digital and physical) to request all relevant information needed from each candidate

4. Create an information sheet indicating specific timelines. Distribute among recipients. For example: outline when tuition will be paid and how often incentives will be paid out. This may be monthly, quarterly, or once a year.

5. For disadvantaged students to successfully enter and complete tertiary education, scholarship support must go beyond academic costs such as tuition. Non-academic costs incurred for lunch, transportation and accommodation must also be considered to ensure students are able to enter and complete a tertiary degree program. Institutions need designated staff to manage stipends and other non-academic costs.

6. A scholarship program for disadvantaged students must include elements that focus on psychosocial development and social-emotional learning. Disadvantaged students have low self-efficacy, low levels of resilience, little to no career planning skills, little to no academic planning skills, interpersonal difficulties and are often unprepared to transition into the tertiary space. A scholarship program for disadvantaged students must go beyond the finances.

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

"Before receiving the scholarship from Advance and FHI360, life was just a normal day to day thing between work and family. I was primarily focused on my small farm and daughter. Advance has transformed my life and has given me hope for a better future. Advance believed in me and gave me an opportunity. So, now it's for me to believe in myself and make the most of this opportunity."

ODETTE GORDON
Agro-processing and Business Management, Knox Community College

"The opportunity to attend university to do something that I love, is a good feeling. It has boosted my self-esteem to know that I am being trained in a field that I have a huge interest in where my passion meets training. This scholarship means a lot to my family."

JASON LEWIS
Entertainment Design Production and Technology, University of Technology, Jamaica

"The Advance Program allowed me to start tertiary education. It made me realize that I needed to take opportunities once they arrived and make the best of it. Getting the scholarship makes me believe that anything is possible and that dreams do come true. Education means success, it means a better way of living or a better way of life. For years, I felt like I was in darkness because education means so much and I was unable to access tertiary education. Thank God for the Advance Program I am now shining through."

AMOY SMITH
Events Planning and Management, Vocational Training Development Institute

Tashana Golding was a scholarship student with Advance. Today, her training has improved her quality of life where she now represents Jamaica on the international stage as a beauty specialist. "My role is to plan and host beauty events. I also do skin consultations and presentations about beauty and wellness." Golding completed the Associate of Applied Science Degree in Health and Wellness Tourism at Excelsior Community College.

"This is a big accomplishment for me. Looking back at where I am coming from, to where I am now, [I'm] grateful."

Advance beneficiary Roshane Bartley completed his associate degree in Entertainment Design Production and Technology at the University of Technology, Jamaica in 2022. He also benefited from an internship opportunity at Phase 3 Productions. Based on his stellar performance within the organization, he transitioned from an intern to a full-time employee as a multimedia technician.

Tashana Golding

Roshane Bartley

The Advance Experience

The Advance Experience

The major aim of the Advance Program was to improve employability for disadvantaged youth enrolled in tertiary institutions.

Education was the driving factor to increase employability through the program. As such, the team worked with local tertiary institutions to develop and strengthen market-relevant programs which served to prepare them for the world of work. However, the students/beneficiaries also needed to then bridge the gap between being a student and entering the workforce. That is where the labor bridging component of the Advance program came in. The Advance Program engaged students in four labor bridging-based activities and used two types of resources to support them. The resources used were a guide and specific videos.

The labor bridging activities followed the pathways of job readiness and entrepreneurship.

Labor **Bridging**

INDUSTRY SEMINARS: Industry professionals were engaged to share insights into career opportunities with students. The shared information included job-ready skills.

INDUSTRY TOURS/SPARK DAYS: Students were given opportunities to visit industry spaces to get a 'better feel' of industry operations. On different occasions, students visited processing facilities or wellness spaces for first-hand experience of the specified industries.

WORLD OF WORK: These sessions helped students refine their employability skills. Students were given the know-how for developing a professional brand which included marketing their skills. There was also a self-paced e-course.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAININGS/COACHING: Students interested in entrepreneurship received guidance and training on starting a business and management. Select students received one-on-one coaching in entrepreneurship.

✓ LESSONS LEARNED

1. Career guidance at the tertiary level cannot solely be generalized to effectively support students' transition to the workforce. Students need industry-specific guidance related to their field of study to better prepare them to work in their industry, increase their employability for their industry and strategically position them to be successful in their industry.

2. Interdepartmental collaboration, between academic and career departments, is essential for effective work-readiness preparation of students.

