

UNIVERSITY of the VIRGIN ISLANDS

UVI

magazine

2008, Vol. 10



Celebrating Our Success

- Reaffirmation of Accreditation
- \$6 Million Health Disparities Grant
- New Administration & Conference Center

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UVI commencement marks the successful completion of the academic year. Photo by Gary Metz

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MISSION:

To foster interest in and support for the University by sharing information with our internal and external constituents about the people and events shaping the University of the Virgin Islands.

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UVI Magazine is published annually by the UVI Public Relations Office with the support of the Office of the President and the Institutional Advancement component.

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Photo by: Gary Metz

Expressing Buccaneer Pride

This year, as the University of the Virgin Islands celebrates its 46th anniversary, I am reminded of the many success stories about which the UVI community can be really proud.

Not that those of us who attend classes, teach classes and are otherwise employed by the University aren't generally proud of what transpires at this venerable institution. It's just that as we take stock of the 2007-2008 academic year, it becomes clear that UVI has accomplished quite a bit in a very short timeframe.

Asked to take an objective, critical look at itself via a Self-Study Report, the University succeeded at having its accreditation reaffirmed by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. This accreditation will hold UVI in good stead until 2017.

The University added two new master's degree programs, constructed and occupied new facilities on both campuses, and is positively impacting the quality of life of those who live in the territory and beyond.

A \$6 million grant the UVI Nursing Division received to study the health of territorial residents will likely impact the prevalence of illness and deaths in the territory related to lifestyle choices.

The UVI Research and Technology Park entered into agreements this year that have established the University of the Virgin Islands as the lead agency for developing a technology economy in the territory.

As if that were not enough, the University of the Virgin Islands coordinated a public education campaign to elect Virgin Islands delegates to participate in the Fifth Constitutional Convention. Convention delegates are involved in the historic process of producing a Virgin Islands Constitution, which will be sent to the U.S. Congress for ratification. The University of the Virgin Islands' role in this historic process enabled a high level of public discourse, one of the central pillars of democracy.

While it might be considered sufficient to accomplish these things quietly, UVI has chosen to communicate all that it has done with valued partners in the fields of business, government, entertainment and the media who understand UVI's mission and support its work.

This 10th volume of UVI Magazine is yet another way of celebrating the University's success and of expressing Buccaneer Pride.

Spread the word.

Patrice K. Johnson
Editor-In-Chief

"Celebrate Success"

I enjoy the thrill of watching our UVI athletes compete in sports. It amazes me still that team members often react or move on the court as if they can read the minds of other teammates. They end up in just the right spot to make the play. When the game ends, they either celebrate the victory or look to build on their defeat. The important thing however, is that they function as a team.

In my five years plus as president, I must say I have been on a winning team here at the University of the Virgin Islands. Our students, our staff, our faculty and our alumni have worked individually and collectively to move this University forward. Our team has synergy – a network that yields much success for celebration.

One of the greatest accomplishments this year has been reaffirmation of our accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. At a time when many universities around the globe are struggling to maintain the academic and financial standards required for accreditation, this achievement is reassuring. It happened because UVI has an outstanding team of scholars and leaders that works daily to equip our students and serve the territory. We also have a talented team of leaders who know how to prepare and present UVI for accreditation.

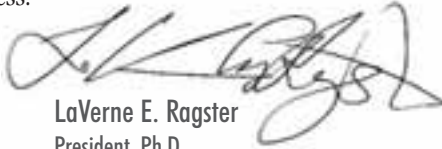
When academic teams work together, we see many positive results, such as outside investment in the institution. In September 2007, the National Institutes of Health's National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities announced a \$6 million grant or investment in our University. These funds, which will be provided to the UVI Division of Nursing over the next five years, will help us establish the Caribbean Exploratory NCMHD Research Center for Excellence. This center will provide a means through which we can conduct research on health disparities that impact the thousands who live in the territory and countless others who are affected by similar medical conditions. Establishment of this center propels our University to yet another level.

In the fall of 2007, the Associated Press and software giant U.S. Viking made a significant investment in state-of-the-arts news production software that for years to come will impact our communications programs. Our goal is to give all UVI students the preparation that positions them for future success. This investment of funds shows that industry leaders believe in this university enough to support and encourage our students by providing with state of the art equipment.

UVI also is poised now to enhance its role in technology research and development with the Research and Technology Park. Through this public/private partnership we will help improve the territory's economic competitiveness and bring more job opportunities to the region.

While many of the investments I mentioned so far relate directly to programs, we also have had some success with corporate support for scholarships. In June, Cruzan VIRIL Ltd. presented us with a check for \$25,000. This contribution brings total gifts from the company to UVI to \$500,000. Cruzan VIRIL realizes the importance of investing in higher education. It has also experienced first hand the benefit of having UVI graduates on its leadership team and in other positions in the company. UVI will continue producing scholars. Our hope is that more companies and supporters will follow the lead of Cruzan VIRIL and establish a program of regular investment in our institution.

I have touched on only a few of our successes because space does not allow me to do otherwise. I encourage you to carefully read the pages that follow in the magazine. You will discover more about our extraordinarily talented team of students, educators and staff, which regularly provide us with opportunities to celebrate our success.



LaVerne E. Ragster
President, Ph.D.

Student Prepared for Life After Graduation



"I really believe in the program here at UVI."

— Athaliah Edwards

While most graduating college students are waiting anxiously for that phone call from a potential employer, Athaliah Edwards knew where she would be headed after her graduation in May. Months before, Edwards, a senior business management major at the University of the Virgin Islands, accepted a job offer working with Philip Morris USA in New York City.

"It is a very rewarding feeling," she says. "After four years of hard work (at UVI), I can move on to something new. It took a lot of preparation."

Philip Morris is the largest tobacco company in the United States. Athaliah accepted the position in January, following three extensive rounds of interviewing. She started working at Philip Morris in June, as a territorial sales manager responsible for 150 clients in the metropolitan area.

Athaliah says she believes the reason she was selected is because of the preparation she did throughout her academic career and her participation in extracurricular activities. Before attending UVI, she worked full time in retail sales and inventory, all with the same company, to demonstrate her commitment. At UVI she was part of an exchange program, joined different organizations, completed an internship in New York, and served as a student ambassador with the Thurgood Marshall College Fund.

Although Athaliah received excellent grades during her collegiate career, she makes it clear that she thinks it takes much more than a good GPA to secure a job. "They need a well-rounded person," she says. "It is good to have a 4.0 GPA, but it takes more than that. You need to be involved in different organizations and demonstrate that you have leadership skills."

As part of the UVI Business-Marketing Program, Athaliah attributes much of the knowledge she has acquired over the years to trained and supportive faculty members. She believes that the diverse UVI staff has given her a broadened perspective of the world outside of the territory, and has also increased her appreciation for different people and cultures.

"I really believe in the program here at UVI. We have different professors from different areas and they are very involved with the students," Athaliah says. "The program did a lot to prepare me for corporate America."

She believes that others need to know what it takes to prepare for work with corporate America. "It is extremely important to be open-minded," Athaliah says. "Take initiative, be curious and explore. Show them that you have something unique to offer."

And Still She Rises - Miss UVI Sharifa Maloney



"I see my future as limitless."

— Sharifa Maloney

Growing up surrounded by her extended family, Sharifa Maloney never lived in one home longer than six months. Looking back, this intellectual beauty who holds the title of Miss University of the Virgin Islands 2007 and Student Government Association president relied on herself, her grandmother's words of wisdom and school as a safe haven.

Sharifa's parents separated during her early childhood, at which point her mother moved from Trinidad to the British Virgin Islands. Sharifa remained in Trinidad, where she attended an all-girl school. "I was surrounded by women in a man's world and I think this pushed me more, giving me a really good support system," she says.

After high-school graduation Sharifa moved to the British Virgin Islands, where her grandmother lived. "I only got to spend about a year with her before she passed away and I felt like she was taken away in an untimely manner. Her words of wisdom came naturally. My grandmother believed in the power of prayer and referred to it as her 'secret weapon'." Sharifa honored her grandmother posthumously during the 2007 Miss UVI pageant.

Having never dreamed of competing in pageants, it wasn't until high-school that Sharifa made a conscious decision to be more elegant and graceful. She had grown up surrounded by boys, climbing trees. Having only experienced pageants from the outside looking in, she was curious to know what it was like from the contestant's point of view.

"I thought competing for Miss UVI would be a really good opportunity to become more integrated into the school's community", Sharifa says.

Although attending UVI was Maloney's 'plan B,' she believes it was the best decision of her life. She sees school as an outlet on which she can always depend. When she walks across the stage at Commencement in 2009, Sharifa will be the first person in her family to graduate from college.

Although she doesn't believe she'll compete in any more pageants, the business administration major says she is open to what life will throw her way. "I don't have my life planned out," she says. "I see my future as limitless. But I do know the Caribbean is ultimately where I want to end up."

St. Croix's Beauty is in the Eye of the Researcher



"The Caribbean has produced many intellectuals. They guided me, so I repay them by mentoring others"

— Omar Christian

The postcard-perfect sandy beaches, blue skies and royal palms of St. Croix are not just for the enjoyment of visitors seeking refuge from cold temperatures or looking for a change in scenery.

When Dr. Omar Christian, a chemistry professor on UVI's St. Croix campus, looks at the natural beauty around him, he sees the perfect classroom.

"The island is one of the best in bio diversity and bio-medicine research," explains Christian. Currently, he and the 8 students he mentors are researching the possibility of developing anti-cancer medicines by harvesting local marine sponges. "The hope is to extract and eliminate major cancer cells," Christian says. "The environment has many secrets that we are just beginning to uncover."

Born in the Virgin Islands, Christian recalls how he got his start in chemistry. During his freshman year, his home was directly behind the University's chemistry building.

"It was a warm setting for early learning," he said. "The chemistry teacher was Mike Fulston. He left a lasting stamp in my life."

So much so that Christian is trying to leave a similar impression on the eight scholars

and independent researchers he mentors.

"The Caribbean has produced many intellectuals. They guided me, so I repay them by mentoring others," Christian says.

He is the first to admit that learning is a two-way street.

