

Chapter 5.6

The Profession of Research Management and Administration in the Caribbean Community

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Abstract

This chapter contextualises and provides an overview of the development and current state of the profession of research management and administration in the English-speaking Caribbean. In addition, the chapter shows that Research Management and Administration is an emerging profession that is beginning to take root in CARICOM countries, especially as demonstrated by the leading HEIs in which it is recognised that research administration functions are important in supporting and adding value to the research agendas of these institutions and their larger mission of contributing to the sustainable development of the region.

Keywords: Caribbean; CARICOM; CabRIMA; Research Management and Administration; RMA; RIMI4AC

The Research Ecosystem in the English-speaking Caribbean

This chapter focusses on research administration in the countries that comprise the 20-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Currently, the membership of CARICOM includes Antigua & Barbuda; Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; St. Lucia; St. Kitts & Nevis;

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St. Vincent & the Grenadines; Suriname; Trinidad & Tobago, plus all other British Caribbean territories and Bermuda as associate members. Except for Belize in Central America and Guyana and Suriname in South America, all members and associate members are island states. CARICOM is home to approximately 16 million citizens, 60% of whom are under the age of 30, and from the main ethnic groups of Indigenous Peoples, Africans, Indians, Europeans, Chinese, Portuguese, and Javanese. The Community is multilingual with English as the major language complemented by French and Dutch and variations of these, as well as African and Asian expressions. Stretching from The Bahamas in the north to Suriname and Guyana in South America, CARICOM comprises states that are considered developing countries. CARICOM rests on four main pillars: economic integration; foreign policy coordination; human and social development; and security (<https://caricom.org/our-community/who-we-are/>).

Universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) in CARICOM involved in post-secondary education and research are strategically important entities for the human capital development needs of the region to support sustainable economic growth, as well as to advance societal welfare in general. Increasingly, urgent demands are placed on Caribbean HEIs by governments and citizens to: (a) produce innovation-capable graduates equipped with problem-solving skills and mind-set, and (b) lead in developing new products and services from research, or improving existing ones for competition in the global economy, or for the public good (Streete et al., 2013). In short, Caribbean post-secondary HEIs are expected to be *innovative-centric*.

Leading research-performing institutions in CARICOM include the following pan-Caribbean and national entities: Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI); Caribbean Health Research Council (CHRC); Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CaPRI); Consumers Affairs Commission (CAC); Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, Research Division (MoA&F); National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA); Northern Caribbean University (NCU); Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ); Scientific Research Council (SRC); University College of the Caribbean (UCC); University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech, Jamaica); University of the West Indies (UWI); and University of Trinidad & Tobago (UTT). This list shows that non-HEI state agencies and HEIs do most of the research in CARICOM. Industry research, though minimal, is mainly R&D for product and service development (Streete et al., 2013).

The major sources of funding for research are external international donors, e.g. United States Agency for International Development (USAID), European Union (EU), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ); other minor sources are government ministries, local foundations, or private sector companies. These sources are complemented by allocations carved out of institutional budgets. For example, the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech, Jamaica) established a Research Development Fund (RDF) that provides funding specifically for projects and other research-related activities (Ivey et al., 2014).

Research focus areas of the leading CARICOM research entities are: Agriculture and Forestry; Economic Development and Theory; Caribbean History and Culture; Education; Environment (Climate Change); Information Communication Technology/Information Systems; Engineering Technology; Medicine and Health (including natural products and pharmaceuticals); and Biochemistry and Marine Biology. These

research focus areas are for the most part aligned with the national development priorities, as well as those of HEIs.

Among the barriers curtailing research output are: limited access to adequate funding mechanisms; time constraints on academic/research staff who are faced with inadequate time to devote to research because of their teaching loads; lack of technological opportunities for conducting research; lack of formal research management structure; lack of national priority on research and innovation. Publicly available data indicate that, as a region, expenditure on research in the Caribbean averages less than 1% of GDP annually. Additionally, the number of patent filings from the region is low. The combined share of patents from offices located in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania was a mere 3.2% of all filings in 2020 ([World Intellectual Property Organization, 2021](#)).

In addition, some of the key issues facing Caribbean research entities are the need to diversify their funding sources, improve their capacity to attract competitive funding, and generate their own income in a variety of ways including sale of expertise, consultancies, industry partnerships, patents and accumulation of intellectual property and fees. Also, some of the initiatives undertaken to increase research productivity include the provision of internal grant funding for research, training, and mentorship for researchers as well as providing incentives and awards for research output, and establishing an institutional research agenda ([Streete et al., 2013](#)).

