

University of the Southern Caribbean

GLENN O. PHILLIPS

Glenn O. Phillips, Ph.D. (Howard University, Washington, D.C.), although retired, is actively writing, researching, lecturing, and publishing. He was a professor at Morgan State University, Howard University, and the University of the Southern Caribbean. He has authored and published numerous articles, book reviews, and books, including "The African Diaspora Experience," "Singing in a Strange Land: The History of the Hanson Place Church," "African American Leaders of Maryland," and "The Caribbean Basin Initiative."

The University of the Southern Caribbean (formerly Caribbean Union College) is located in the lush northern mountain range of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The only privately-operated university in this nation was granted a charter by the country's government in March 2006 and offers a wide range of fully accredited degrees. These include business, education, health, and the humanities, as well as behavioral, biological, and social sciences, theology and religion. Associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees are offered in almost 50 academic fields, as well as a doctorate in educational psychology. These programs are supported by a highly qualified faculty and staff of more than 200.¹ During the 2017-2018 school year the enrollment was more than 2,000.

Beginning in the mid-1880s, Seventh-day Adventist literature and book sellers arrived in the eastern Caribbean. The most receptive readers were young people who quickly desired to share their new faith with others?² The early Adventist missionaries quickly recognized the need to train these new Caribbean believers. To facilitate this, they operated a boarding training school in the region. After the creation of the Inter-American Division in 1922, careful plans were made to establish a boarding school that would enable the Adventist youth from the eastern and southern Caribbean, as well as the Guianas in South America,³ to attend. They would study to become Bible workers, ministers, and teachers and be trained to serve their communities after receiving a Christian Adventist education.



The original building when the school was founded in August 1927.

Today, it hosts the USC Museum.

Photo courtesy of the USC Public Relations Office.

The University of the Southern Caribbean (USC) was founded on August 27, 1927, under the name “East Caribbean Training School,” with six pioneering teachers and one student on an abandoned 264-acre cocoa estate, *La Realista*—an old estate house in Maracas Valley⁴ in Trinidad’s beautiful northern mountain range. The forward-thinking pioneering principal, Clarence J. Boyd, launched an ambitious plan to create an idyllic campus with farm and trade industries. Within the first year, the first building was erected that housed the administrative offices, women’s dormitory, dining hall, classrooms, and cafeteria. It attracted students from around the eastern Caribbean and within a year enrolled 88 students and graduated the first eighth-grade class. During its first 90 years, USC was led by 23 presidents who worked untiringly to expand the mission and scope during their tenure at the institution. Ambitiously guiding it from its largely agricultural Adventist boarding school status, these educators, along with their colleagues, board of trustees, students, and alumni witnessed its academic expansion over the decades. It has developed to a junior college, a senior college and, presently, the leading private tertiary institution in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that presently graduates hundreds annually.

There are five major phases in the academic development of this institution. It was renamed Caribbean Training College in 1928, Caribbean Union College in 1946, and finally University of the Southern Caribbean in 2006⁵ USC remains faithful to its motto, “A light to the Caribbean,” and its curriculum continues to reflect the major principles of Adventist Christian education, seeking to train students to serve in their communities.

The institution’s five distinct historical experiences are: (1) The Pioneering Experience (1927-1935); (2) Creating a Training School (1936-1945); (3) Becoming a Junior College (1946-1972); (4) Moving beyond Senior College (1973-2005), and (5) Facing the Challenges of a University (2006-present). Among the longest serving and transformational principals and presidents were: Clarence J. Boyd (1927-1928), founding principal; R. S. J. Hamilton (1930-1937), consolidating programs; A. R. Tucker (1944-1950), increasing enrollment; B. L. Archbold (1957-1962), expanding curriculum; K. E. Forde (1966-1971), launching the first degree program; Dr. Bernard W. Benn (1972-1977),⁶ expanding the college offerings; Dr. Vernon E. Andrews (1983-1990), pursuing affiliation with Andrews University; Dr. Sylvan Lashley (1991-1996), doubling the college offerings and enrollment; Dr. T. Leslie Ferdinand (1997-2001), seeking accreditation; Dr. Trevor A. Garner (2004-2011), achieving university status; Dr. Clinton Valley (2012-2015), extending enrollment; and Dr. Hilary Bowman (2016-present), restructuring the fiscal operations and undertaking the construction of new dormitories for men and women.⁷