"Sometimes, the students will come in and say, 'My grandma says this plant is good for this,' and from there we might begin our research," he explains. "I am consistently impressed by the intellectual capabilities of my students. The students keep me interested in researching interesting plants or animals for medicinal possibilities."

He hopes that some of that research will take place as a result of establishing a regional national product institute that he hopes to open within five years.

"If we can find locally cultivated medicines, it will considerably affect consumer spending for the positive," Christian explains. "The whole purpose of chemistry is to provide answers to questions in healthcare. Our purpose is to serve the community."



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Michelle Smitherman's 'Need' to Keep Busy

"I always need to stay busy. Some people can't handle it and they get overwhelmed, but that has never really been a problem for me. I like it."
— Michelle Smitherman

Michelle Smitherman (left) contacted journalist Charlayne Hunter Gault, who consented to serve as the keynote speaker in 2007 for the Alfred O. Heath Distinguished Speakers Forum.

Balancing what seems like a million different things at once might drive the average person to the brink of insanity. But Michelle Smitherman, manager of Advancement Services at the University of the Virgin Islands, is anything but average.

"I can't function if I don't have a lot to do," she says. "I always need to stay busy. Some people can't handle it and they get overwhelmed, but that has never really been a problem for me. I like it."

Smitherman, a former reporter for the Washington Post, has plenty to keep her busy in the Office of Institutional Advancement. Her chief duties include bringing in prominent speakers each year to participate in the University's Alfred O. Heath Distinguished Speakers Forum.

Heath, a physician and Trustee Emeritus of the University, is a native Virgin Islander who Smitherman refers to as a true "Renaissance Man" because of his contributions to society through medicine, academia and the arts. The Heath Speakers Forum, now in its fifth year, has become a well-attended local event. However, it was not always that way.

"Three years ago, no one was really coming," says Smitherman. "We didn't have the resources, and we weren't taking a planned approach. After seeing that, I just decided to get involved."

And get involved she did. The first year she assumed the role of leading the lectures, she brought in internationally recognized activist, author and president of Trans-Africa, Randall Robinson. Next, she invited Charlayne Hunter-Gault, former bureau chief for CNN in South Africa, and in March 2008 she landed poet/activist Nikki Giovanni. With the marquee names came larger audiences. So large, in fact, that the appearances had to be moved from smaller lecture halls to the University's Reichhold Center for the Arts, a covered outdoor theater that seats 1,200.

The larger audience also meant more tasks for Smitherman — which suits her fine.

"I research a lot, and I read a lot of books. It's about just being in tune with what is going on and being persistent," explains Smitherman. "With [Nikki Giovanni] I just took a chance and sent an e-mail and she responded."

Smitherman likes to get responses from the students about potential speakers.

Not surprisingly, they frequently propose such people as hip-hop

mogul Russell Simmons and comedian Chris Rock, both of whom have fees that are prohibitive.

"We promote reading, so we usually select people who have a book out," Smitherman explains. "[The] people who have a global impact. Everything isn't doom and gloom in the Black community. We have some great stories and it is important to hear them."

It's also important that the president is not removed from the process.

"The president's office gives me a lot of leeway because they trust my judgment," she says. "I usually present three of my top choices to the president, and she lets me know which one she prefers, but she is usually pleased with my selections."

Future selections are likely to include someone from the Caribbean such as former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and Paul Farmer, a medical anthropologist. Not only is the Speakers Forum free to everyone who wishes to attend, but there is a lot of valuable information available for UVI students and the public.

"When you can bring people out of their living rooms and their comfort zone, and expose them to these things, it is great," says Smitherman.

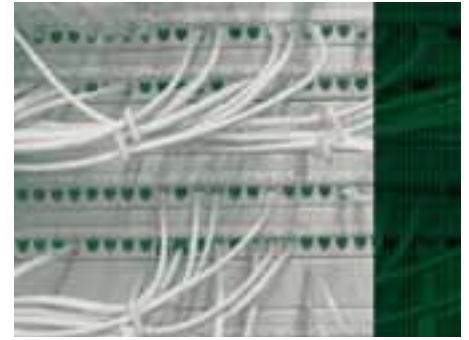
Smitherman's work is so great that she's a recent recipient of the President's Award. But her work doesn't stop there. She sits on several other committees, and for several years has helped plan the annual Foundation for the University of the Virgin Islands (FUVI) Celebrity Golf Classic on St. Croix. Each year, well-known celebrities such as actor Richard Roundtree, actress Regina King; San Antonio Spurs forward Kurt Thomas and Buffalo Bills wide receiver Peerless Price make it a point to fly to St. Croix to participate.

"We do this on St. Croix to spotlight it because we have a campus over there as well," Smitherman says. Each year the FUVI Celebrity Golf Classic includes football, basketball and golf clinics for children the day before the golf tournament.

Smitherman refuses to take all of the credit, saying, "We have a good team. We call ourselves the A-Team."

She's the A-player on the A-team.

"I never had any visions of running a lecture series or putting together a golf classic," says Smitherman. "You just do it. Any chance I get to do something great, I just go for it because I like to be involved."



Improving the Quality - and Reaction - of Campus Computers

In keeping with the University's motto of being "Historically American, Uniquely Caribbean, and Globally Interactive," UVI's newest effort to reach out to the worldwide community is Internet2. Yes, there is another Internet. The term "Internet" simply refers to a network of computers. The one that most of us use is Internet1, or the "commodity Internet." Internet2 was created nearly a decade ago by academia at research universities as a noncommercial prototype.

Both Internets are comprised of servers, routers, switches, and computers that are all connected together. Routers decide which way to send information, and servers handle Web site requests and store information for retrieval. Internet2 is very much like the Internet that the public utilizes. However, there is a distinction: fewer users and much faster connections. Those differences result in Internet2 moving data at a speed of 10 gigabytes or more per second compared with the 4 or so megabytes per second using general access Internet. Basically, Internet2 retrieves the same data 100 to 1,000 faster than the old-fashioned Internet.

Starting in the Fall semester 2008, UVI will offer Internet2 on campus for students and staff. This updated technology will increase opportunities for research and teaching applications and also provide quicker connections. With Internet2, students and researchers will have access to information much faster than through the

conventional internet. Internet2 was built for speed, and made specifically for universities and companies with research-related purposes.

Tina Koopmans, UVI's Chief Information Officer, played a role in acquiring the new technology, and foresees it to be a beneficial move for the University.

" This will allow student researchers to work faster and research more thoroughly. Internet2 will help connect UVI to more than 200 other universities and businesses. "

— Tina Koopmans

"I think it's going to have a very large impact on the work that researchers can do," Koopmans says. "This will allow student researchers to work faster and research more thoroughly. Internet2 will help connect UVI to more than 200 other universities and businesses."

According to Internet2's official online site, the program is an "advanced networking consortium; providing both leading-edge network capabilities and unique partnership opportunities that together facilitate the development, deployment and use of revolutionary Internet technologies." Internet2 equips its users with the ability to establish collaborative efforts with technology leaders in industry, government and international communities.

UVI's participation with Internet2 will

allow entrance to cutting-edge technology, research, and increased library resources for university affiliates.

Koopmans says she had known UVI researchers in the past who had to work through the middle of the night because the University's bandwidth was too restricted during the day. Internet2 will change that.

With Internet2, the storage will increase seven times over, providing more space overall for University computer users, as well as quicker Internet connections.

"It's so much easier to get things done when it goes quickly," Koopmans says.

It is not certain if the program will be available on the first day of classes, but it can be expected before the semester ends.

Furthering UVI's technological outreach will continue in the future. According to Koopmans, the goal after Internet2 is to have a full digital signal 3 (DS3) for the St. Thomas campus.

For more information about Internet2, visit <http://www.internet2.edu/>.



UVI VOICE journalists and their faculty advisor attended the 2008 National HBCU Newspaper Conference, hosted by Morgan State University in Baltimore. From left, Miriam Welderufael, St. Croix campus managing editor; Aslin Leger, St. Thomas campus managing editor; faculty adviser Dr. Robin Sterns; reporter/copyeditor Sana Hamed; and reporter Andrea Soto.

UVI Students Win National Newspaper Awards

University of the Virgin Islands students and the student newspaper UVI VOICE took home four wins, including a first place, at the 10th Annual National HBCU Student Newspaper Conference.

Carl A. Christopher won first place in the “Best Editorial Cartoon” category for his “smoke signal” cartoon in the UVI VOICE’s Technology Issue. The UVI VOICE won third place in the “Best Special Section or Theme Edition” for the Technology Issue. Miriam Welderufael won an honorable mention in the “Best Informational Graphic” category for “The Freshman 15: Myth or Fact.” Also winning an honorable mention was Jane Meade in the “Best Feature Writing” category for her article “Celebrated Journalist Discusses ‘Winds of Change’ in the New Africa” featuring Charlayne Hunter-Gault.

UVI VOICE Faculty Advisor and UVI’s Communication Program Coordinator Dr. Robin Sterns is thrilled about the awards.

“Our students were competing directly with students from all of the HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) - there are no ‘big school/small school’ categories. So our

first place and third place awards are major accomplishments,” Dr. Sterns explained in an e-mail to UVI faculty and staff. “What amazes me about this and what impresses me is that there are schools that do a cartoon editorial five days a week all year long,” Dr. Sterns said in an interview. UVI VOICE is published about four times a semester. “It is absolutely phenomenal that he (Christopher) would win.”

The UVI VOICE Technology Issue that garnered two wins was published in October 2007. It focused on problems that plagued the University as results of a lightning strike and UVI’s conversion to a new information system. That issue featured eight news stories, editorials and opinion pieces about the technology problems. Five UVI students and one UVI administrator contributed to the articles.

Attending the conference were St. Croix Campus Managing Editor Miriam Welderufael, St. Thomas Campus Managing Editor Aslin Leger, reporter/copyeditor Sana Hamed, reporter Andrea Soto, and Dr. Sterns. The conference was hosted by Morgan State University in Baltimore.

Welderufael and Leger selected and entered the content for competition. Leger said that in considering what stories to enter in the competition she and Welderufael looked at the stories that generated the most feedback from the UVI community.

Leger described the conference as “phenomenal,” with its networking opportunities and informative workshops. “It feels like it’s not a competition. We all learn from each other,” Leger said.

