

TESTIMONY OF PRESIDENT DAVID HALL  
UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENERGY  
AND TECHNOLOGY  
28TH LEGISLATURE  
OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

EARL B. OTTLEY LEGISLATIVE HALL  
ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Good afternoon, Chairman Barshinger and members of the Committee on Economic Development, Energy and Technology, other members of the 28<sup>th</sup> Legislature present, other testifiers, members of the Press, persons in the viewing and listening audiences, ladies and gentlemen. My name is David Hall and it is indeed an honor for me to appear before the Committee on Economic Development, Energy and Technology of the 28<sup>th</sup> Legislature to offer testimony on Bill No. 28-0134. Here with me today are members of my Cabinet, to include Provost Al Hassan Musah and Mr. Vincent Samuel, Vice President for Administration and Finance, who are joining me in the Well. Also in attendance are Dr. Eustace Esdaille, Interim Dean for the School of Business, and Dr. Ronald Harrigan, Interim Dean for the School of Education.

As the only institution of higher education (IHE) in the Territory, UVI has a tremendous role to play with respect to its contributions to this community. Recognizing the reality of this, UVI has as its vision statement the following: *The University of the Virgin Islands will be an exceptional U.S. institution of higher education in the Caribbean dedicated to student success, committed to excellence, and **pledged to enhancing the social and economic transformation of the U.S. Virgin Islands.*** Of particular note, given the proposed legislation before us today, is the last phrase of the vision statement in which UVI aspires to enhance the social and economic transformation of the Territory.

To be great, we must add new programs in areas that are needed in the marketplace and the economy. Thus, at its March meeting, the UVI Board of Trustees approved a Master of Arts in Psychology program in the area of Counseling Psychology. This expansion is directly related to UVI's mission and vision. We are currently exploring new programs to include a Bachelor of Arts in Resort and Hotel Management, and other health and science related degrees. We are also exploring Centers of Excellence in the areas of Renewable Energy, Leadership, Economic Policy, Spirituality and Professionalism, and other areas where we can contribute to the life and vitality of the Territory and the region.

**Bill No. 28-0134**

Having set the context within which UVI is currently operating, I will now offer some thoughts on the proposed bill which states that

*The Public Finance Authority is authorized to enter into a memorandum of understanding ("MOU") with the University of the Virgin Islands and the St. Croix Career and Technical Education Center to incorporate the disciplines of both educational institutions into the management and operations of the Kings Alley Hotel in Christiansted, St. Croix.*

As noted previously, UVI is committed to working with both the Virgin Islands Government and the private sector to contribute to the enhancement of the economy of the Territory. As President, I am committed to UVI maintaining a prominent role and place within the community.

I fully respect the intent of the proponents of Bill No. 28-0134 in wanting to provide opportunities for our students in the area of Hotel and Resort Management. I believe, however, that it may be prudent to allow the entities to be impacted by the proposed legislation to come together to identify a wide array of opportunities and the most viable avenues through which we may accomplish the general intent of the proposed legislation. Because of the limitations associated with the targeted establishment, the breadth and depth of experiential learning for our students, if limited to this establishment, may not yield optimal outcomes, although I am certain that optimal outcomes are desired by this committee, the entire legislation and all who would be impacted.

Additionally, in instances where there may be major curricula changes, the addition and expansion of academic programs, and the adoption or revision of major policy documents, it is important that the University Administration take those matters to the Board of Trustees, which has ultimate governance authority for the institution. Thus, the legislation of a relationship may not be the most efficacious approach to the desired intent of the proposed legislation.

Yet, I would like to share with this committee that we have begun preliminary work toward the establishment of a Bachelor of Arts degree in Resort and Restaurant Management. Some of you

may recall that, in the past, UVI has offered an Associate of Arts degree in Resort and Restaurant Management. However, that program has been suspended for some time now. During the 2006-2007 Academic Year, an external review team conducted a thorough review of the Associate's degree program. Based on that review, the team recommended the establishment of a four-year degree program in Resort and Restaurant Management. This recommendation was supported by the faculty in the School of Business and has been embraced by members of the hospitality industry, with whom we have begun a dialogue relative to the possibilities that such an opportunity affords both the University and the hotel and resort establishments across the territory.

As President, I supported the recommendations of the School of Business and encouraged the School to set Fall Semester 2011 as the outside date for offering the new degree in Resort and Restaurant Management. As a first step, we convened a meeting on February 19, 2010 with key representatives from the hospitality industry to discuss plans, and solicit feedback.

The November meeting with the hospitality partners was very promising and produced consensus on several items. Some of the more important were:

1. The concept of a bachelor's degree in hospitality and resort management is timely and relevant. Graduates from the program would be in great demand in the US Virgin Islands;
2. The design of the bachelor's degree curriculum should aim at breadth of coverage to provide graduates maximum flexibility in their choice of career pathways in the hospitality industry;
3. **A well-rounded and meaningful internship experience for all students enrolled in the program is a critical aspect of the bachelor's program.** The industry partners would provide assistance in designing the internship as well as opportunities to intern at their respective establishments;
4. UVI will maintain collaboration with the hospitality industry as it implements the ideas and programs that meet the changing industry needs. In that context, UVI will work with the Hospitality Association's Education and Training Committee to establish an advisory board that will guide responsive program development;
5. The hospitality industry will collaborate with and support UVI's efforts to deliver the types of programs and services that the industry needs.

We anticipate a follow up meeting with the hospitality partners in the near future to continue our discussions on the proposed plan of action.

As we move forward with planning, we intend to examine ways to collaborate with the Department of Education and include the appropriate key personnel in discussions of the most viable pathways between the programs. We believe that collaboration regarding the King's Alley Hotel can best be addressed within this broader context of the planned Resort and Restaurant Management program.

I applaud this committee for raising this critical need and bringing together all the appropriate parties. On behalf of the University of the Virgin Islands, I thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on this matter. As President, I assure you that the critical, underlying need which you have identified will receive my utmost attention and support. Thank you for your continued support of the University of the Virgin Islands.