

The Passing of Professor Emeritus Tara Prasad Dasgupta



Professor Emeritus Tara Prasad Dasgupta, CD.

The UWI mourns with the rest of the scientific community, the loss of a great man of science, Professor Emeritus Tara Prasad Dasgupta.

Tara Prasad Dasgupta, a Professor of Inorganic Chemistry was born on January 29, 1941 and transitioned on April 20, 2020.

He joined The UWI family in 1974 as a lecturer in physical chemistry in the Faculty of Natural Sciences (now Faculty of Science and Technology). He was appointed as the Head of the Department of Chemistry for the period of 1992-2002 and under his leadership, the research infrastructure of the Department of Chemistry was significantly improved with state of the art equipment that helped contribute to vibrant research programmes.

Always a man of science, Professor Dasgupta's research interests included: Inorganic Reaction Mechanisms which extended to Synthesis and Reactivity of Novel Polynuclear Complexes; Electron Transfer involving Biological Reductants; Toxic substances in Foods; Degradation of pesticides in tropical ecosystems; and Nitric Oxide releasing compounds and their biological applications - to name a few.

He served in numerous other capacities, including: Head of the Electronics Unit in the Faculty, Head of the Jamaica Racing Commission (JRC) Testing Laboratory and as manager of the Mechanical Engineering Workshop on campus. In 1995 Professor Dasgupta established The UWI's Pesticide Research Laboratory to help monitor the levels of pesticides in agricultural products and organic pollutants in the environment.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry, London and Caribbean Academy of Sciences, as well as the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry. His eminence

in the field of science earned him an invitation from the Noble Prize Committee of Sweden to nominate candidates for this prestigious award. At his home campus, for three consecutive years, he received the Vice-Chancellor's award and Principal's award for his outstanding research work.

Through his work, the Department of Chemistry has been recognised regionally and internationally for its outstanding research work in Reaction Mechanisms with over 100 papers published in this field. He supervised over 50 graduate students (35 Ph.D. and 18 M.Phil). This renowned scholar and researcher is included in several biographical reference books such as Who's Who in the World, Who's Who in the Commonwealth, International Book of Honour, Men of Achievement and Personalities in the Caribbean. Throughout his career he forged critical partnerships with local, regional and international entities e.g. Tanuad International, bringing regional and international expertise, capacity and recognition to the Department of Chemistry. Leading up to his retirement (September 2006) in addition to his duties in Chemistry, he contributed to the School of Education (B. Ed Secondary Distance Project).

Following his retirement, the title of "Professor Emeritus" was conferred upon him by The University of the West Indies (2009) and in 2013 the title of "Honorary Research Fellow". The Jamaican Government conferred the Honour of the order of Distinction in the rank Of Commander (CD) in recognition of his significant contribution to science, education and research in 2013 and in 2019 he was presented with the Musgrave Silver Medal, again in recognition for his many contributions to science, education and research.

He was a Founding Member of the Caribbean Academy of Sciences, Jamaica - an independent non-profit charitable organization legally registered with the Government of Jamaica for promoting science and technology in Jamaica (founded in 2010), and he was a former President of the Regional Caribbean Academy of Sciences. He was most recently involved in the creation of The Centre for Advanced Research in Renewable Energy (CARRE) and the first Net Zero Energy Building (NZEB) in the Caribbean as one of the principal investigators.

The significance of Prof Dasgupta's contribution to science and his lifetime of work at The UWI is second to none. He will be missed. As The UWI community mourns his passing, our thoughts and prayers are with his family and colleagues at this difficult time. He is survived by wife Sibani, daughters Sutopa and Shuvra, son-in-law, Robert and grandchildren Audeep and Avinav.