Impressed by the UVI group, several organizations have shown interest in the students. An editor of the Detroit News has offered a paid internship to one student and two graduate journalism program directors are recruiting the students for their graduate programs, said Dr. Sterns, who is also a UVI English professor.

This is the second consecutive year the UVI VOICE has won awards at the conference. Last year UVI VOICE won second place in the “News Series” category and second place in the “Editorials” category. UVI is a charter member of the Black College Communication Association, which sponsors the conference.

Life is beautiful.



With The Resources You Can Rely On.

UVICELL Offers Top Notch Training, Certification

“Our goal is to offer avenues to meet current and emerging needs through timely and relevant workforce training and human resource development programs.” — Ilene Garner

Licensed taxi operator David Williams became a Certified Tour Guide after completing UVI CELL's Taxi and Tour Certification program.

The Community Engagement and Lifelong Learning Center is one of the flagship programs at the University of the Virgin Islands. Started five years ago, UVICELL capitalizes on the strengths of UVI faculty, staff, students and community partners to address growing concerns in the territory's public and private sectors.

Through a partnership with the American Management Association (AMA), one of the most respected names in management training, UVICELL offers high quality training that translates into productivity and career growth with recognized credentials.

“Our programs have also been evaluated by the American Council on Education,” says Ilene Garner, the center's director. Fifteen courses were assessed and determined to meet ACE standards in a college-accredited environment.

“We are committed to both the public and private sectors in our community,” Garner says. “Our goal is to offer avenues to meet current and emerging needs through timely and relevant workforce training and human resource development programs.”

Three and half years ago, a shortage in certified nursing assistants and home health care aides existed in the community. A health-care initiative was begun to help meet this and other critical shortfalls in healthcare professions. UVICELL was able to draw on the expertise and knowledge of its advisory board, composed of officials from the Virgin Islands Departments of Labor, Health and Education. Three focus groups were conducted.

A collaborative effort with Region 2 Medicaid and Medicare officials, hospitals and healthcare organizations throughout the territory resulted in the establishment of a 120-hour Home Health Care Aide course within nine months. The course prepares students to take the national certification exam while at the same time learning safe and effective care for their patients. Students also learn how to assist the care team to achieve established patient goals. The program has an astounding 97 percent pass rate on license exams.

UVICELL's collaboration with Old Town Frederiksted (OTF) on a building revitalization project led to the opening of the Joseph E. Simpson Building on St. Croix. The facility is an example of how government agencies, community organizations and private citizens can pool resources. It now houses the executive offices of OTF as well as office and classroom space for UVICELL. The combination of a \$541,000 grant from the Historically Black Colleges and Universities program and more than \$400,000 in funding from the V.I. Public Finance Authority, the 26th Virgin Islands Legislature, the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources Community Development Block Grant program and the West Indian Co. Ltd. made the project possible.

“That partnership allows us to provide programs and services that benefit the St. Croix community,” Garner said.

An SAT Prep Course is offered through UVICELL, in partnership with the Prosser

ICC Foundation. It grew out of the observation that private/parochial school students were performing better than public school students on the SAT test. The course offers strategies to effectively prepare for the SAT and maximize test scores, which improves the chances of admission to the college of a student's choice.

Because tourism is the economic engine for the Territory, meeting the needs of the hospitality industry ensures a strong economy in the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean region. The hotel and tourism community is deeply invested in several of UVICELL's programs that strengthen customer service skills, Garner says.

Originally developed for licensed taxi operators, UVICELL's Taxi and Tour Certification program is open to any individual with a desire to become a Certified Tour Guide. Taxi and tour operators are educated on customer service, Virgin Islands history and culture, points of interest and presentation skills. Upon successful completion of the course, participants receive a certificate of completion and a certification identification card. Graduates of the program are eligible for membership in the Certified Taxi and Tour Guide Association.

“We know that life is complex and the one thing that we can do to assist is to provide the very best professional and life-long learning opportunities that help students compete in our rapidly changing economic environment,” Garner says.



Representatives of various law schools gave UVI students and others who stopped by the Caribbean Law Fair an overview of their respective schools.

Caribbean Law Fair Engages Future Attorneys

The success of the second annual Caribbean Law Fair raises hopes of expanding it more next year, bolstering the University of the Virgin Islands' connection to the academic world and engagement with the local community.

"We are hoping to be able to invite more schools," says Verna Rivers, counseling supervisor on UVI's St. Thomas campus. This year's event in March attracted 11 schools from across the U.S. In 2007, there were 10 universities represented at the fair, which is co-sponsored by UVI and the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University.

"We have a few students attending law schools on the East Coast," Rivers says about the future. "We are trying to get some of those schools to participate."

Attending this year's fair on UVI's St. Thomas campus were law school representatives from the University of St. Thomas (Minnesota), the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law, the University of Richmond (Virginia), Florida Coastal University, Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law, Tulane University, the University of Memphis, Touro College (New York), Widener University (Delaware), South Texas

University and the New York Law School. Two members of the Virgin Islands Bar Association also attended.

Fairgoers, who were UVI students and select high school student, as well as members of the public, had the opportunity to discuss with school representatives such matters as how to prepare for law school, the different criteria for acceptance at different schools, financing and scholarship possibilities and how to choose a school.

The fair's goal: Create awareness and interest.

"We have gotten a great response from students," Rivers says. "Many have stated they now have an interest in law that was not there prior to this event. It has been an eye opener."

The fair was initiated by alumni from UVI and the Thurgood Marshall School of Law, who wanted to share their experiences.

Following the fair, Thurgood Marshall officials held a reception for alumni and interested students. This was an excellent time for students to further interact with school representatives and alumni. The reception gave students a chance to practice networking, Rivers says.

"I hope that this event will eventually lead to more native attorneys. We don't have a shortage of attorneys in St. Thomas, but it would be nice to see more local students come back and serve their community."



The Former Harvey Center at the Center of Change

The UVI Administration and Conference Center officially opened in November 2007. The fully air-conditioned building houses most UVI operations and features more than 4,000 square feet of conference and training space.

The University of the Virgin Islands has undergone many transformations in recent years, including new computer labs, a new student dining facility and the reconstruction of The Harvey Center on the St. Thomas campus, now simply known as the Administration and Conference Center (ACC). Originally built in the 1930s to house the St. Thomas Naval Air Center, the structure has seen many renovations in the 46 years since the University's founding.

Formerly known as the Trade Winds Hotel, and most recently as The Harvey Student Center, the building was alternately home to a student dormitory, campus bookstore and commuter lounge. Since the re-occupation of the building began in October 2007, the ACC has supplied a new home for administration offices and impressive conference rooms.

Boasting an 11,000 sq. ft. addition, the ACC overlooks the Herman E. Moore Golf Course to the east and Brewers Bay to the west. The ACC's parking lot and patio area display picturesque views that impress new

visitors. The building, which features impressive new technology throughout, was redesigned to maximize the utilization of space via the strategic location of various functions. The ACC is home to the offices of: Accounting & Payroll, Administration and Finance, Board of Trustees, Enrollment Services, Cashier, Financial Services, the Office of the President, Public Relations and many more, making it the "one stop shop" of UVI administrative services.

Re-designing the building to fit the new vision for the space was time-consuming. Talks began in 2000 with the adoption of the 2000 Capital Projects Development Program and related Draft Master Plan 2000-2010. The next five years were dedicated to budget, planning, and revision, and in late 2005 contractors started renovating and expanding the conference center.

The ACC is now a three-story 31,000-sq. ft. facility, with an expanded professional kitchen, and includes a parking lot accommodating up to 85 cars. The ACC has more than 4,000 sq. ft. of conference and training

space. The largest "smart" conference room (2,000 sq. ft) on the main level is equipped with the latest Polycom video conference system, which allows video streaming and conferencing to any UVI video conference facility.

Situated on a hill with picturesque views to the east and west, the ACC is the perfect location for UVI socials, award ceremonies, and community activities. The space made available by moving all the administrative offices to the ACC has allowed for the creation of classrooms, and space to accommodate program growth and expansion.

Since November 2007, when the ACC officially opened, UVI has wasted no time utilizing the expansive new building. The building has been the site of new events, including the first Campus Spirit Committee open house, an after-hours faculty/staff social. Through the use of the new ACC building, UVI is truly serving its valued internal stakeholders, resulting in a committed and caring University community.

A Math Masters Program UVI Can Count On

After two rigorous and rewarding years, the first graduates of the University of the Virgin Islands' new graduate program in mathematics education plan to return to their secondary school classrooms this fall with powerful new tools to teach the territory's students.

"It has been a challenging road," says Karisma Hector of St. Croix, one of seven working teachers who received Master of Arts degrees in Mathematics for Secondary Teachers at UVI's commencement in May.

"I'm 100 percent happy I did it," Hector says about participating in the program. "There were a number of techniques that we learned. . . that will transcend into our teaching as we share our enthusiasm," she says.

Hector, who has taught math nine years at Central High School, was chosen by her classmates as spokeswoman for the group, which managed to finish the demanding program in two years by attending summer, night and weekend classes while working.

"They were cooperative. They worked hard, and I'm proud of them," said Dr. Vanere Goodwin, coordinator of the program. Goodwin says an impetus for establishing the program was the federal "No Child Left Behind Act," which mandates that teachers be "highly qualified."

The seven new master's graduates fulfill the mandate, he says. "They have the training, the software, and they know the mathematics, so they can move forward."

Supporting the program with funding, including scholarships, was the National Science Foundation's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research and the Virgin Islands Education Department. The foundation and the school system want to encourage using science and math as a way to build a skilled work force in the territory.

Supplemental work for the graduates involved conferences, including one in Salt Lake City, and technical training at the University of Virginia.

"We were exposed to the technology that is available to help teach mathematics," Hector says of the stint in Virginia. "It was a wonderful experience for us to be on a different campus rich with history, to be taught by wonderful instructors, and then to receive laptops to aid us in our instruction," she says.

UVI is lending computers to the graduates teaching in the territory's public schools to provide the best modern math-teaching technology available to them. The educators intend also to use the laptops to give presentations to other teachers in the territory.

As the graduates move forward, so will the program: The next group begins in the fall.