3. Industry immersion during their studies is a key component to the work-readiness of students for technical careers. As much as possible, students must have first-hand exposure to the industry during their studies. This will ensure a greater understanding of how their industry works, including the roles and responsibilities of professions.

4. Students and new graduates need entrepreneurship and freelance coaching to create their own employment in the technical industries. There is a high incidence of self-employment, entrepreneurship and freelancing in the technical industries, specifically in Jamaica within the wellness tourism, agribusiness and creative industries. Students and new graduates need guidance and coaching on starting their own businesses and creating their own employment in their specific industries. Entrepreneurship is not easy, but it remains a viable option for some graduates.

The lessons learned in labor bridging could positively guide future project teams with a similar focus.

LABOR BRIDGING TESTIMONIALS

SPARK DAY

"I was so excited to do the tour at Belcour Preserves because I was going to go into the field to experience the true works of an agro-processor and entrepreneur. Plus, meeting the co-founder, Mrs. Lumsden, was great. [Mrs. Lumsden gave] me the motivation I need to stay in school through her life story and her achievements"

↗ **DEVON BAILEY**
Student,
Knockalva Polytechnic College

INTERNSHIP

"The internship experience has been great for me. I now have the knowledge and skills to create my own products if I wish to do so in the future. This internship has been very educational and informative in the product development department"

↗ **MOESHA MARTIN**
Past student, CASE

ENTREPRENEURSHIP PITCH COMPETITION

"The entrepreneurship coaching was great. I found the most value with the individual coaching sessions. I definitely learned a lot and got amazing insights into the world of entrepreneurship from my coaches."

↗ **ANTONNI JAMES**
Winner, Advance Program
Entrepreneurship Pitch Competition

Antonni James Tops Pitch Competition

Antonni James smiled brightly when she realized she won. James, who is on her way to being a digital media marketing maven, landed first place in an entrepreneurship pitch competition hosted by the Advance Program.

"It feels amazing to have won. Winning the pitch competition honestly gave me an extra boost," she said.

James added that it was an internship experience that jolted her into digital marketing. She interned at Gwen-Estelle Naturals as a social media manager. At the natural hair care company James helped to create and post content, while working on boosting engagement among the business' target audience. It was here that a career in digital media marketing came to life.

The 22-year-old Montego Bay Community College student topped a field of ten budding entrepreneurs. It was a tight competition as all ten delivered interesting business pitches ranging from food and beverage production to entertainment management. The virtual award ceremony coupled with their admitted edginess did not hold sway over their passion, which was palpable as they delivered their pitches.

Advance is a workforce development program working with select tertiary partners to contribute to new and better employment opportunities for Jamaican youth. However, not everyone can be hired by a big company as soon as they leave school. Some students would go on to create their own employment and generate opportunities for other young Jamaicans.

So, Advance supported aspiring entrepreneurs with a customized entrepreneurship and coaching component. Over 30 students expressed interest in starting businesses. The ten finalists made it through rigorous coaching and training, with James wowing the competition judges with her focus and strategy.

The JMMB Joan Duncan Foundation added their support by donating funds toward the prizes for first, second and third place. "Innovation is the key to survival and sustainability," said Foundation CEO Kim Mair. Mair added "JMMB was born out of one woman's desire to make a change in the financial landscape. Joan Duncan had a simple vision to help Jamaicans from all walks of life to live better lives through targeted financial planning and wealth creation opportunities." According to Mair, the partnership with the Advance Program on the entrepreneurship component fits with the foundation's vision. Mair and the foundation team also organized guest presentations on financial literacy and planning for James and the other entrepreneurs.

"Creating my business was such a long process," James said, while confirming the lengthy research she had to do. She is clear, however, that while her journey is just beginning, she is off to a great start. Just take a look at her LinkedIn page and Instagram feed. "My mission is to empower you coach, I want you to leverage social media to grow your business, drive traffic and increase sales." James is pursuing clients in need of social media management, strategy, as well as content and email marketing.

James has completed her courses and is on track to graduate in the coming months. Advance will continue to support her and the other members of the top ten by facilitating direct coaching from experts in their respective industries, support with business registration and provision of selected start-up tools and supplies.

Private Sector Engagement

→ Since 2017, Advance Jamaica partnered with several private sector entities through memoranda of understanding and letters of intent.

MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING

Advance secured memoranda of understanding with four companies. These are: Grace Kennedy Foundation, JP Limited, The S Hotels and the Bureau of Standards Jamaica.

