



**Annual Report of the
Gerace Research Centre**

University of the Bahamas

2016-2017 School Year

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Events	2
	A. The University of the Bahamas	2
	1. New Logo	2
	2. GRC Faculty Visiting Lecture Series	2
	3. UB Fellowship Program.....	2
	B. BAARK Pet Clinic	3
	C. San Salvador National Parks	3
	D. GRC Joint Symposium	4
III.	Improvements	4
	A. Technology.....	4
	B. Vehicles Repairs	4
	1. Maintenance.....	4
	2. Breakdown Record	5
	C. Vehicle Purchases	6
	D. Dorm Repairs	7
	E. Other Improvements.....	8
	1. Faculty Lounge	8
	2. Automated external defibrillators.....	8
	3. Auxiliary Office.....	8
IV.	GRC Finances.....	9
	A. Student Days	9
	B. Budget	9
V.	Future Improvements.....	10
	A. Campus Internet Upgrade	10
	B. Wifi for students	10
	C. New Cafeteria Stovetop/oven.....	10
	D. Main Office Renovation	10
	E. Backpack Kayak	11
	F. Credit Card Processing	11
VI.	Donations	11
	A. Additional Graduate Housing.....	12
	B. Solar Power System	12
VII.	Updated Campus Map	13

I. Introduction

Hello everyone,

It was suggested to me that an update of the events and changes taking place at the Gerace Research Centre, University of the Bahamas, would be an excellent way to keep faculty informed and interested in the station. A better understanding of what is happening in San Salvador also provides a means for faculty to offer advice and to provide support for the station. Given that the new season is upon us, I wanted to present our valued faculty with this report of what occurred over the previous school year and list some of our goals for the upcoming year. I also hope that our improvements will entice you to hurry back and see us!

This is the first report of what I hope will be an annual distribution. Please note that this report is by no means an exhaustive list and there are other improvements occurring all the time. To see what is new here at the Gerace Research Centre, you're just going to have to come and see for yourself. For more details on anything held herein, please feel free to contact us.

As always, we at the Gerace Research Centre greatly look forward to your next visit to us here in San Salvador!

Thank you all,
Troy



II. Events

A. The University of the Bahamas

As you can see from our updated logo on the front page of this report (and any emails you have received), we are no longer part of the College of the Bahamas but rather the University of the Bahamas (UB)! The charter ceremony for the University of the Bahamas took place in Nassau on November 10, 2016. The University of the Bahamas has been helping us make improvements to the GRC and we have been working on a number of initiatives to better coordinate with the UB.

1. New Logo

Not only have we changed “College” to “University” on our logos, we’ve also incorporated the new UB Logo (with the Blue Flamingo Mascot) onto our t-shirts.

Front
Design:



Back
Design:



2. GRC Faculty Visiting Lecture Series

Travel to San Salvador almost inevitably requires a stop-over in Nassau. The University of the Bahamas is very interested in having our knowledgeable faculty and researchers share their work with the UB community. We are currently looking for faculty willing to provide lectures at the University of the Bahamas Main Campus. Accommodations for your stay in Nassau will be provided. If you are interested in providing a lecture on your work, please get in touch.

3. UB Fellowship Program

The University of the Bahamas is looking to initiate a fellowship whereby faculty researchers will be provided space and accommodations for a month to work on their research and coordinate with UB faculty members. This fellowship is an excellent opportunity for researchers who want to collect data in New Providence and is a great way to find new collaborators and colleagues in the Bahamas.

B. BAARK Pet Clinic

On May 6th and 7th, The Gerace Research Centre hosted a group from BAARK (Bahamas Alliance for Animal Rights and Kindness) to hold a pet spay and neuter clinic. They also sent a person from the Bahamas Humane Society to talk to the students at both the primary and secondary schools on Friday, May 5th. Advertising material was placed in advance around the island to let the local populace know about the clinic. We set the clinic up in Lab 8 (archeology lab). Volunteers from Sandy Point and Nassau did an incredible



job setting up traps for stray dogs and cats and transporting the animals back and forth from the clinic. We also had some wonderful help from our visiting schools. In total, 72 dogs and cats were spayed or neutered over the weekend. And there was local interest in receiving a vet on the island to conduct full check-ups. Another clinic may be held again later this year or early next year.