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Two members of the UVI Swim Team, Marcus Sydney (left) and Kamal Russell.

Making Waves

“During the meets this year, our team felt like they should be there. They were prepared to win.” — Coach Tyrell

For most, thinking of the United States Virgin Islands calls to mind white sandy beaches, cloudless blue skies, and days perfected with swimming and splashing in the crystal clear waters of the islands’ beaches. Given its location, it is surprising that the University of the Virgin Islands, which has campuses on St. Croix and St. Thomas, has not in its 46 years of operation fielded a swim team. In January 2007, UVI Athletic Director Peter Sauer changed that by establishing a varsity swim team.

“Starting a varsity sport and basing that sport on the St. Croix campus was a goal of mine,” Sauer says. “One of our objectives in the Athletic Department is to have students develop and become leaders through sports competition. We believe swimming is another great way to achieve that goal for UVI students.”

Currently, there are 11 students on a varsity swim team, which is part of the LAI League (Liga Atlética Interuniversitaria), consisting of 19 Puerto Rican Universities, including four NCAA member teams. In the spring of 2007, the swim team competed in its first meet.

While the team did not place in the meet, its members are eager to improve upon their times. Amanda Weber placed highest for the team, swimming the 200 meter breast-stroke with a time of 3:58.03 to place 4th.

“This swim meet was a chance to create a foundation for my swimming,” Weber says. “I plan to build off of that foundation and continue improving. I swam times that I can make better with more training.”

UVI Coach Kevin Tyrell, is confident the team will get better with time.

Coach Tyrell brings a wealth of experience to the job. He served as volunteer assistant coach at Harvard University from 2000-2004. He is also currently head coach of the St. Croix Dolphins and Virgin Islands national swim team coach.

“I was fortunate to be able to learn from one of the best college coaches in the nation in Harvard Men’s Swimming Head Coach Tim Murphy. He and Assistant Coach Sean Schimmel were great role models and I learned a great deal from them,” Tyrell says. “I enjoy applying the knowledge gained from them to form a winning swim team for UVI.”

UVI students are eager and excited about the newest athletic addition. For graduate student Jay Wiltshire, whose schedule is already loaded with studying for tests, leading group projects, writing papers and supervising up to 200 students as a residence hall supervisor on the St. Croix campus, being on the team is a chance to escape his around-the-clock responsibilities.

“It’s a challenge, but I love it,” Wiltshire says, explaining his enormous juggling act. With practices that begin before the sun rises, Wiltshire, who is earning a master’s degree in education with a concentration in administration, relishes the additional discipline. “The quiet clears my mind,” he says.

Wiltshire is not the only student excited and committed to the team. Kamal Russell has been looking for this opportunity since he first enrolled. “I’m excited about our UVI team. Being a competitive swimmer growing up and choosing to go to UVI, I always wished we had a team. It’s here now and I believe we can be successful quickly,” he says.

Training on St. Croix at the Dolphins Pool at Country Day School, Coach Tyrell is the first to admit the advantage of using this facility. The Dolphins Pool is a 6-lane, 50-meter Olympic-size pool, which he says will greatly aid in the swimmers’ training.

“We had a lot more confidence this year,” Tyrell says. “During the meets this year, our team felt like they should be there. They were prepared to win.”

A Physical Approach to Eliminating “The Freshman 15”

Meeting new friends, joining student organizations and living away from parents all are part of the new life students experience when they begin college. There is another common experience shared by college students – The Freshman 15. No, that’s not a description of football players or the name of a small sorority. Rather, it’s a reference to the extra weight freshmen invariably put on after starting their college careers.

Last fall, UVI’s St. Croix campus made the weighty decision to do something about The Freshman 15. It opened a new student fitness center to pound away at the pounds.

“We wanted to improve the overall quality of student life,” explains Nereida Washington, the acting campus executive administrator on UVI’s St. Croix campus. “It was our goal to not only fulfill our students’ intellectual needs but also the needs of their health and well being.”

The new 900-square-foot fitness facility is called the Bucs Fitness Center. Once an old storage space, it sits within walking distance of residence halls, the student activity lounge, campus bookstore and cafeteria. Faculty, staff and students are able to workout daily from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. during the week and 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekends.

With almost around-the-clock access to cafeterias and little exercise, not to mention the late night, unhealthy snacks that fuel those all-night cramming sessions, students may find themselves packing

on the pounds rather quickly.

UVI freshman Shantel Simmons knows firsthand the challenges higher education can bring and felt the fitness center was a much needed addition.

“There are treadmills and ellipticals for cardio, as well as weights for weigh training. It’s nice we have a private place to work out, where outsiders are not able to just walk in. The center is also free so now students don’t have to pay for an expensive gym membership.”

Acting Student Activities Supervisor Hedda Finch-Simpson likes the idea of a fitness center for another reason: “The center created campus job opportunities for students.”

Given the success of the Bucs Fitness Center, plans have already begun for its expansion. UVI is looking to designate space outside of the building for warm-ups and toning, and wants to build additional rooms for group classes such as aerobics and yoga.

If the renewed emphasis on physical fitness does not eliminate The Freshman 15, perhaps it can at least change it to “The Freshman 10.”



Teams Jump Through Hoops to Play at UVI

Every year, as autumn slowly fades into winter, the University of the Virgin Islands becomes home to top college teams competing in one of North America’s most popular sports — basketball. Over a

two-week period that stretches through the Thanksgiving holiday, UVI hosts Paradise Jam, the largest NCAA Division I college basketball tournament in the nation.

Since 2000, Paradise Jam at the University of the Virgin Islands has annually welcomed players and spectators from across the U.S. mainland to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

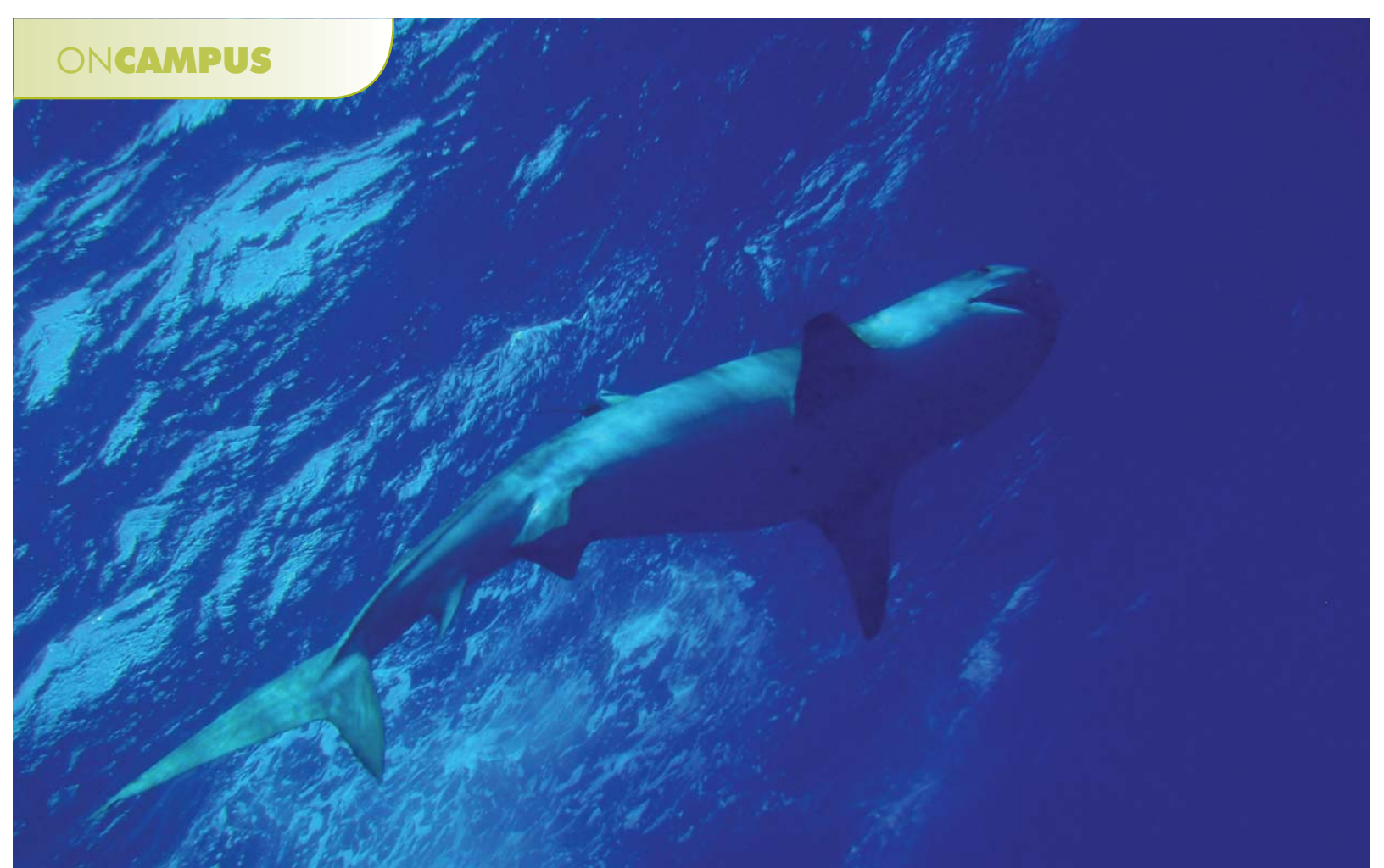
The tournament has blossomed to include both women’s and men’s basketball teams, most of which are ranked in the top 25 in pre-season rankings. Participants have included Connecticut, Duke, Tennessee, Rutgers, Maryland, North Carolina and Stanford, among many others. Last November, in addition to Connecticut, UVI hosted Iona, La Salle, Miami,

Southern Mississippi, Valparaiso, and Wisconsin for the men’s tournament. On the women’s side were Baylor, California, Central Florida, Iowa, South Florida, Texas Tech, Villanova and Wisconsin.

The University of the Virgin Islands plans to continue to capitalize on the wave of success acquired by its involvement with college basketball. Paradise Jam has made UVI visible to more than 60 million people. It also focuses attention on local basketball players, some of whom receive scholarships to colleges on the mainland to play for larger programs. Overall, consistently luring the top basketball teams in the nation for Paradise Jam creates a winning situation for the territory and UVI.