Additionally, letters of intent were signed by Jamaica Film and Television Association (JAFTA), Main Event, the Advertising Association Agency of Jamaica, CB Group, Hydro-Gardens of Jamaica, and SMC Europe/Caribbean Ltd.

Private sector engagement was implemented through three types of activities.

INTERNSHIPS

Over the years, more than 15 students benefited from internship opportunities through private sector engagement. Program beneficiaries received internship opportunities through the following companies/individuals: MLR Technology, CB Group, Grace Kennedy Foundation, Phase 3 Productions, JP Farms, Karin Wilson Edmonds, SMC Europe/Caribbean Limited, Lucien Harrison Limited, and ListenMi Caribbean.

INDUSTRY SEMINARS

Advance hosted, in collaboration with its partner institutions, industry seminars where members from the private sector engaged students in industry discussions.

SPARK DAY

The name Spark Day was officially used on March 30,2022. Prior to this, 'field trips' and 'away days' were terms used. Spark Days continue to expose students to the world of work.

PRIVATE SECTOR TESTIMONIAL

"Students get a chance to meet industry leaders, entrepreneurs and professionals who share their wisdom, learning, and experiences. They also widen their choices in job opportunities. These interactions are useful to students in their careers and help them to develop leadership qualities, management skills, and to learn about the industry. It allows them to see and experience real workstations, plants, machines, systems, assembly lines, and interact with highly trained and experience personnel."

↗ **LILETH GUY**
production manager,
Walkerswood Caribbean Foods Ltd.

→ # 5 Tips on engaging the private sector

REACH

Research, Evaluate, Approach, Communicate and Highlight Benefits

Since the establishment of Advance in Jamaica, private sector partnership has been instrumental in the success of Program participants obtaining industry experience and for some, employment opportunities.

When establishing private sector partnerships, there are a few elements to be considered. These include:

1. **RESEARCH** - It is important to conduct extensive research on the prospective company or organization a project would like to partner with to achieve a mutual goal.

2. **EVALUATE** - Identify the goals and objectives of the prospective company and evaluate if these factors align to the goal and objectives of the initiative the project wants to achieve.

3. **APPROACH** - Make initial contact with prospective companies to find out who is in charge and the protocols that must be followed to engage partnership. Ensure you are speaking with the right person(s).

4. **COMMUNICATE** - Use appropriate channels of communication such as emails or phone calls to establish familiarity and build a relationship. Through these channels the aim of the initiative will be shared and the need for partnership.

5. **HIGHLIGHT BENEFITS** - Once communication has been achieved it is important to highlight the benefits of both parties partnering. In this case, the benefit for private sector partnership included developing a labor force, having access to prospective employees and social good. Additionally. Advance Jamaica has used private sector partnerships particularly Spark Days to promote youth development, but it is also a good PR opportunity for companies as media content is created and distributed to the general public.

6. **BONUS: REMAIN CONSISTENT AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP** - Ongoing communication is important to maintain a good partnership. It is important to check-in with partners, extend invitations to other initiatives that can be beneficial to members of the private sector. This can be to attend learning fora or allowing members of the private sector to contribute to panel discussions.

✓ ## LESSONS LEARNED:

1. Successful private sector engagement requires that academic and non-academic staff at all levels have the capacity to mobilize resources and identify the institutions' value proposition. It requires a systematic, strategic and multi-level approach. Building the capacity of staff to develop strategic partnerships, write grant proposals and mobilize internal resources is key to developing private sector partnerships. However, this should not be done solely at the senior administration level. Lecturers, marketing officers and even administrative staff must also demonstrate a capacity to develop and maintain private sector alliances.

2. Labor bridging is more effective and successful through sustained partnership between education institutions and private sector partners. It is not enough for students to do practical assessments and receive support from career services. They need exposure to the industry. Private sector partnerships for degree programs or specific academic departments allow for continued labor bridging for students across different cohorts for internships, field trips, guest lecturers etc.

Sashawney Clarke's 'Advanced' Experience

Graduate of the College of Agriculture Science and Education (CASE), Sashawney Clarke, who transitioned from an internship to part-time employment says gaining hands-on experience has been beneficial to her knowing how to properly apply herself in the world of work.

"The associate degree program was an exciting experience," she said. "I wanted to get experience in that field because COVID came when I was doing my studies, so I was not able to go to different establishments for the hands-on experiences," she continued.