Evolution of the Profession in CARICOM

It is to be noted that whereas the term ‘research administration’ is used in several other regions and countries, in the Caribbean, the predominant phrase is ‘research management and administration’. So, how did research management and administration develop in the Caribbean? The understanding that research output, primarily by faculty members, is one of the indicators that set HEIs, and in particular universities, apart from other kinds of post-secondary institutions ([Kirkland, 2008](#); [Leydesdorff, 2008](#); [OECD, 2004](#)) and increasing demands on CARICOM HEIs by their proximate stakeholders to produce ‘useful knowledge’ and innovation-capable graduates acted as catalysts for them to take deliberate actions; these actions took the form of appointing staff members to undertake administrative assistive functions for researchers. These individuals were, in the main, academic staff members without any formal training or certification in research management and administration ([Streete et al., 2013](#)). Corroboratively, Falk (2011) reported that Caribbean research management practitioners expressed ‘significant concerns’ about the availability of training opportunities and support for the research and innovation management function.

In 2009, the University of Technology, Jamaica became Caribbean partner on the EU/African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Science and Technology project, ‘The Improvement of Research & Innovation Management Capacity in Africa and the Caribbean for the Successful Stimulation and Dissemination of Research Results (RIMI4AC)’. The RIMI4AC project was funded at €2.6 million under the Science and Technology Programme of the ACP with support from the EU. The specific objective of this project was to strengthen the capacity of research institutions in the regions for sustainability, to effectively manage research and innovation activities, to improve dialogue between researchers and policy makers, and to inform evidence-based national and regional policies feeding into the regional sustainable development agendas of the regions from which project partners were drawn ([ACU, 2011](#)).

Within the framework of the RIMI4AC project, [Streete et al. \(2013\)](#) undertook a study of the state of research management in the Caribbean. Among their main findings were:

1. Not all public HEIs had research management/administration offices or offices that performed research management/administration functions.
2. Where offices existed, they were under-staffed.
3. In most cases, Research Managers were mainly Academic Administrators/Managers and/or Researchers/Academics without any formal training in research management and administration; on-the-job training was the primary method of developing their competence.

[Streete et al. \(2013\)](#) also found that three regional universities were embracing the new paradigm. The University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech, Jamaica), The UWI, and the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) have all deliberately engaged in newer models of research and innovation management. These included commissioned research and applied research aimed at solving identified problems and addressing societal needs. In addition, [Ivey et al. \(2014, 2016\)](#) documented examples of positive impactful research initiatives, engagements, and achievements by researchers of the University of Technology, Jamaica who were provided with a suite of supportive actions by the institution's Research Managers.

The CARICOM RMA Community

In October 2010, the initial steps for establishment of the Caribbean Research and Innovation Management Association (CabRIMA¹) were taken with the formation of a steering committee, chaired by UTech, Jamaica, together with representatives from research and innovation (R&I) organisations across the region. Thereafter, the establishment of the Caribbean Research and Innovation Management Association (CabRIMA) was endorsed by unanimous acclamation during 'Research and Technology Day' at the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech, Jamaica), in Jamaica, on 7 April 2011, and was followed by a presentation, 'Professionalising Research and Innovation Management in the Caribbean Region: The Context and Case for Establishing CabRIMA', by a staff member from the School of Graduate Studies, Research and Entrepreneurship, UTech, Jamaica ([Henry, 2011](#)).

The founding of CabRIMA was a major outcome of the earlier mentioned EU/ACP-funded Science and Technology project, 'The Improvement of Research & Innovation Management Capacity in Africa and the Caribbean for the Successful Stimulation and Dissemination of Research Results (RIMI4AC)'.

The goal of CabRIMA is 'to support systematic improvement in the effectiveness of research and innovation management systems, structures, and processes in regional research & innovation institutions through capacity building and effective networking'. Caribbean Research and Innovation Management Association (2020), and its objectives are to:

1. Professionalise the research and innovation management profession in the region, raise the profile of regional Research & Innovation Managers, identify training needs, and provide opportunities for continuous professional development.