According to Peter Sauer, UVI’s athletic director, Paradise Jam has become the largest and most profitable event in the territory outside of Carnival, attracting about 21,000 people over a two-week span. A television contract with Fox College Sports has made television coverage of the tournament even more alluring, resulting in more revenue to the area and a strengthened tourism market.

“We have never had this type of exposure in our 46 year history,” Sauer says. “[Paradise Jam] is a great engine for our economy, and it is great for the people of the Virgin Islands. We just want to keep getting bigger and better.”



Tiny UVI Degree Program Makes a Big Splash in Earth Sciences Studies

A new master's degree program in marine and environmental sciences at the University of the Virgin Islands stands to enhance the University's reputation nationally and internationally, as well as increase the school's value to the Caribbean. Still an infant, the MMES – Master of Marine and Environmental Science program has taken its first steps toward success.

UVI has exceeded expectations for enrollment in its MMES program. Because of UVI's size, MMES for now is limited to 10 students, and planners had expected it to take three or four years to reach that number.

"In our first group, which started in 2007, we have nine," says Dr. Sylvia Vitazkova, head of the program. She reports that "six are residents of the Virgin Islands, and three are from the mainland."

Such enrollment is contrary to the trend in earth sciences studies at other institutions.

Kenneth E. Redd, director of research and policy analysis at the Council of Graduate Schools in Washington, D.C., says

enrollment in programs like UVI's has been flat over the past decade.

"Many of the science fields have seen relatively small growth over the past years, so the earth sciences field is not alone," he adds.

That Virgin Islanders are the majority in the course helps fulfill one aim of the National Science Foundation grant that fostered the program. Known as EPSCoR, the acronym for Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, such a grant is supposed to bolster the economy of the state or territory to which it is given.

The beautiful waters and temperate climate of the islands lure nearly 2 million visitors annually, and tourism makes up about 80 percent of the islands' economy. Out of sight under those warm waters are the islands' reefs, which harbor an enormous number of marine species that are part of this attraction; they also keep the islands' waters calm and welcoming by cushioning them from powerful ocean waves and storms. The territory's reefs and environment underpin the islands' existence.

Preservation through good management is crucial.

"Frankly, the environment is the context for everything," Vitazkova says. "If you don't have an environment, then you don't have tourism. You don't have an economy or health. You don't have beauty."

According to an Ocean Conservancy report, "Coral diseases are increasing on Virgin Islands reefs. And this tells us that the ocean environment is changing in unfavorable ways. Diseases can result from a great variety of coral pathogens in our waters, or from a breakdown in the immune system of the coral animal, resulting from many stresses occurring at once or over extended periods."

UVI's program aims to address this concern. It is a program with its head in the academic skies while its feet are planted on the beach.

"Essentially there was a real need here in the Virgin Islands and greater Caribbean for this kind of training," Vitazkova says. "There are a number of environmental

resource management positions in government and with non-governmental agencies that need staff that has local knowledge and training. That kind of training hasn't been available, so people have had to go away to get it. Once you go, you rarely come back.

"There has been a brain drain," she says.

Thus, the graduate program has the potential for getting jobs to local residents and for improving resource management. It is a dual economic benefit.

This upward spiral of benefit ascends with another effect of the program.

Dr. Elizabeth Gladfelter, an investigator at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts and a former longtime resident of the islands, played a major role in shaping the curriculum.

"UVI had gotten into the model that these people were teachers, that these people on the other side of campus were researchers," Gladfelter says. "The problem is, a lot of the teachers had advanced degrees and were researchers, but they were swamped with teaching and needed to carve off time."

In her proposal for the program, she wrote that the "program at UVI will provide the university community with advanced-level students capable of assisting UVI faculty as research assistants and as teaching assistants [as well as] serving as role models for undergraduate students. TA time is a considerably less expensive cost for the university than faculty time, and this is an effective way to free faculty time ... for conducting research.

"The program will enhance the research climate and serve to improve UVI competitiveness in gaining federal research dollars."

Gladfelter also would like to see the university "strengthen its undergraduate and graduate programs so that they are producing teachers for the Virgin Islands educational system who understand how the environment works and how science integrates with making policy decisions. So, part of this idea is to develop whole scientific training within the territory."

The program also is "putting UVI on the national and international map," Gladfelter says, adding that through the program, "UVI has developed affiliations with Yale, Woods Hole ... a number of other institutions."

"You might think that this is a little tiny university on a little tiny island, so how can it be involved in global climate change?" she says.

"There are two aspects to it," she explains. "One is that global change itself is really a complex issue like evolution or plate tectonics. These fields are dependent on results from a number of scientific approaches and information from all over the world. One of the roles UVI can play is to provide a place to collect some of that information, for example, with the Ocean Observing System.

"Two is that the program is a place from which UVI researchers can collaborate with other scientists who are looking at sites all over the world, from the poles to the tropics, and who need a good set of data from the Virgin Islands. The tropics and the poles are the areas most likely to suffer the first drastic effects of climate change."

She says, too, that from a scientific standpoint "at UVI, you have qualified researchers already in the field ready to study phenomena such as the big coral bleaching event in 2005." The die-off was in a summer of record high temperatures.

Further, she says, "Ways to approach problems being developed at UVI, partly through the master's program, will be directly applicable to other places in the Caribbean and conceptually applicable anywhere in the world."

One might suppose that UVI's highest ranking marine biologist would have been a prominent force in producing the program, but UVI President LaVerne E. Ragster declines to accept laurels.

"It is linked to our strategic plan in which I had a hand," she says, "but this really is the effort of a lot of people."

For a student who wants hands-on experience, UVI is an excellent choice, both Gladfelter and Vitazkova agree. A small, historically black university, UVI may have an edge in competition for earth sciences students against established academic giants, such as Yale, Duke or the University of Georgia.

"A good thing about this program is that the students are down there," says Gladfelter. "It is a good place to go out and see what's going on. It is not just abstract numbers you are getting from an instrument. You can actually see what's happening, and once you understand that, you can extrapolate to ecosystems anywhere in the world."

Vitazkova puts in another way.

"You have your laboratory at your doorstep," she says, referring to the program's recently upgraded facilities at seaside.

Further, she says, "When you live in your scientific subject, when it is in your face all the time, it is relevant. That is one of the reasons this is the perfect place to study."

Apparently that idea is catching on.

"Our application pool has grown 100 percent," Vitazkova says, citing applicants from the Bahamas, other Caribbean islands and Central America. "We are getting inquiries that make us wonder how the word is getting around."

Nevertheless, she says, "For now we are keeping our program small. I want to gain a solid reputation before expanding. It is important that we provide a high quality program and that our graduates are very well respected after they leave here and enter the workforce.

"We want to get it right."



The program also is "putting UVI on the national and international map," Gladfelter says, adding that through the program, "UVI has developed affiliations with Yale, Woods Hole ... a number of other institutions."

Criminal Justice Degree Program Takes Shape

Sensitive to the needs of the community it serves, the University of the Virgin Islands has instituted a Bachelor's degree program in criminal justice. It has been welcomed enthusiastically.

"We found that many members of local law enforcement had no training beyond the high school level," says Professor Nandi Sekou, coordinator of UVI's Criminal Justice Degree Program. "We have had an overwhelming response in that group and also from local public and private high school students."

Explaining the rationale behind proposing the program, Dr. Malik Sekou, Dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences Division, says that, "because of the high crime situation, they (law enforcement officers and students) look to the University for some type of leadership and support." The University's

Board of Trustees approved the Criminal Justice Degree Program in March. Beginning with the Fall 2008 semester, students may declare a criminal justice major in pursuit of an Associate of Applied Science, Bachelor of Science, or Bachelor of Arts degree.

In the past, the University of the Virgin Islands offered law enforcement courses and an Associate's degree in police science. Most of the students who enrolled were police officers.

"The Criminal Justice Degree Program is broader," Nandi Sekou says. "We have students who may be interested in criminal justice administration, working with Homeland Security or Corrections." She says the curriculum has been expanded to give greater depth for aspirants to the higher degrees. New offerings will include "higher, upper-level courses in constitutional law, in justice

administration, in the justice system," she says.

The Virgin Islands Legislature has passed a special appropriation to fund scholarships for courses in law enforcement.

"We could have officers who will be seeking those degrees and who will be better trained and equipped to deal with our crime problem," Sekou says, adding that crime in the territory is no worse than it is in other parts of the U.S., although it may seem that way. "Because we are a smaller area, crime affects us more than it would in a large city like New York or Chicago."

While some students may venture beyond the U.S. Virgin Islands, Professor Sekou emphasizes the practical aspects of UVI's Criminal Justice Degree Program: "Our Criminal Justice Program is in response to community needs as we see it."



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Eat Fresh From the UVI Farm Store

Tomatoes, zucchini squash, cucumbers, watermelon and so much more. These are just a few items of fresh produce one may find at the University of the Virgin Islands' Farm Store.

Those who are familiar with the small store on the St. Croix campus may not know the story behind it — how and why the Farm Store came to be.

It is safe to say that the UVI Farm Store was created because of The Agricultural Experiment Station (AES). The AES, which is at the end of an unpaved road on the northeast end of the St. Croix campus, conducts basic and applied research. Its goal is to meet the needs of the local agricultural community by increasing production, improving efficiency, developing new enterprises, preserving and propagating germplasm unique to the Virgin Islands, and protecting the natural resource base. The station has research programs in animal science, aquaculture, biotechnology, forage agronomy, fruit and ornamental crops, and vegetable crops.

“As a land-grant university, UVI receives federal funds to do agricultural research, extension and education,” says Dr. James Rakocy, director of the Agricultural Experiment Station and research professor of aquaculture. “The results of our research are conveyed to the farming community through the Cooperative Extension Service. What we sell in the store depends on what we are currently researching or doing experiments on.”

In September of 2005, when the Farm Store was created, University officials saw a need to efficiently and effectively sell the AES's leftover produce. “We knew we were creating a valuable product,” Rakocy says.

“Rather than let everything go to waste, the money we make once we sell the fruits, vegetables and fish is then put back into our research program.”