Clarke shared that her experience with the Advance Program exposed her to the ins and outs of food processing, agro-processing, product development, and various regulations. "All of that material and information I received throughout the two years helped me to develop skills, and my knowledge base," she said.

Clarke, who attained an associate degree in agro-processing and business management, is making full use of her current role as an administrative assistant at MLR Technology and Innovation. She says her experience as an intern and her current experiences are setting the foundation and paving the way for her to, one day, become an entrepreneur within the agro-processing and business sector.

MLR Technology and Innovation, a product development consulting firm established in 2018, assists entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized businesses in taking their ideas to market. They focus on the creation and development of products in the pharmaceutical, natural health products, food, and cosmetic space. They assist clients in developing new products and walking them through the compliance activities to get their products on the market. MLR also does capacity development and training in product development and innovation.

THE INTERN EXPERIENCE

Founder and Principal Consultant of MLR, Dr. Aisha Bailey, says it was a no-brainer in taking Clarke as an intern and moving her into a part-time role. "Sashawney was pretty impressive to start. Her temperament and her open-mindedness showed that she had the fundamentals we were looking for. On the technical side, she had the fundamental training so she could understand what we were doing. Pair that with her personality and she proved to be a trainable intern," she said.

Dr. Bailey also expressed how pleased she was with Clarke being a good representative for the business. She shared: "You can ask her to call clients, service providers and know that she would do a good job."

As an intern, Clarke focused largely on helping the MLR team with desk research. From time to time, she assisted in the lab when she could. She also assisted with some administrative tasks.

Excited about the internship with MLR, Clarke shared, "It helped me gain a lot of experience because even though I did the practical stuff in college, I wanted to have an in-person experience."

Clarke referred to her time learning in classes and using course material but being able to apply that knowledge in her internship gave her a better understanding and appreciation of how things actually work.

"It (the internship experience) was new to me, and it was a bit challenging, but I was able to do it and manage other aspects of my life at the same time. I learned product development and did research. Sometimes I would visit the lab to see how they develop products and conduct inventory," she shared, echoing some of what Dr. Bailey shared.

"When I first got the internship, I was living in St. Elizabeth. Ms. Bowes from the Advance Program would normally send out information via email in terms of internship opportunities and I kept missing them. I finally got one and learned of the benefits such as transportation and other allowances. Because of that, I was able to come to Kingston to complete the internship without having to worry," she explained.

COMMENDATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE PROGRAM

Dr. Bailey shared high commendations for the Advance Program. She said: "The approach from the Advance program is very innovative. It is disruptive in that they challenge some of the norms and paradigms that plague the educational system. At the very least, it presents a model on how education itself can be innovative and how we can challenge the status quo to ensure that talent is better suited to fit into these industries (such as agro-processing and business management) that are constantly changing."

In summing up her Advance experience, Clarke said the following:

"Before benefiting from the Advance Program, I was going through a lot in terms of not knowing what to do and not having the funds to do anything. It has allowed me to hone my communication skills. I always wanted a degree, and I did not know where the funds would come from. I was able to complete the program and make myself and my family proud."

THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE ANIMATION LAB

ADVANCE DONATED EQUIPMENT to the Vocational Training Development Institute, the University of Technology, Jamaica, Knockalva Polytechnic College (KPC), Montego Bay Community College, Portmore Community College and Knox Community College to help train students for the agribusiness and creative industries. Additionally, the Program supported KPC in upgrading its computer lab to a resource center.
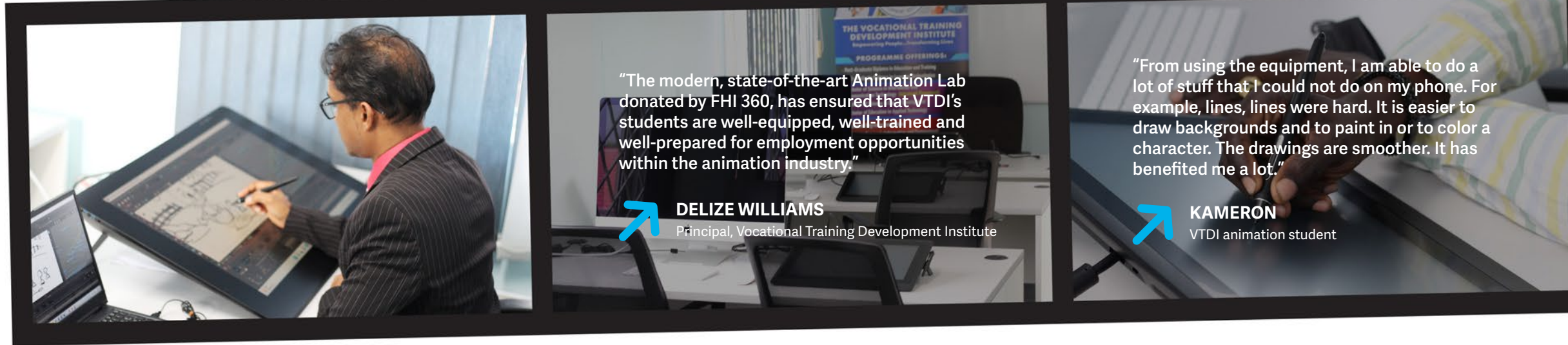
"The modern, state-of-the-art Animation Lab donated by FHI 360, has ensured that VTDI's students are well-equipped, well-trained and well-prepared for employment opportunities within the animation industry."