USC began as a boarding school for Adventist youth who were primarily trained to be employed by the Adventist church in the eastern Caribbean; but by the end of World War II, many of its students began to further their education at colleges and universities in the United States. By the mid-1950s, an increasing number of the administrators and faculty were alumni, and most Church leaders across the Caribbean Union of SDA were graduates of the institution. As the academic offerings increased over the years, an incremental institution affiliation was developed with Andrews University,⁸ in addition to eventually obtaining a charter from the

Trinidad and Tobago government to obtain university status.

Since 2004, USC has steadily increased its non-Adventist student body. One leading reason for this trend is that the institution participates in the T&T GATE program that allows all academically qualified Trinbagonians to study at USC at the expense of the nation. At the same time, the institution's enrollment and graduation size have also tripled. There were 551 in the 2018 graduating class. The institution also has a very active and loyal alumni association with chapters around the eastern Caribbean and across the U.S. and Canada.

Among the hundreds of graduates that have served in numerous offices of the Adventist world Church are: Roy Adams, associate editor of *Adventist Review* (1988-2015); Harold Baptiste, vice president of the General Conference (2002-2015); George W. Brown, president of the Inter-American Division (1980-1993); Lael Caesar, associate editor of the *Adventist Review* (2011-present); and G. Ralph Thompson, secretary of the General Conference (1980-2000).

Principals/Presidents of CUC/USC

Clarence J. Boyd (1927-1928); Leon H. Gardiner (1928-1930); R. S. J. Hamilton (1930-1938); M. E. Smith (1938-1941); C. E. Stenberg (1941-1944); A. R. Tucker (1944-1950); Percy W. Manuel (1950-1957); Bender L. Archbold (1957-1962); Benjamin G. O. French (1962-1965); George W. Brown (1965-1966); K. Eugene Forde (1966-1971); B. Wilfred Benn (1972-1977); Belgrove Josiah (1977-1981); Myrl O. Manley (1981-1983); Vernon E. Andrews (1983-1990); Sylvan Lashley (1990-1997); T. Leslie Ferdinand (1997-2001); Shirley McGarrell (Acting) (2001-2002); Paul L. Van Putten (2003); Esther E. Simmons (Acting) (2003-2004); Trevor A. Garner (2004-2011); Clinton Valley (2012-2015); Hilary Bowman (2016-2021); Colwick M. Wilson (2021-present).

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. *USC Annual Report for 2018-2019*, Maracas Valley, Trinidad: USC Publication 2019.
2. George F. Enoch, *The Advent Message in the Sunny Caribbean* (Port-of-Spain, Trinidad: Watchman Press, 1907), 5.
3. Wesley Amundsen, *The Advent Message in Inter-America* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 80.
4. Glenn O. Phillips, *The Making of a Christian College: Caribbean Union College, 1927-1977* (Maracas Valley, Trinidad: College Press, 1977), 9-21.
5. Clarence J. Boyd, "School Memories: Seventh-day Adventist Schools as I Saw Them... as They Used to Be," unpublished autobiography (Loma Linda, California, 1965), 106: "Caribbean Union College Student Enrollment Record Book, 1927-1947" (Maracas Valley, Trinidad, 1947), 1-4.
6. *Caribbean Union College 1973-1975 Bulletin* (Port-of Spain Trinidad: College Press, 1973), 1; See the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, pursuant to Act No. 16 of 2004 hereby confers the title of the University of the Southern Caribbean, formerly known as Caribbean Union College of Maracas Royal Road, Maracas, St. Joseph granted this 23rd day of February 2006.
7. Phillips, *The Making of a Christian College*, 35-68.
8. Glenn O. Phillips, "Commemorating the Ninetieth Anniversary of the University of the Southern Caribbean, 1927-2017"; *Celebrating Ninety Commemorative Journal* (Maracas Valley, Trinidad: USC Publication, 2017), 44-52.

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