C. San Salvador National Parks

After many years of hard work and dedication by the San Salvador Living Jewels and the Bahamas National Trust, a management plan for the National Park system on San Salvador is about to be released. The park system includes five different areas on San Salvador. These are Graham's Harbour Iguana and Seabird National Park, West Coast Marine Park, Southern Great Lake National Park, Pigeon Creek and Snow Bay National Park, and Green's Bay National Park. You can purchase dive tags in our library to help support the parks. Please note changes to permitting for research conducted on national park lands (see researcher packet online at www.geraceresearchcentre.com)



D. GRC Joint Symposium

The 2nd Joint Symposium on the Natural History and Geology of the Bahamas Conference took place June 8th to June 12th. The overall theme of the conference was impacts of hurricanes and we held two evening specialty oral sessions in addition to general geology and natural history. We had anticipated running a field trip in Nassau before the conference but that had to be cancelled due to low numbers. The replacement trip to High Cay with snorkeling, hiking, and food and drink service was very well received. For those in attendance, please let us know if you are planning on submitting an article for the next conference proceedings. Also, the 1st Joint Symposium Proceedings were handed out during the conference and the electronic version is now available online on our website at the following page:

<http://www.geraceresearchcentre.com/1stJNHG.html>

III. Improvements

A. Technology

Some of you may have already experienced the improvements made to the wireless internet last season (2015-2016 school year). Wireless is now available from the Lab Building to the Library. The University of the Bahamas has continued to make improvements to our campus technology. All of our lab and library computers now have Windows Office 2016 so that students can write reports in Word and analyze data in Excel. A few weeks ago, the campus's internet download bandwidth was quintupled! We now have 40 Mbps download speeds (around 5 Megabytes per second).

B. Vehicles Repairs

1. Maintenance

We spent much of the past year improving our vehicle fleet. We conducted a large check and overhaul of all vehicles including repairs such as new brake lines, brake pads and shoes, headlights, windshield wipers, blinkers, oil filter, fuel filter, spark plugs, and a great deal of body work and welding to repair rust spots. Most of the tires and batteries were replaced. And most trucks received a new coat of paint as well as new back benches installed.

One of our large trucks received an entirely new transmission (and can now drive in reverse again). One of our newer trucks (which was previously used for mailboat runs and transporting GRC goods) has had new benches installed. It was put on the line for faculty use (Truck B) at the beginning of the season and has worked without issue since then. Our largest vehicles (Truck L and Truck O) had the cabins gutted, refloored, and repaired including replacing the cabin seats (and yes, the seats can even be adjusted based on your height).



Truck B now on the line



Remodeled Large Truck Cabins



2. Breakdown Record

Our vehicle breakdown record was greatly improved from last year. Hurricane Joaquin likely caused a more rapid degradation of our vehicles with a delayed onset, rusting their bodies and frying their electrical systems over time. There were numerous vehicle breakdowns late last season...sometimes more than one vehicle a day. This pushed us to make major repairs on our fleet. This year we had a total of 12 incidents of vehicles breaking down in the field. Nearly half of those were due to dead batteries and one quarter due to flat/blown out tires. We replaced most of the batteries and tires around April, but they continue to wear out rapidly. In this salt-air environment with poorly paved roads, we have little choice but to continue to replace tires and batteries. There were only three incidences during the 2016-2017 school year that put a given vehicle out of commission until parts could be purchased and repairs could be made. We plan to continue working hard to keep our vehicles safe and reliable, as well as replacing older vehicles with newer ones.

C. Vehicle Purchases

I have heard many times from veteran faculty members how miraculous it is that we are able to keep our vehicles running. We do what we can, but eventually our trucks do fall beyond repair. In order to keep a large enough fleet to manage during our busy season, it is necessary to buy new vehicles. We were able to purchase two vehicles from Japan at very reasonable prices (including shipping and duty). One, a new van purchased during the latter part of the previous school year, was purchased to replace the 1980's van (with which I'm sure most of you are familiar) that sadly was no longer worth repairing. We also purchased a small bed truck with great gas mileage that currently is used for transporting GRC goods and will eventually receive back benches.



