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## VI-EPSCoR Conference to Spotlight Small Island Resilience and Research Progress

The University of the Virgin Islands hosts the annual "Creating an Impactful Virgin Islands Research Ecosystem" conference on November 7-8, featuring discussions on Ridge to Reef research outcomes, STEM education, and local sustainability initiatives

Community Center / **Published On October 25, 2024 06:27 AM /**

Staff Consortium **October 25, 2024**

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The V.I. Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (VI-EPSCoR) is preparing to host its annual conference titled "Creating an Impactful Virgin Islands Research Ecosystem" on November 7-8, 2024.

The event, which will be held at the University of the Virgin Islands, aims to bring together researchers, students, and community members to share insights and outcomes from the final year

of the Ridge to Reef (R2R) project, a research initiative funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) focusing on small island resilience.

According to a UVI release issued Thursday, this year's conference is set to highlight the critical role of a resilient research ecosystem in the Virgin Islands and underscore the impact of STEM education in strengthening the local community. It will also provide an opportunity for students to present their ongoing research and projects, offering a platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration.

"We are excited to welcome participants to our annual conference, where we will delve into the significant progress made during the R2R project," stated Dr. Kim Waddell, director of VI-EPSCoR and principal investigator for Ridge to Reef. Dr. Waddell emphasized the event as a valuable occasion for stakeholders to connect and support the growth of the territory's research community.

The conference will feature a range of expert talks, including a presentation by Dr. Nicole Angeli, director of the U.S. Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife, on the subject of Fish Ecology and Herbivory. According to the release, her talk will focus on the importance of understanding and preserving the balance within marine ecosystems.

Another key speaker, Dr. Sandra Richardson from NSF's EPSCoR section, will share insights into the organization's efforts to boost STEM research capacity in underserved regions. Other notable speakers include Kristina Edwards from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Michalrose Ravalier from the Virgin Islands Department of Education, and Howard Forbes Jr., the Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service Coordinator.

Participants will have the chance to engage in workshops, interactive sessions, and networking opportunities throughout the two-day event. The conference aims to emphasize the practical applications of scientific advancements, showcasing how recent research can contribute to the sustainability and resilience of the Virgin Islands.

The event will commence with opening remarks from Dr. Kim Waddell, Dr. Rick Nader, Vice President for Research and Economic Business Development, and Dr. Safiya George, President of the University of the Virgin Islands, setting the tone for two days of productive discussions and exchanges.

For registration details, a full schedule, and information about speakers, interested individuals can visit the VI-EPSCoR website at [www.viepscor.org/24-annual-conference](http://www.viepscor.org/24-annual-conference).