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UVI Faculty Asks Senate for \$1.3 Million For Employees as Turnover Spirals and Education is Impacted

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UVI's Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix

In a formal letter dated September 4, the president and executive committee of the University of the Virgin Islands Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (UVI-AAUP), have submitted a plea to the Senate Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance for additional funding. The letter supports UVI President David Hall's request for \$1.3 million in additional funding to raise faculty salaries in the FY2024 budget.

[As reported by the Consortium in August](#), Mr. Hall's chief concerns is the "inability of UVI to offer competitive compensation to its academic professionals," which has resulted in a 50 percent

faculty turnover rate over the past five years. The AAUP letter further highlights that these noncompetitive salaries have led to faculty positions going unfilled or being filled by underqualified candidates, affecting the quality of education at UVI.

The AAUP raises questions about the fairness of the government's treatment of UVI employees. The letter cites Governor Bryan's allocation of \$18 million for a 3 percent pay raise for all government employees in his FY 2024 budget. However, UVI was conspicuously left out of this allocation. This comes despite the fact that UVI faculty were subjected to an 8 percent pay cut alongside other government employees in 2011 and included in the repayment of that cut in 2021.

The letter outlines that faculty salaries at UVI have been struggling to keep up with inflation since 2004 when the merit-based compensation system was abolished by the UVI Board of Trustees. While a Collective Bargaining Agreement was negotiated in 2020 to establish minimum salary levels, putting UVI in the 40th percentile of American higher education institutions, this agreement expired in August 2022. Since then, faculty have been working without a union contract due to a stalemate in negotiations.

The AAUP concludes by offering a suggestion to the Finance Committee. It proposes that each year's appropriation to UVI should include a percentage of the university's total payroll, adjusted for core inflation, specifically earmarked for employee raises. This, AAUP says, would solve the problem of eroding faculty salaries, the inability to attract and retain qualified staff, and the resulting negative impact on educational quality at UVI.