¹<https://www.utech.edu.jm/academics/sgsre/the-caribbean-research-and-innovation-management-association-cabrима>

2. Provide a forum for networking, collaborative actions, and the transfer of know-how among Research & Innovation Managers of the region.
3. Develop mechanisms for Research & Innovation Managers of the region to benchmark their activities against best practices in the profession.
4. Stimulate research and innovation, and support the translation of research results into policies, practices, and products beneficial to end-users.
5. Influence national and regional policies that will foster the regional sustainable development agenda of CARICOM member states.
6. Link regional Research & Innovation Managers with the Global Research Management Network.

The secretariat for CabRIMA is the School of Graduate Studies, Research & Entrepreneurship, at the University of Technology, Jamaica.

Since its establishment, CabRIMA's membership reflects the major HEIs and research organisations in Jamaica; for reasons of the geographical realities of the Caribbean islands, pan-Caribbean membership has been mostly members from the UWI. However, to address this challenge, CabRIMA has leveraged the Internet to interact with its members, initially through its now-dormant website, but now primarily through its Facebook page.

In keeping with its mission and objectives, CabRIMA has spearheaded activities aimed at building the capacity of its members to more effectively perform their functions. As well as publishing a monthly newsletter, workshops and seminars undertaken by the association covered topics such as writing effective grant proposals, securing funding, and policy development.

In addition to their participation on the RIMI4AC project, UTech, Jamaica's Research Managers have participated in congresses of the International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS).

CARICOM RMA Demographics

The Research Management and Administration (RMA) community in CARICOM is relatively small and is more developed and structured in the six leading universities – The UWI; University of Technology, Jamaica; NCU and University of the Southern Caribbean; University of Trinidad and Tobago, and University of Guyana.

The University of the West Indies²

The UWI is a regional university and its three main campuses are Mona (Jamaica), Cave Hill (Barbados), and St. Augustine (Trinidad). Each campus has its own RMA office.

The Mona Office for Research and Innovation (MORI) falls under the Principal's Office and is responsible for coordinating research on the Campus. Responsibilities of MORI are:

- Identifying funding opportunities and promoting them to UWI's researchers.
- Liaising with funding sources and partners on behalf of researchers.
- Reviewing and approving all research proposals before submission to external entities.

²www.uwi.edu

- Reviewing and signing research proposals on behalf of the university or as a delegate of the Campus Principal.
- Comprehensive application guides.
- Workshops, information sessions, agency site visits, and grantsmanship to help researchers understand policies and requirements.
- Patent applications.

At the St. Augustine Campus, the Office of Graduate Studies and Research (OGSR) works together to nurture research, advance innovations, and promote entrepreneurship. The OGSR is headed by a Pro-Vice Chancellor, who is supported by a staff complement of eight, comprising administrative support and programme officers. The mandate of the University Office of Research (also referred to as the Research Division of the School for Graduate Studies and Research) is to facilitate the development of research capacity and output at The UWI and transform the university into a more research-driven institution. The School for Graduate Studies and Research oversees the administration of the Campus Research and Publication (CRP) Fund. This fund, which covers the costs of research projects and publications, is open to full-time Academic and Senior Administrative and Professional members of staff and Research Students of the campus. The following are some of the key responsibilities/foci of the Office of Research:

- Inter-Campus and International Collaboration.
- Researcher Development and Recognition.
- Intellectual Property Protection and Commercialisation.
- Research Policies and Procedures.
- Research Funding.
- Management of Research Institutes, Centres and Units.
- Research Cluster Development and Management.

At the Cave Hill campus, Research Support, located under the Office of the Campus Principal, provides a single space on the Cave Hill Campus where staff and students can access guidance, information, and other sources of help in the preparation of successful research or project proposals for funding.

University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech, Jamaica) (www.utechja.edu)

The School of Graduate Studies, Research, and Entrepreneurship (SGSRE) is the unit responsible for Research Administration at UTech, Jamaica. The SGSRE is headed by an Associate Vice President, which is supported by a staff complement of five comprising Administrative support, a Technical Officer, and a Manager of Projects and Operations. The responsibilities of the SGSRE are to:

- Provide linkages among Graduate Studies, Research and Entrepreneurship.
- Vigorously promote industrial/professional graduate research degrees at both the master's and doctoral levels.
- Develop a formula for equitable allocation of returns from income-generating research and consultancy ventures.
- Lead inter-disciplinarity for research and consultancy among Faculty Graduate Studies Research & Entrepreneurship Units (FGSREUs).
- Organise a system of mentorship and pastoral care for graduate students.

