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Howard University and U.S. Virgin Islands Launch Major Health Technology Initiatives

New collaborative programs in public health informatics and telehealth announced

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The Howard University College of Pharmacy (HUCOP) Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s Office of Health Information Technology (OHIT) have announced two groundbreaking initiatives: Public Health Informatics & Technology for the US Virgin Islands, a workforce training program, and the Digital Research Initiative.

These initiatives, aimed at advancing public health informatics, health information, and telehealth, signify a major collaborative effort between academia and government.

Under the leadership of Howard University Provost Anthony Wutoh, Dean Ranti Akiyode of HUCOP, and Zane Networks LLC, a DC-based health transformation company, the initiatives have been successfully launched. Key faculty members Dr. Mary K. Awuonda, Dr. Pamela Carter-Nolan, and Dr. John Kwagyan, in collaboration with USVI government agencies and the Schneider Regional Medical Center, have been instrumental in their establishment.

The Office of Health Information Technology, created in 2021, is focused on enhancing health and wellness in the USVI through innovative health information technology resources. The two major initiatives include:

1. **Workforce Training Initiative (PHIT4VI Program):** Tailored specifically for the USVI, the PHIT4VI exchange program allows students and professionals from the Virgin Islands to participate in public health informatics and training programs at Howard University. The program comprises elective courses, bootcamps, and workshops. The inaugural cohort has eight participants gaining insights into public health informatics, health IT systems, and hands-on training with electronic health record and health information exchange data systems.
2. **Digital Research Initiative:** Centered on collaborative telehealth research, this initiative is facilitated through HUCOP's Telepharmacy and Population Health Center (HUTEPH), under the leadership of Dr. Mary K. Awuonda. Launched in April 2023, the project aims to initiate a telehealth-supported, pharmacist-led care program and enhance the existing medication management program at the Schneider Regional Medical Center in St. Thomas.

Dean Akiyode of HUCOP remarked on the alignment of these efforts with the college's vision and strategic plan to expand its research and training efforts. "For HUCOP these efforts are well aligned with the college's vision and strategic plan to expand its research and training efforts beyond mainland U.S.," Akiyode said.

Michelle Francis, Director of OHIT, expressed her enthusiasm for the projects, noting their alignment with Governor Bryan's vision for integrated healthcare. "I am thrilled to see the efforts over the 18 months coming to fruition in ways that tangibly benefit Virgin Islanders," stated Francis. "It has been an honor and pleasure to help manifest Governor Bryan's vision for integrated and enhanced health care through re-kindling the relationship with Howard University and partnering in ways that ultimately improve health outcomes while also positively impacting our workforce and economy."

These partnerships represent a long-term strategy to expand training and research between the U.S. Virgin Islands and Howard University College of Pharmacy.

For more information on OHIT, visit www.ohitusvi.com. Howard University, founded in 1867, continues its legacy as a leading research university with a commitment to serving the African American community and beyond.