DELIZE WILLIAMS
Principal, Vocational Training Development Institute

"From using the equipment, I am able to do a lot of stuff that I could not do on my phone. For example, lines, lines were hard. It is easier to draw backgrounds and to paint in or to color a character. The drawings are smoother. It has benefited me a lot."

KAMERON
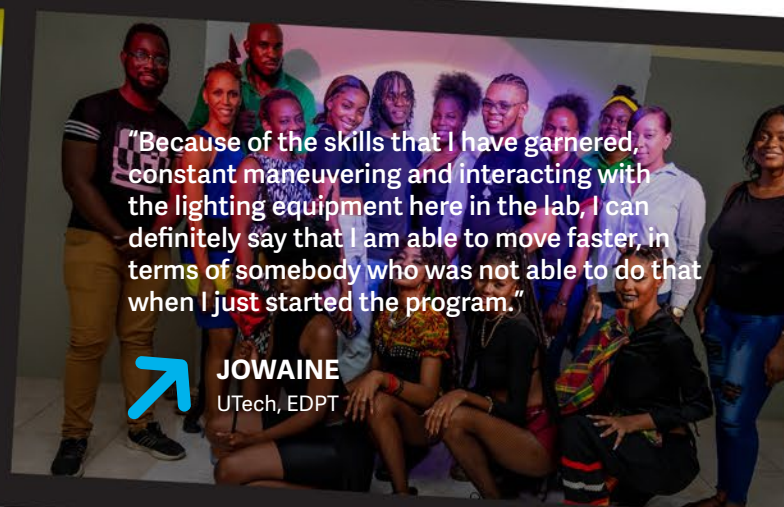VTDI animation student

Four
LEARNING LABS
and a Resource Center

"Because of the skills that I have garnered, constant maneuvering and interacting with the lighting equipment here in the lab, I can definitely say that I am able to move faster, in terms of somebody who was not able to do that when I just started the program."

JOWAINE
UTech, EDPT

"This resource center has helped us a lot. We complete our work much faster. We can multitask because when we are doing our research, we can do more than one [thing] at the same time. In terms of online classes, the internet is much faster [as well as] the audio and the graphics."

KEVONIE
Knockalva student

KNOCKALVA POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE
AGRO-PROCESSING UNIT

ELVIS HEWITT-BUCKLE LEARNING LABORATORY
FOR AGRO-PROCESSING AND HOSPITALITY

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY,
JAMAICA LIGHTING DESIGN LAB