New Van



New Small Bed Truck

Our other vehicle purchase was a former moving van found for an incredibly good price in South Florida. The box car was removed and will eventually be used for additional faculty storage. The back bed was then added with benches and put on the line May of this year (after getting its blue paint job, of course). It's now Truck Y (Big Yellow) and is the best truck we currently the best truck available at the GRC.



New Truck (before)



New Truck (after)

D. Dorm Repairs

Last fall much of our building maintenance focused on improving the conditions of the dorms. This is always an area of greatest complaint from students. We have yet to acquire the necessary funds to truly redo the dorms (including adding air conditioning). But we did conduct a complete renovation including repairing and patching cement, improving bathrooms, adding new curtains, and painting walls floors, bed frames, and drawers. The new look is much less dark and dreary. In May, we also added an entirely new shower room in the men's dorm (like the one that was already in the women's dorm) so that the men no longer need to shower together in large stalls.



E. Other Improvements

1. Faculty Lounge

The faculty lounge was given a much needed facelift, including a working refrigerator, stove, oven, food preparation space, and microwave, for those who visit off-season.



2. Automated external defibrillators

Thanks to a very generous anonymous donation, we now have two AED defibrillators on campus in case of medical emergency (located in the cafe and conference room).



3. Auxiliary Office

In order to provide work space on campus for BNT National Park managers, University of Bahamas visiting administrators, or any of our faculty visitors who want a quiet place in which to work, we have created a new auxiliary office in our administrative building. Room 1, which was previously being used for storage, has been bisected such that half the space is still used for office supplies and our primary network hub with the other half making the new, lockable office space. It is already coming in as quite a handy space while we renovate our main office.



IV. GRC Finances

A. Student Days

This year, we had a total of 10,449 Student Days (or the sum of the number of visitors each day for an entire year). This is lower than previous years, although our calendar year was cut short two months to match the University of the Bahamas calendar (ending June 30th instead of August 31st). Including our visitors in July and August to make it comparable to previous years, our Student Days were 11,389. This is still about 2,000 less than our average year (around 13,000). We understand that this was a difficult year for student recruitment, and please know how much we all appreciate the effort you all put into getting your courses together and filled.

B. Budget

The Gerace Research Centre had a total income for the 2016-2017 school year of \$751,132.09 (including the months of July and August, which are no longer a part of our calendar year). Most of that income came from Room and Board (including AC unit rental) followed by miscellaneous Sales (library, snack bar, boat trips, ice, etc.). We were fortunate to acquire an anonymous donation that helped cover our new vehicle purchase. During that time, total expenses were \$727,709.00. The majority of our expenses are from salaries and food/fuel purchases. These were followed by Maintenance (which includes capital investments such as new equipment and appliances) and Vehicles (which includes new purchases, repairs, insurance, etc.).

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	
Room and Board	89.5%	Salaries	50.9%
Sales	5.0%	Food + Fuel	21.4%
Donations	2.5%	Maintenance	11.2%
Vehicle Rentals	1.6%	Vehicles	9.3%
Technology Fee	1.4%	Administration	4.8%
		Library/Snack Bar Purchases	2.3%

V. Future Improvements

A. Campus Internet Upgrade

The University of the Bahamas is currently improving the entire network of our campus. During the last weeks of our season, contractors came to trench and run fiber optic cable lines around campus to link all of our buildings. A fiber optic system will not succumb to rust and will never need to be upgraded again (no matter how much our internet connection is improved, the system on campus will be faster). UB Information Technology department will be returning this fall to connect the fiber optic cable lines to hubs in buildings around campus and install more wireless routers so that all of campus can be covered.

B. Wifi for students

I know that many of you appreciate the freedom of teaching here in San Salvador without having students constantly playing on their phones like they do during class in the US. But in order to stay competitive, providing wireless access for everyone is a necessary and inevitable change. With the improvements that the UB is currently making, we will be able to provide students wireless access soon. **But please note** that the students will be accessing a separate wireless network from faculty with their own dedicated bandwidth. This means if they all choose to stream movies, their internet speed will slow to a crawl while faculty access speeds remain unchanged.

