

Post-Hurricane Property Insurance Premium Increase of \$886,000 and G.E.R.S. Contribution Hike Impact UVI FY 2021 Budget of \$40.2 Million

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University of the Virgin Islands, St. Croix By. ERNICE GILBERT/ VI CONSORTIUM

In the regular session of its quarterly meeting on March 7, on the St. Thomas Campus, the University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees unanimously approved a Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations request of \$40.2 million to cover the University's operations and programs.

"Our appropriation remains in line with FY 2020 with the exception of two key areas that we did not have much control over," said UVI Board of Trustees Vice Chair Oran Roebuck, chair of Finance and Budget Committee. The Government Employees Retirement System contribution increased from 20.5 percent to 23.5 percent and there was a post-hurricane increase in the property

insurance premium of over \$886,000. The University's request also includes a request for \$500,000 to address deferred maintenance programs.

"We understand that the government remains in a challenging position so we have maintained our appropriation request with the exception of those areas that we really need to adjust for," said Board Trustee Vice Chair Roebuck.

The university's fiscal year 2020 budget, which the board approved in 2019, [was \\$47.1 million](#).

During his report to the Board, UVI President Dr. David Hall said that he was delighted that the University's Department of Computer and Computational Sciences (CSC) introduced its first certificate in Applied Computer Science Technology, coordinated by UVI Professor Timothy Kentopp. "One of the things that the territory has been asking the University to respond to, is providing vocational training or non-degree training for high school students or adults," Dr. Hall said. This two-semester certificate program is not only offered to undergraduates, but also to high-school students and the wider community interested in Computer and Information Technology. The ACS Tech certificate is designed as a career certificate to provide a population of students not currently served by traditional full-time degree programs. "This is one way we are trying to address work force needs," said President Hall. "I want to congratulate our computer science program for being able to take a lead in this regard."

During the President's Report to the Board, Dr. Hall spoke of 17 UVI students who attended the 19th Annual Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF) Leadership Institute Conference in Washington, D.C. last fall. UVI students, Renell Agard, Iris Battiste, Kayla Francis, Sabreen Noubani, Alesha Petersen, Requel Petersen, and Kelvina Salters, attended representing the Albert A. Sheen Campus. KymBre'Una Daniels, Sherkquan Henry, Christopher McDonald, Khaleilah Krall, Joshua Mitchell, Felicea Fontanelle, Ozzeisha Liburd, Roberto Tirado, Jair Smith, and Khefren Sackey represented the St. Thomas Campus.

Students secured interviews and networking opportunities with various companies and agencies, to include Caterpillar, Wells Fargo, Walmart E-Commerce, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), J.P Morgan Chase and Microsoft.

"Our Dean's List Reception has become one of the most popular events that happens on both campuses," Dr. Hall told Board members. "I am extremely moved by parents, family members and other supporters that come out to this event and cheer for those students that excel academically." The University hosted its annual Dean's List Receptions on Nov. 3, 2019 on St. Thomas and Nov. 17, 2019 on St. Croix. The Dean's List Reception is a special recognition program hosted by the Office of the President that celebrates the high academic achievement of students who made the Dean's List. "At some Universities, sporting events is where you bring out people and you develop school pride, but for us academic achievement has become that. The Sports and Fitness Center was near full to capacity. Some may criticize that, but I am proud of that because it says that we are celebrating academic excellence." To make the list, undergraduate students must have at least 12 semester hours of coursework and maintain a semester grade point average of 3.20 or higher for the previous semester, and earned no grade lower than a C, with no incomplete grades or remedial courses.

"We can be very proud that enrollment is up, programs are expanding, our physical facilities continue to improve and expand," said Board Chairman Henry Smock. "Of course, we know Dr. Hall and the rest of the University are not resting on their laurels; they continue to look for innovative ways to continue to make this a great institution. We continue to expect great things

from UVI.”

As is customary, President Hall highlighted the excellence and commitment of those UVI employees or units that have performed exceptionally with the President’s Appreciation Award. This quarter’s award was presented to Leslyn Tonge and Tamika Thomas Williams.

Leslyn Tonge, an administrative specialist in the Office of the Provost, received the award for her leadership with the Passport to the World program.

“None of the educational and cultural aspects of our trip to Ghana could have happened without there being a leader,” Dr. Hall said. “We were impressed by the leadership that Leslyn Tonge has provided to this effort. It is one thing to hear about someone’s contribution but it is another thing to see it close-up and I was blessed to be able to do that.”

Among some of the highlights of the trip to Ghana, the President mentioned their work with the students at Becky’s Home, an all-inclusive orphanage and the Tetteh-Occlooo State School for the Deaf.

Through this trip, the University was able to establish a relationship with the University of Professional Studies Accra (Ghana). “We were able to cement our relationship with the University who will be offering certificate programs through that University,” Dr. Hall said. “Our Public Management program which we offer here and in St. Martin, we will now offer in Ghana.”

The President also highlighted their visit to the Assin Manso Slave River. “It was a very emotional and spiritual moment for all 36 of us who walked the path that many of our ancestors walked, bathed in the same river that they had their last bath in before being placed in dungeons and shipped to the Caribbean and America,” Dr. Hall said.

The Passport to the World program has organized several trips since its inception in 2015. “This was the first time I had the honor of participating and although I was very supportive of this program before, having experienced it myself and seen the educational benefits that come through the exchanges that occur, I am even more committed to this program,” Dr. Hall expressed. The President also noted the significance of visiting Ghana during its “Year of Return.” “To visit during this period where the country and government was inviting African Americans to come back, that made this an extra special event.”

Also receiving the President’s Award was Director of Public Relations, Tamika Thomas Williams, for her lead role on the relaunch of the UVI magazine. “Our UVI Magazine, which has been dormant for quite some time, was resurrected in the past academic year and it only came about because of the leadership and dedication of our Public Relations Director, Tamika Thomas Williams,” Dr. Hall said. “She was able to pull together individuals who could write stories about UVI and highlight our student achievements, and was able to capture the steam of innovation and weave it into a wonderful and impressive online and hardcopy magazine, which is called Eye on UVI.”

While in executive session, the Board ratified the actions of the Executive Committee meeting of the Board on Jan. 29, and Feb. 24, 2020. The Board:

- Approved the granting of an honorary degree to former U.S. Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch
- Approved for the UVI administration, to explore the possibility of UVI engaging in a contract with Scholarly to assist in recruiting students.

- Authorized the President and Vice President of Administration and Finance to purchase the leasehold improvements of VI Finest Foods, LLC while awaiting the approval necessary to acquire the fee simple at a later date from the Virgin Islands Port Authority.
- Approved a new risk assessment list.

Also, while in executive session, the Board approved the Nov. 2, 2019 executive session meeting minutes, addressed personnel matters and received an update on legal matters.

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Saturday, June 20, 2020.

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