- Establish a system for the protection of Intellectual Property Rights.
- Develop benchmarking of research activities with respect to: research planning, staff participation in research, graduate students, research income, research outcome, and research impact.

The work of the SGSRE is supported by eight Graduate Studies, Research and Entrepreneurship Coordinators, who serve as the links between the SGSRE and the eight academic units within the university. The 13 research management and administration staff at UTech, Jamaica provide support to some 500 academics and more than 200 graduate students.

Northern Caribbean University (www.ncu.edu.jm) and University of the Southern Caribbean (www.usc.edu.tt)

These are ‘sister’ universities operated under the aegis of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. NCU is located in Jamaica and the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) has its main campus in Trinidad and Tobago (smaller satellite campuses are located in other Caribbean islands). At USC, the Office of Research and Innovation, located within the Office of the Provost, is responsible for Research Administration.

With respect to NCU, the larger of the two, Research Administration is more developed and is overseen by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies (ORGS) under which the Office of Research falls. This office, which is headed by a dean, is the primary agent of the University’s current thrust to foster research. Core functions include facilitating faculty members in obtaining external research funding, managing internal research-funded projects, promoting involvement in research among faculty and with students, expediting undergraduate and graduate research, and overseeing the process for the implementation of new graduate programmes.

University of Trinidad & Tobago (UTT) (www.utt.edu.tt)

At UTT, Research Administration falls under the Office of Post-Graduate Studies and Research, which is headed by an Associate Vice President.

University of Guyana (UG) (www.uog.edu.gy)

The School of Graduate Studies and Research is responsible for Research Administration at UG.

University Colleges, Teacher’s Colleges, Multidisciplinary Colleges, and Community Colleges

As a group, these institutions are at a lower level with respect to their Research Administration arrangements and research output than the universities mentioned above, although they have expressed interest in undertaking research, which is included in the mission statements and foundation documents of some of them. Most of the Teachers’ Colleges in Jamaica have Research Officers (ROs) who are supported by an administrative office; these ROs are primarily involved in organising research days and conferences. With respect to University Colleges, The Mico University College,³

³MUC – www.themico.edu.jm.

established in 1835, operates an Institute of Technological and Education Research (ITER), which is headed by a director who is supported by a senior research fellow and a research assistant. The mission of the ITER is to build a research culture that enables The Mico University College to undertake high-quality research in areas of educational policy, development, and management, with special reference to Jamaica and the Caribbean.

College of Agriculture, Science & Education (CASE – www.case.edu.jm)

CASE is Jamaica's premier multidisciplinary college that has a tripartite mandate enshrined in its Scheme Order: teaching, research, and service. CASE's predecessor institutions include the Jamaica School of Agriculture that was founded in 1910. The college has a Research Coordinator (RC) in each of its three faculties (agriculture, science, and education); these RCs are provided with administrative support services.

The University College of the Caribbean (UCC – www.ucc.edu.jm)

Research Administration at the UCC is overseen by a Director of Administration and Student Services, College of Graduate Studies & Research. One of the flagship research events of the UCC is its Annual Research Conference. Notably, UCC also has a Director of Innovations.

The Future of RMA in CARICOM

There is no gainsaying that the research management and administration functions performed by Research Managers are value-adding in Caribbean HEIs. The research generated in HEIs – primarily in science and technology – has taken on a new approach in the Caribbean region. Previously, such research was seen as the basis for scholarly achievement and professional advancement (Streete et al., 2013). However, newer models of research generated by HEIs are predicated on the principles of entrepreneurship, combining competencies through collaborations with non-university entities, and are being guided by institutional and national research goals (Frank Heemskerk, Personal Communication, 2010).

Concerning the future of CabRIMA, efforts are currently being made to re-energise its membership and to use the new communication and conferencing technologies that the COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated to be efficacious, to realise its pan-Caribbean coverage as a community of practice.

Summary

In this chapter, from the overview provided, it has been shown that RMA is an emerging profession that is beginning to take root in CARICOM countries. However, the absence of formal certification of staff in research administration and inadequate resourcing of offices remain key challenges. Additionally, efforts are being made by its secretariat at the University of Technology, Jamaica to re-energise the Caribbean Research and Innovation Management Association (CabRIMA) to achieve its objective 'to support systematic improvement in the effectiveness of research and innovation management systems, structures, and processes in regional research & innovation institutions through capacity building and effective networking'.

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