

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDUSTRIAL UNIVERSITY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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ABSTRACT

Trinidad and Tobago has had the good fortune to be blessed with relatively abundant reserves of oil and gas, which have been the mainstay of the economy. These are exported directly but value-added downstream industries have also contributed to GDP through oil refining and particularly the use and processing of gas for electrical power generation and in the manufacture of products such as iron and steel, methanol, urea and fertilizers. The country is experiencing an explosion of activity in oil and gas production, for which the current technical educational facilities cannot provide the type and quantity of skilled and professional workers required. This is in part due to the regional structure (and attendant constraints) of the existing university as well as its traditional focus. A new, national university has been proposed to cater for the increased demand for industry-ready technical personnel in Trinidad and Tobago. This presents the opportunity to establish an institution that is integrally associated with industry and other institutions from inception, which would satisfy the (extra) demand for operational skills as well as engage in focused industrial research and development and entrepreneurial endeavours. Equally important is that oil and gas are non-renewable resources, which should provide the capital and opportunity to diversify the economy, particularly in innovation, design and manufacture, with particular emphasis on the former. The contribution of the non-petroleum manufacturing sector (i.e. excluding oil and gas based industries) is of the order of 10% of the GDP of Trinidad and Tobago. The manufacturing sector comprises assembly type industries for the most part. However significant added value and wealth generation derive from the intellectual and creative input of innovation and design in processing, manufacture and services.

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