Rakocy explains that customers and students are usually alerted to what the store has on sale through e-mail. “People don't normally come to the store every day. That is because we produce a large amount of one or two types of fruits or vegetables at a time. When we do have excesses of something we send out the emails and people come in.”

The University of the Virgin Islands Farm Store is open from Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Welcome to UVI Farm Store	
Tilapia (whole)	2.50 lb
Tilapia (clean)	3.00 lb
Tilapia (fillet)	6.00 lb
Cherry Tomatoes	\$2.00 lb
Tomatoes	\$1.00 lb
Bibb Lettuce	\$1.50 head
Romaine Lettuce	\$1.25
Green Leaf	1.25
Red fire	1.25
Green chili	1.50 lb



With Tax Restrictions Relaxed, RTPark Poised to Blossom

“The RTPark is taking its place as a significant cornerstone of the territory’s economic development program, in collaboration with UVI. It is creating new mechanisms for engaging commercial enterprise as partners in improving the territory’s economic competitiveness and career opportunities for Virgin Islanders.” — Executive Director David M. Zumwalt

The University of the Virgin Islands Research and Technology Park is coming of age after a “challenging adolescence,” says Park Executive Director David M. Zumwalt.

“The vision for the UVI Research and Technology Park is to establish a place where a technology sector could grow in the Virgin Islands economy, one closely affiliated with UVI,” Zumwalt said. “I look forward to the coming year because so much is happening.”

Zumwalt was referring in part to a significant obstacle the Park overcame in April when the federal government permanently eased some tax restrictions that had made the Park less attractive to potential business partners. The restrictions had slowed progress for development of the Park since 2004, the year the rules were enacted.

“Now is the time to begin to demonstrate tangible results,” Zumwalt says. “The RTPark is taking its place as a significant cornerstone of the territory’s economic development program, in collaboration with UVI. It is creating new mechanisms for engaging commercial enterprise as partners

in improving the territory’s economic competitiveness and career opportunities for Virgin Islanders.”

While the Park was slowed by tax issues, it did not sit still, and in 2007 secured an important long-term agreement to use the state-of-the-art undersea data transmission cables of Global Crossing and equipment space in the company’s facility on St. Croix. Global Crossing is a leading Internet company that delivers services in more than 600 cities in 60 countries. When it was laying its cables in the sea, it brought them up at St. Croix to create a switching station, an opportunity the UVI RTPark seized upon.

Also in 2008, the UVI Research and Technology Park and the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority signed an agreement making the Park the territory’s lead agency for developing a technology economy, and plans are in the works for the UVI RTPark to build its own facility.

The Park and the University are independent entities, but under the Park’s government charter and through agreements, it shares revenue with UVI and taps University resources for which it pays, Zumwalt says.

The vision of the Park has been “to leverage untapped resources, facilitate infrastructure where needed, achieve growth through public/private partnerships, and have as stakeholders the Virgin Islands government, UVI, and commercial interests,” Zumwalt says. “It is uncommon to see public sector, academic, and commercial interests coming together—and staying together—to accomplish a common goal.”

He acknowledges that there has been criticism stemming from the time that it has taken to pull things together. This is a long-term process, Zumwalt says, adding that the Park’s job is not to provide jobs but is to attract businesses that will need to employ skilled local residents—people like those UVI is preparing in its business curriculum or might train in the future.

“We are becoming much more focused on community engagement than we have been in the past,” Zumwalt says. “We are now positioned to do so, and I appreciate the community’s patience and support. We intend to be measured by results—starting now.”



UVI Leads V.I. Constitution Effort

If the United States Virgin Islands eventually adopts a constitution, territorial residents will owe a great deal to the University of the Virgin Islands. UVI has been playing a significant role in the effort – and that role promises to grow.

The University is officially charged with leading the public education drive, and it also has lent a helping hand in other ways.

“The University has said that we will help in any way we can,” says Tregenza Roach, who is coordinating the University’s effort.

Educating and informing the public is a crucial part of the process, as it will be up to voters to approve any document that the constitutional convention comes up with. That 30-member group has been meeting since October 2007.

“The whole idea, after it is adopted, is to use some traditional forms of communication that we have had in the Caribbean, as well as technology.” Roach says.

Even before the convention began, UVI coordinated a number of television programs, public forums and other activities designed to raise awareness of the effort.

The University has continued to spread the word, notably through the Web site it developed, www.itsourfuture.vi. That Web site, which has a wealth of information on the constitutional effort, has had 112,000 visitors, Roach says.

If history is any guide, UVI has its work cut out for it. Voters rejected two previous constitutions – in 1979 and 1981.

A large part of the current task, Roach says, is to help people understand what the constitution is and why it is important.

“The process of adopting a constitution by public vote is a novel idea,” he said. “Certainly, the U.S. Constitution was not adopted in this way... You have to acknowledge that you’re going to have a small percentage of people who are really, really interested.”

Another challenge is making sure people understand that the constitution would not change the relationship of the Virgin Islands to the United States. Though many see it as a step along the path toward political self-determination, the constitution would be a document affecting only the islands’ internal affairs – such matters

as the right to a free public education, the right to free access to beaches and the shoreline, and how local representatives are elected.

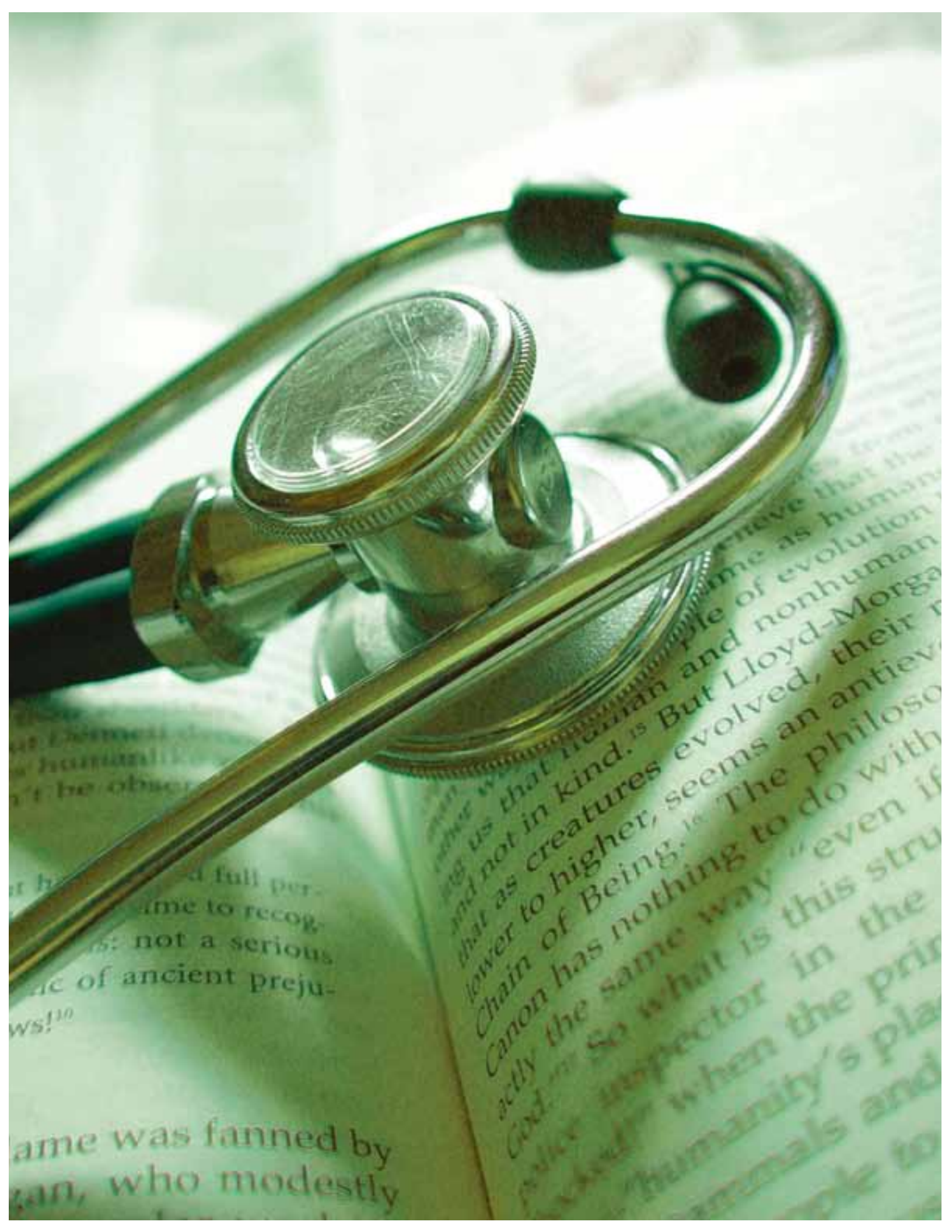
The constitution would replace the Revised Organic Act of 1954, a law passed by Congress that serves as the Virgin Islands’ de facto constitution.

UVI has assisted convention delegates by providing research and testifying before convention committees, and by providing meeting space to delegates, which helped lower costs.

Roach acknowledges that much work remains to be done.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- www.itsourfuture.vi was developed by the University of the Virgin Islands, which is coordinating the public education campaign for the islands’ constitution. The Web site includes background, history, links and a section for comments.
- www.viconstitution.com is the Web site of the Fifth Constitutional Convention. The site’s links include working notes from the convention committees, information on delegates and convention rules.



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Dr. Gloria Callwood, former Chair of UVI's Division of Nursing Education on the St. Thomas campus (left), welcomed Dr. John Ruffin, Director of the National Institutes of Health's National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities to UVI. The \$6 million NCMHD grant award to UVI was supported by V.I. Delegate to Congress Dr. Donna Christensen (right).

NEW HEALTH GRANT RESUSCITATES LIVES

By: Denise Stewart

The Virgin Islands and the entire Caribbean have for years faced challenges with access to information, diagnosis and treatment of diseases resulting in shortened lives for the young and old.

“We are a microcosm of the national population,” says Dr. Gloria Callwood, former chair of the Nursing Division on UVI's St. Thomas campus. “Our health outcomes are worse. African-Americans have a lower breast-cancer rate than the rest of the population but a higher death rate. We know we are a mirror to those populations in the states.”