"Professor Dasgupta was a gentle giant who always made difficult concepts and situations so easy to understand and accept. Whether as a teacher, a supervisor, a Head of Department or as a colleague he was an inspiration and a motivator. The UWI will miss Tara". **Pro-Vice Chancellor and Principal of The UW/ Mona Campus, Professor Dale Webber**

"Professor Dasgupta worked tirelessly to build the scientific capacity of The UWI and the Caribbean region. Throughout his career he also forged critical partnerships with local, regional and international entities e.g. Tanuad International, bringing regional and international expertise, capacity and recognition to the Department of Chemistry". **Dr Michael A. Taylor, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology, The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus.**

"Prof Dasgupta taught me inorganic chemistry at N2 and N3 in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, UW/ Mona. After completing a MPhil in Physics in 1993 he offered me the post of NMR Engineer in the Chemistry Department where I honed my skills for a similar post at Columbia University in January 1997. Prof Dasgupta had always been very supportive of my academic and professional growth and was very instrumental in my return to Jamaica from Intel Corporation in 2006 to take up the role of HOD in Electronics Unit and Senior Lecturer in Physics Dept. He strongly supported all my endeavours and was extremely confident in my abilities, which laid the foundation for the development of Engineering at the UWI Mona. Rest in peace my friend!" **Dr Paul Aiken, Chief Executive Officer, Mona-Tech Engineering Services Ltd and Former Dean of the Faculty of Engineering**

Professor Tara Dasgupta was a distinguished scholar and as one of his students, I benefitted from his incredible intellect and experience. His scholarship has been highly impactful at The University of the West Indies, nationally, regionally and internationally. Over his illustrious career, he has mentored many undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom are all over the world.

Dr Richard A. Taylor, Lecturer in Inorganic Materials Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science and Technology, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus

"I remember heading to Jamaica in October 1987, not too long out of high school after spending two years at The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, to pursue a B.Sc. in Special Chemistry, followed by an undergraduate research project (on cobalt chemistry) with him in 1988 until I graduated with my B.Sc. (Special Chemistry) in July 1989; went home to teach chemistry at high schools in Barbados; then came back to pursue my Ph.D. degree with him in October 1990. Prof sent me to Brooklyn College (March-April 1993) to carry out EPR measurements as I told him that I knew that we were producing a paramagnetic species from Mo(V) species. That trust in me and my ability to think outside the box and worked with minimal supervision was always instilled in us. He never came into the lab to spy on us or forced us to be locked in the lab.

He was well last week when he sent me a WhatsApp message that Mona Campus had approved me as an external examiner for his Ph.D. student. At the age of 79 years, he had a full research group running! Professor Tara Dasgupta was like a father to all of us. I try to mentor like him with humility and respect."

**Dr Alvin Holder, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, USA, former student and mentee.**

The Graduate Students of Prof. Tara Dasgupta are deeply saddened by his sudden passing.



We pause to reflect on his over 45 years contribution to Chemistry while at The UWI Chemistry Dept. Having a workaholic approach, he has supervised over 50 past Grad-students and authored over 120 international publications. While being the Head of Chemistry Dept, he had two separate research groups: Inorganic Reaction Mechanisms and Pesticide Research as well as carrying a teaching Lab with half teaching load. His secret was to have the best and brightest Special Chemistry Students join his research Groups. At one point three of his Graduates were faculty members in the Dept.

With a huge emphasis on research, every effort was made to acquire State of the Art Equipment to include 500 MHz NMR, Crystallography and Chromatography Equipment. His negotiation skills saw Tanuad International establishing a Base in the Dept in the Late 1990s. We benefited from a new Chemistry Building with more space for lectures and labs to do both teaching and research.

Additionally, even after retirement, he remained active with Energy Projects, the Caribbean Academy of Science and Peer reviewing for Journals. The Pesticide Research Lab continues to establish the break down rates and by-product of pesticides before they can be applied in our country.

Our sympathies go out to the immediate and extended family during this difficult time. His work and legacy is alive as a "Father of Chemistry". This Pic was taken Oct 2013 at Kings House when he received the National Award Order of Distinction - Commander class.

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