



PR#099-24

## PRESS RELEASE

### **MoECST Responds to UBFSU on Subvention Concerns**

*Belmopan, June 21, 2024.*

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST) notes with appreciation and respect the release issued by the University of Belize Faculty and Staff Union (UBFSU).

The Government of Belize and the MoECST are deeply committed to the responsible, sustainable development of the University of Belize (UB). The UBFSU has an important role to play in the growth and development of our national university. For this reason, over the past three years we have worked closely with the board of trustees, administration, faculty and staff of the University to develop an inclusive, comprehensive, sustainable plan for the future growth and development of UB.

A UB Commission was appointed in 2021 to carry out a full review of the programmes and structures of the University. After more than six months of consultations and engagements with all stakeholders, including the faculty and staff, the commission produced a report with very specific, practical recommendations for improving the national university. The implementation of those recommendations is ongoing.

In 2023, the board of trustees, which includes representation from the government and private sector, along with the UB faculty and staff and students, brought in an independent professor from the United Kingdom to review the commission's report and conduct consultations with stakeholders. He has provided further analysis and recommendations to support the development of UB.

The current administration came into office in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Belize's economy was in crisis. Public officers and teachers were

asked to make an unprecedented sacrifice by way of a salary adjustment. Unemployment was at an all-time high.

In those circumstances, it was not only impossible to restore the subvention to pre-pandemic levels, but it would have been irresponsible.

With hard work and good management, this administration under the leadership of Prime Minister Briceño, has returned stability to the economy and restored confidence in Belize.

The Government currently provides an annual subvention of BZ\$7.6M to UB. In addition to this, the MoECST has provided scholarship and financial assistance to UB students at an unprecedented level of \$7.5M annually from 2020 to 2023, compared to the 2019 total of \$1.5M. Notable, as well, is the level of support being provided to individual members of the faculty and staff to further their education and upgrade their capacity to serve the UB.

The Ministry's objective is to have a clear plan for the sustainable, responsible financing of the national university. An element of that plan is to increase the subvention to UB from the current level to BZ\$10M in the 2025/26 financial year. The Government of Belize, through the MoECST, remains committed to the continued support and development of UB, through the combination of direct support to the university, the faculty, and the students. When we support our national university, we support our people who are then better able to contribute positively to the development of our beloved Belize.

**Ends**