What the mirror reflects is not a pretty picture: Almost a half million people in the Caribbean are living with HIV/AIDS. Many of them die. Many are orphans.

- Of adults in the Virgin Islands 8 percent have been diagnosed with diabetes. Thousands of others have the disease but do not know it.
- Six out of 10 Virgin Islanders are overweight or obese, putting them at risk of serious illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease.

To improve that picture, the University of the Virgin Islands has established a research center with the help of grants from the National Institutes of Health's National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities. The most recent grant of \$6 million was announced last September.

This five-year award will assist the UVI Division of Nursing in working within Virgin Islands communities to identify and address factors that contribute to poor health outcomes as compared to the majority population, says Callwood, who is principal investigator for the project.

The award is being used to establish the Caribbean Exploratory NCMHD Research Center for Excellence. The Center will focus on research, community outreach and mentoring. There are several such centers on the mainland and in the territories.

A search is underway for a center director. The center's first initiative will be a study to determine the prevalence of physical, emotional and sexual intimate-partner (IPA) abuse of women who get healthcare services. Previous studies have



Dr. John Ruffin, Director of the National Institutes of Health's National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities, visited UVI to announce the grant award.

“We are doing important work that will have significant impact and our students will be a part of it,” Callwood says. “We have been given a wonderful opportunity to positively impact the health outcomes of our people.”

identified IPA as a risk factor for a variety of physical and mental-health problems in several major controlled studies in the U.S. Battered health-care services six to eight times more often than non-abused patients and as a result have greater health-care costs, Callwood says.

The Center will collect additional data on IPA, health conditions and utilization of medical and mental-health care. The researchers also will examine Afro-Caribbean, African-American and other Virgin Island women’s experiences, preferences and concerns about IPA screening and policies.

This is the second time in three years that UVI has received a grant from the agency. In 2004, the UVI Division of Nursing received a \$1.6 million grant that allowed UVI to expand research in education and health in the Virgin Islands through creation of an Export Center.

“That grant allowed us to lay the foundation for the Export Center. Now we will build upon that foundation with this most recent effort,” says Callwood.

UVI’s nursing faculty established partnerships with researchers from Johns Hopkins University, Case Western Reserve University, the University of Florida and the University of Pittsburgh. Their research was published as *Women in the U.S. Virgin Islands: A Focused Study on the Needs of Caribbean Women* in December in the *Journal of the Black Nurses Association*

Officials with the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities have said that UVI is uniquely positioned for research because of the large minority population in the territory. About 110,000 peo-

ple currently live on St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix and Water Island. Findings from research at UVI could be used to help other areas of the country, according to Dr. John Ruffin, director of NCMHD.

Both the 2004 and 2007 grants come as a result of the passage of the Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act of 2000, which established NCMHD. That agency works to promote minority health and to eliminate health disparities. NIH defines health disparities as differences in the incidence, prevalence, morbidity, mortality and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups.

Since its programs began in 2001, NCMHD has provided more than \$300 million to support several hundred research, training, community-outreach, and capacity-building projects around the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Exploratory Research Center will help reduce and ultimately eliminate health disparities in the USVI, Callwood says. “When addressing issues of health disparities we must look at the factors that contribute to those disparities and we also must partner with the community to help us in addressing them,” she says.

UVI President Dr. Laverne E. Ragster praised Callwood and her team for their efforts leading to receipt of the grant. “I admire Dr. Callwood because she takes on challenges others would walk away from,” Ragster said. “Her current challenge has brought remarkable and far-reaching results.”

While the new Center will benefit the community long term there also are some

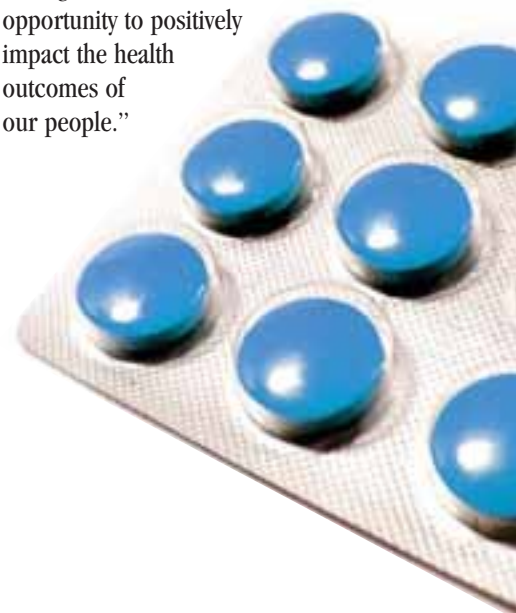
short-term benefits for students in the Division of Nursing.

Currently, the highest degree of nursing offered at UVI is the Bachelor’s degree available on its St. Thomas campus. Still, students who are pursuing under graduate degrees have opportunities to participate in the research and hone their skills, Callwood said.

In the future, the University would like to expand to include a master degree nursing program in its offerings. “We have developed an outline for the program. It currently is being reviewed by the faculty,” Callwood says. “It is our goal to provide our students with the highest level of training available.”

Already some students have gained certification to conduct research using human subjects. This is key in the preparation for research participation, Callwood says. These students will be prepared to participate in research in other settings, she added.

“We are doing important work that will have significant impact and our students will be a part of it,” Callwood says. “We have been given a wonderful opportunity to positively impact the health outcomes of our people.”



UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS AND ITS ACCREDITATION

By Denise Thorpe



In 1971, less than 10 years after the then College of the Virgin Islands was founded, the institution first gained accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. That accreditation was re-affirmed in November, and will now continue at the University of the Virgin Islands through 2017.

For colleges and universities, accreditation is official confirmation that they are offering first-rate programs and are meeting the highest standards in academics and institutional management.

“While we are a young University – only 46 years old – we are expected to perform as a 100 year-old-institution.,” UVI President Dr. LaVerne E. Ragster says. “Our faculty and staff work very hard to meet that challenge.”

These are challenging times. At a time when many small institutions and some historically black colleges and universities face accreditation obstacles because of finances and programs, those issues were not questioned by the accrediting team reviewing UVI.

“When an issue doesn’t even come up, that means it doesn’t exist. It means that we have sound programs and finances, and that speaks volumes,” Dr. Ragster explained. “The report of the visiting Evaluation Team re-affirmed our understanding of our areas of strengths and challenges. We are poised to take the opportunity that this reaffirmation process has given us to continue our efforts towards fulfilling VISION 2012 and our mission.”

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accredits degree-granting colleges and universities in the Middle States region, which includes Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

More than 500 institutions currently are members of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. The list includes prominent national and international universities such as Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., American University in Washington, D.C. and the London (England) Metropolitan University.

All colleges and institutions in MSCHE adhere to the same format for self-study and review to maintain their standing with the accrediting agency.

Dr. Ragster attributes UVI’s success to the hard work of the faculty and staff, both in guiding the process and working daily to maintain programs at the highest standard.

Accreditation is critical to UVI’s ability to receive federal funds and to participate in federal programs.

It is also important because accreditation:

- Assures the public that UVI is meeting the standards of the Commission on Higher Education, guaranteeing that its programs meet national and international quality standards;
- Ensures that other institutions will accept the credits of UVI students;

- Strengthens the University by providing an extensive self-study of programs and processes and
- Attests that UVI has met the criteria of its higher education mission, to set well-defined and appropriate goals for student learning and institutional effectiveness.

While UVI received an excellent report from the evaluation team, there were some areas identified for follow up review, Dr. Ragster says.

The University was asked to:

- Submit a progress letter on April 1, 2008, documenting the development and implementation of a faculty handbook that includes policies related to promotion and tenure;
- Provide a monitoring report on March 1, 2009 documenting the steps taken to strengthen shared governance, progress in the implementation of the new administrative structure and reorganization, and steps taken to improve communication to all campus constituencies regarding shared governance and the new administrative structure;
- Direct an early staff visits to discuss the Commission’s expectations for reporting and
- Direct the completion of a Periodic Review Report, which is due June 1, 2012.”

The effort to strengthen shared governance is expected to make all segments of the UVI community feel more connected.

“This means that we will work with all areas of our faculty, staff and student body to make certain they know they can have input on decisions made at the University,” Dr. Ragster says.

The Commission’s decision represents the culmination of the accreditation reaffirmation process, which started with the University’s completion of its self-study, followed by a site visit from an evaluation team, and the team’s final evaluation report.

The Evaluation Team commended UVI for:

- Transforming UVI’s mission into an outcomes-driven statement with an increased focus on the learners to be served;
- Using University resources to create a welcoming and pleasant environment;
- Forming a partnership with Florida International University and Global Crossing leading to a plan for connection to Internet2;
- Supporting academics by increasing the use of technology while also increasing the retention of science majors and
- Focusing on the natural and social environments of the Caribbean region as a core to the general education program.



Dr. LaVerne E. Ragster observes a student's chemistry experiment in a laboratory on the St. Thomas campus.

Dr. Ragster says, "The accreditation process afforded the University the opportunity to critically assess our activities in key areas of emphasis and provided us the opportunity to showcase our areas of strength and articulate areas where we would need to focus attention and work together to strengthen the institution."

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that defines, maintains, and promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources. It examines each institution as a whole, rather than specific programs within institutions.

THE PROCESS

The reaffirmation of accreditation announced on November 15, 2007 was the culmination of a process that actually began three years prior to that date in November 2004. That is when the president appointed an executive committee to lead the process. Two years of planning went into developing the hundreds of pages included self study, submitted to the accrediting agency in December 2006.

Dr. Frank Mills, professor of social sciences and director of UVI's Eastern Caribbean Center, served as chairman of the UVI team. Dr. Patricia Rhymer Todman, professor of psychology, was the co-chair.

More than 25 faculty and staff members had direct responsibilities for gathering information for areas in the self-study, but the entire university played a role.

"Early on, President Ragster stressed the importance of this process to the entire faculty," Mills says. "Everyone handled their responsibility because they knew what was expected."

UVI officials says an important part of the process was keeping everyone informed as the self-study and visits proceeded. A self-study Web site was established so that everyone could have access to the information.

