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UVI Unites Over 3,000 Would-be Scientists From Home and Abroad For NASA's STEM Engagement and Educator Programs

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The Shuttle Independence sits atop the Shuttle Carrier Aircraft with JSC and Rocket Park in the background at the NASA Space Center in Houston, TX. By. GETTY IMAGES

The University of the Virgin Islands announced Tuesday that it is hosting more than 3,000 students and educators from the USVI as well as students from 22 states, 30 countries and two U.S. territories as part of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Engagement and educator outreach initiatives.

The event, which is being held in a hybrid format, allowing both in-person and online participation, has attracted students from countries including India, Scotland, South Africa and the United States, and will bring together NASA scientists, faculty from UVI and other institutions, and Virgin Islanders currently affiliated with NASA facilities to participate in discussions about STEM education and careers, NASA internships, and citizen science activities the agency offers, UVI said.

“This event represents a tremendous opportunity for our young people to become even more interested and engaged in the fascinating world of STEM education and research, which help to expand the boundaries of human discovery and knowledge,” stated UVI President Dr. David Hall. “UVI is proud to be able to host this gathering of incredibly talented scientists along with some of the brightest young minds and future leaders to learn together in an engaging forum in the beautiful U.S. Virgin Islands.”

According to the release, joining Mr. Hall will be Dr. Daryll Pine, president of the University of the Maryland, principal investigator of the Engineering for US All (e4usa) National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, which supports pre-engineering in high schools across the nation. Dr. David Morris, associate professor of Physics and director of UVI’s Etelman Observatory, directs UVI’s participation in the grant, UVI said.

The outreach is coordinated by UVI’s College of Science and Mathematics and will be held from January 23, through January 27 as part of NASA’s Educator Professional Development Collaborative (EPDC), a national educator professional development system composed of and designed to serve STEM educators at all levels, including K-12 educators, pre-service teachers, higher education faculty and informal educators. Its mission is to guide and support a broader group of educators to use the best of NASA’s professional learning resources.

UVI said students from the Addelita Cancryn Intermediate and Junior High School, St. Croix Central High School, Giff Hill School in St. John, and Gordonsville High School in Tennessee will make presentations to NASA scientists and subsequently respond to questions from the scientists about their projects. Afterwards, NASA experts will explain how students can join the agency ranks after earning a college degree and serve on teams around the world conducting and supporting space research and activity.

Also joining the event will be Virgin Islanders Simmione Fullwood, an engineer now working at the Kennedy Space Center, and Dr. Rudolph King from the Langley Research Center.

“UVI’s physics and engineering program and our students have benefited tremendously over the past decade from our relationship with NASA,” said Dr. Morris, whose research is supported by several NASA grants. “NASA’s support of the physics program and new engineering concentration at UVI will train an entirely new generation of engineering talent right here in the USVI. The experience that our students gain by working at UVI on NASA programs is leading them to excellent job opportunities in the USVI and abroad, even at NASA centers.”