C. New Cafeteria Stovetop/oven

You probably haven't had the chance to see our current stovetops, but if you did than you know that they are in pretty poor shape. Thanks again to a generous anonymous donation that allowed us to make this improvement; we will be replacing the old stove top with a large commercial ten burner stove top and oven (arriving soon).

D. Main Office Renovation

We are currently making our wonderful administrative team a little more comfortable with a newly renovated main office. We are redesigning, painting, and tiling the office. Renovations have already begun. Feel free to stop by and say hello to Velda and Rochelle next season and check out the new look when everything is completed.



E. Backpack Kayak



For those interested in exploring the interior lakes and ponds, we now have an Oru Kayak™ generously donated to us by The University of Tennessee, Chatanooga. This amazing kayak folds up and fits into a wearable backpack to take with you anywhere you want to go. Once familiar with its use, a person can take it out of the backpack and assemble it in just 10 minutes. Visit locations on the island you've only ever dreamed about seeing! The Oru Kayak™ is available for rent this upcoming season.

F. Credit Card Processing

We have been working on this item for a while. At the end of this season, we finally received functional credit card processing equipment thanks in part to the University of the Bahamas. The system has been tested and works. It will be up and running for credit card payments this upcoming season. You can now pay your bills by credit card in person or over the phone (please do not email us your credit card information). There will be an additional charge to pay by credit card to cover the banking and currency exchange fees. But if your university already provides you with a P-card, this new system should make your life and the setting up of your class a lot easier.

VI. Donations

Given our budget limitations as well as our mission to provide field research opportunities for students at the lowest cost possible, there is little room for the expense of major renovations and improvements. As you can see from some of our current improvements (AED's, Truck Y, Oru Kayak™, New Cafeteria Oven), your donations go a long way toward improving the Gerace Research Centre. Below are two projects for which we are currently seeking funding (one smaller, short term project and one major, long term project). We will be providing more details and pricing information about both of these projects soon.

We can receive tax-deductible donations through a US based charitable organization; The Bahamas Education, Culture, and Science Foundation (BECS). We can also accept donations directly by credit card (there are no fees or minimum purchases for donations, however such donations are not yet tax deductible). If you are interest in donating to either of these causes or donating to the GRC in general, more information

can be found below. Also, if you have an idea or improvement that you would like to fund for the station, please contact us directly so we can work out the details and logistics.

For more information, please visit our website:

<http://www.geraceresearchcentre.com/support.html>

Or contact the BECS foundation directly at dtgerace@gmail.com

A. Additional Graduate Housing

Many of you have probably walked over the large cement foundation sitting outside the conference room between the lab building and the graduate housing. We have hit full capacity twice in the past two years (~200 persons), and our renovations in the administrative building have made returning Rooms 1 to 3 back into functional housing nearly impossible. Our plan is to utilize the current cement foundation near the graduate housing to construct a building with three additional graduate rooms. This would be a cement structure preferable with cement slab roofing. Fresh water and electricity can be easily connected from the nearby units. It would primarily require the purchasing of construction materials in addition to a hot water heater, an electrical breaker box, shower stalls, toilets, and a septic system.

B. Solar Power System

Some of you already know that we have started making small moves towards solar power with our campus lighting. Given the environment here, it only makes sense to eventually switch as much of the campus over to solar power. As was announced during the Second Joint Symposium on the Natural History and Geology of the Bahamas conference, the Gerace Research Centre has its electricity bill paid by the Ministry of Education in exchange for the scholarship programs that the station runs. This arrangement will soon be coming to an end with the transfer of the electric company from a government entity to a private corporation. As you can imagine, this is one of the main reasons why our costs are low and why our scholarship program is so important. When this arrangement ends, we will be stuck paying a rather hefty electricity bill and will be forced to raise our fees. Solar power is a project the University of the Bahamas is currently examining for all of its campuses. So we will have access to information and experts regarding design and requirements. However, this is something we would like to move on ourselves as soon as possible.

The Gerace Research Centre isn't just a location. It's a community to which you are all a part. Thank you all for your continued support!

VII. Updated Campus Map