"What the commission wanted was for us to look at ourselves even if it is painful," Mills says. "We had to look at things we did not do well 10 years ago, and ask if we made any particular improvement. This was a time for us to be analytical, rather than just descriptive."

Three people outside of the university were asked to review the documents.

"They gave their responses, and in some instances, we had to go back, make changes, and improve our study," Mills says.

A member of the UVI faculty since 1974, Mills is a veteran of the process. This is the third time he has led the University's accreditation team.

While everyone worked together because they realized the importance of the process and its potential outcome, still there were challenges.

"Some faculty thought this was an opportunity for them to air their grievances," he says. "We had to get everyone to understand that this is not a vehicle for airing all of your gripes and every difficult experience you have had."

For the accreditation team members, a bit of relief came with the submission of the self-study report to the MSCHE, but that was only the first round.

"In a sense, you never feel relief until the actual delivery of the findings from the chair of the site visit. Even then, you wonder what will they find that we did not deal with well enough," Mills says. "It is not until you have the delivery of the results on that final morning that you know it is done."

THE PRODUCT

In May, UVI granted more than 200 bachelor's and master's degrees at its Commencement ceremonies. Some graduates will go immediately into the job market while others will go on to graduate school.

Those graduates, Dr. Ragster says, will be equipped with the best educational preparation because of their studies and experiences at UVI.

UVI students have opportunities for learning beyond regular classes. For example, students in April participated in a model United Nations Conference to gain a better sense of international concerns, policies, and affairs.

In the weeks prior to graduation, more than 130 UVI students – 75 on St. Thomas and 55 on St. Croix – received awards, scholarships and divisional honors.

"The University's mission is to prepare students and to serve the entire community," Dr. Ragster says.

"That is why we strive every day, not only during the self-study period, but always, to maintain the highest credentials in accreditation."

Choir Reunion



It was 20 years in the making and when it finally happened, it exceeded Dr. Gloria Quinlan's wildest dreams.

The beloved former choir director of the College of the Virgin Islands and later University of the Virgin Islands choirs from 1979 until 1986, "Ms. G" as she is affectionately known, had been dreaming of reuniting with former UVI choir members for several years.

In March her dream became a reality when Dr. Quinlan returned to St. Thomas to host a CVI/UVI Choir Reunion. Dr. Quinlan was joined by her husband, Quincy Quinlan, a UVI alumnus and Rhodes Scholar. She was also joined by 26 members of the Huston-Tillotson University (HTU) Concert Choir, where she is a professor. Reunion activities included a reception at UVI, a reunion concert, church service and a beach picnic.

"We are still on a high from that incredible experience! It was such a joy to see everyone after so many years and to make such beautiful music again," Quincy Quinlan said in a letter to reunion participants. "I believe that everyone who came was inspired, enriched, motivated and uplifted, so much so that people are already talking about doing it again," Quinlan said.

"Additionally, there were so many developments on campus to catch up with. Those of you who were unable to make the reunion were sorely missed."

The reunion concert was the main event. Held at the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School, more than 90 people performed. About 70 former CVI/UVI choir members attended the event, which drew an audience of about 300 people.

The reunion steering committee was headed by Jennifer Toussaint, along with Jemima Parris, Dale Morton, Yvonne Francis and Dr. Utha Williams.

Reunion t-shirts with the UVI and HTU logos were made to commemorate the event. The t-shirts were such a hit that they sold out immediately. A DVD of the reunion concert was also made.

Former UVI Choir Director Dr. Gloria Quinlan, center, receives a standing ovation as she is ushered to the stage by her husband, Rhodes Scholar and UVI alumnus, Quincy Quinlan at a reception at UVI.

Spotlight on Dale Morton

With his camera bag slung over his shoulder and his constant picture-taking at many UVI events, Dale Morton may be considered the St. Thomas campus' official photographer.



Dale Morton

But then again, with his constant reminders about alumni activities and a mental list of hundreds of UVI alumni, Morton may be mistaken for UVI's Alumni Affairs director. He is neither; yet he is both. Morton's actual title at UVI is Extension Agent II at the Cooperative Extension Service (CES). Yet many officials around the campus rely on him for taking pictures. He is also often called upon to liaise between administration and alumni. Morton takes it all in good stride.

"I get excellent job satisfaction from the impact we have in the community," Morton says of his role in CES. His responsibilities include coordinating the VI Healthy Homes Program and evaluating all aspects of natural resources in the Virgin Islands. "This job is never a boring

one." His other defacto roles, coupled with his almost three decades of service to the University, give him a different perspective than many other UVI employees.

"I've built up quite a collection of UVI history," he says. Morton has also volunteered at Reichhold Center for 26 years, served as yearbook advisor and photographer, was a student activist, served as an officer of UVI's Student Government Association and was a UVI Carnival troupe member.

His "greatest joy" as an employee was his participation in the book "Island Peak to Coral Reef, a Field Guide to the Plant and Marine Communities of the Virgin Islands," which was published in February 2006. The 214 page high-gloss, waterproof book takes readers on an ecological journey across the territory. Morton contributed more than 60 percent of the book's terrestrial photos.

Morton's long history with UVI all started with a young boy who wanted to get a higher formal education. "I came with the zest to get my biology degree and go back home to make a difference," he says. Home is his native St. Kitts, which he planned on returning to in 1983, after earning his degree from UVI. Returning to St. Kitts is something Morton has yet to do. He says he still plans to return to St. Kitts to make a difference – but only the Lord knows when and in what capacity. In the meanwhile, Morton is making all the difference he can, at UVI.

Student Can't Stay Away from UVI



"...What good is it if you have this great scientific find, if you can't convey it? The whole purpose is to improve the lives of those around you." — Erik Emeric

Like many students, Erik Emeric did not take the transition from high school to UVI seriously. And it showed.

"For reasons which were well within my control, I was placed on academic probation at the end of my fourth semester, and then dismissed for the same reasons at the end of my fifth semester," recalled Emeric.

After leaving UVI, Emeric began working as a barber. He admits he knew even then that he was not living up to his potential; even referring to it as the "mental morgue" during his off hours.

"There were days when I went home with \$500 in my wallet. But I was so unchallenged, mentally unstimulated. I was just making money," Emeric remembers. Several years later, a person who stayed at UVI until graduating persuaded Emeric to take a second shot at college.

"I ran into Taetia Dorsett-Philips," Emeric recounted. "We had taken a number of courses together and often studied together. When I asked how she was doing, she told me that she was in graduate school working on her masters. I was embarrassed that I had not followed through and finished my degree so I went back to UVI and finished. I think if I had not run into Taetia that day, I might still be underachieving."

He is surprised that he got off track in the first place.

"I started out well through my first year and a half at UVI and I managed to earn a decent GPA. Then, those maturity issues became a bigger issue... a major one." He credits Dorsett-Philips and Drs. Teresa Turner and Richard Hall at UVI for their embracing him upon his return to the campus.

Today, Emeric is anything but an underachiever. He is currently pursuing his doctorate in biology, which he expects to complete this fall. Following graduation, Eric wants to do post-doctoral studies

Even his years away from the classroom served as a learning experience.

"I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world," he says of that experience. "It taught me how to talk and connect to people. What good is it if you have this great scientific find, if you can't convey it? The whole purpose is to improve the lives of those around you."

Erik says that after he completes his post-doctoral studies, he knows exactly how he wants to improve the lives of those around him – by returning to UVI yet again, this time as a professor. He is confident that he will be able to make the case for students remaining in college instead of dropping out and delaying their education.

He will be able to make that case as well as anyone.

Alumni Breakfast 2008

The St. Thomas-St. John Chapter of the UVI Alumni Association recognized four alumni at its 6th Annual Alumni Recognition Breakfast on June 7, in the Dining Pavilion on UVI's St. Thomas campus.

Trevor A.C. Connor, DDS (1983), was selected to receive the Distinguished Alumni Award. Debra Elisa Gottlieb (1995), the budget director at the Office of Management and Budget, was given the Alumni Honor Award. Eltino S. Pickering (2004), the drillmaster of the Superior Court Rising Stars Youth Steel Orchestra, was presented with the Alumni Horizon Award. Senator-at-Large Carmen Wesselhoft (1985), received the Alumni Award of Excellence.

UVI President Dr. LaVerne E. Ragster welcomed those in attendance and called attention to recent developments of which UVI alumni can be proud. She said that the University is "offering more and more."

Wesselhoft, who said that she spent her "entire professional career" at UVI before being elected to the Virgin Islands Legislature, praised the University and its programs. "UVI alumni are able

to compete with the best and the brightest anywhere," she said. "I am so proud to be a part of the extended UVI family."

Pickering, who said he was "honored and privileged" to accept his award, praised his mother for her persistence in seeing that he attend UVI. "College was not on my agenda," he said. Pickering later realized that his education was pivotal. "By accepting this award I can continue to be a role model to my students and teach them that education is the key to your success," he said.

Although Dr. Connor could not attend the event in person, his videotaped message, which was produced by students of the Summer Youth Moviemaking Workshop, was well received. "I wish the University of the Virgin Islands much success for the future," Dr. Connor said, while congratulating the other honorees.

"Thank you for bestowing this award on me. I am humbled by the esteem it signifies," Gottlieb said. Her son, Odari Thomas, who was named Student of the Year of the Charlotte Amalie High School Class of 2008, will enroll at UVI in the fall.



UVI Alumni Elisa Gottlieb, Eltino S. Pickering and Sen. Carmen Wesselhoft



Dr. Trevor Connor



Radio personality Tom Joyner and his wife Donna Richardson-Joyner sport the head pieces, spears and shields they received from the Shaka Zulus cultural group while on St. Thomas for the UVI-hosted Buccaneer Beach Party. The beach party welcomed Joyner, a UVI supporter, and passengers from his Fantastic Voyage cruise to the University. Bottom: UVI President Dr. LaVerne E. Ragster sits with Joyner and comedian and actress Kym Whitley at Brewer's Bay for the Buccaneer Beach Party.

UVI President Dr. LaVerne E. Ragster sits with Joyner and comedian and actress Kym Whitley at Brewer's Bay for the Buccaneer Beach Party.



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The island of St. Croix's scenic northwest shoreline. Photo by Eric Johnson

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