KNOCKALVA POLYTECHNIC
COLLEGE RESOURCE CENTRE

SPARK DAY

SPARK DAY is an Advance Program school-to-work activity that exposes students, enrolled in programs focused on agribusiness, health and wellness tourism, and creative industries, to the world of work through field trips and guided tours to industry facilities. The aim of Spark Day is to give students hands-on experience and expose them to the daily operations of local companies.
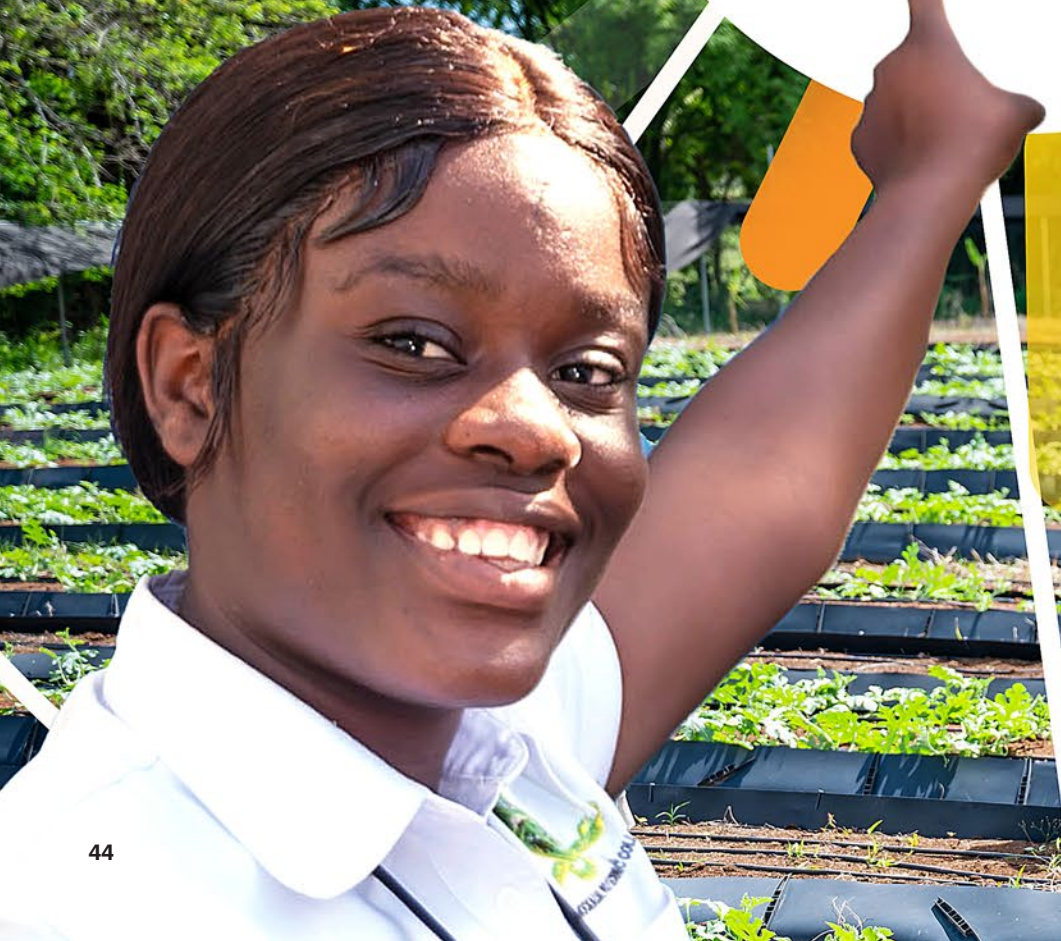
LET'S RELIVE THE JOURNEY:
PROJECT C.U.R.E.

THE COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF JAMAICA
and its member colleges received medical supplies and
equipment from FHI 360, through the Advance Program.
This donation was in partnership with Project C.U.R.E. and with
support from the National Education Trust. The donated items
included masks, sanitizers, thermometers, gloves, gowns, and
emergency relief beds. Let's relive the journey!

PITCH COMPETITION ↗

Advance supported aspiring entrepreneurs with a customized entrepreneurship and coaching component. The top four finalists received equipment to support their business ventures. JMMB Joan Duncan Foundation added their support by donating funds toward the prizes for first, second, and third place.

Entreprenuership coaching

STUDENT SHOWCASE ↗

Budding creative industry professionals showed their fashion styling, production, and lighting design skills at the Advance Program student showcase.

Fashion styling

Production

Lighting design

TABLET DONATION ↗

The Advance Program donated 150 tablets to the CCCJ to contribute to the heightened need for online learning tools during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. These tablets were distributed among students at CCCJ's member colleges.

150
Tablets donated

LEARNING FORA ↗

Advance Jamaica hosted four learning fora to share best practices and lessons learned in areas of workforce development, positive youth development, and student retention in higher education.

→ Positive Youth Development through Social and Emotional Learning

→ Work Ready: Industry Conversations on Workforce Development

→ School to Work: Making Stronger Connections for Youth Employability

→ Seeing it Through: Student Retention Strategies in Higher Education

Best practices

Lessons learned

SOMETHING EXTRA

JENNEL JOHNSON

Past student,
Excelsior Community College

JEVAUGHN RICHARDS

Past student,
Excelsior Community College

GRADUATES

Advance is a workforce development program funded by the United States Agency for International Development and implemented by FHI 360.

USAID: https://www.usaid.gov/

FHI 360: https://www.fhi360.org/