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Dr. Suzette Lettsome Appointed President of Virgin Islands State Nurses Association

As the new VISNA president, Dr. Lettsome brings extensive experience and a passion for fostering a strong, collaborative nursing community that supports health and wellness across the Virgin Islands

Health / **Published On November 15, 2024 06:58 AM /**

Staff Consortium **November 15, 2024**

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Dr. Lettsome was inducted as the new President of the Virgin Islands State Nurses Association (VISNA) on Friday, November 1, 2024. She was inducted by Judge Emile Henderson III (who is also a part-time faculty member for UVI CLASS). By. UVI

The University of the Virgin Islands announced on Thursday that Dr. Suzette Lettsome, an assistant professor in UVI's School of Nursing, has been named the new president of the Virgin Islands State Nurses Association (VISNA). The role places Dr. Lettsome at the helm of a key organization advocating for the professional growth of nurses and the health of Virgin Islands

residents.

Originally from St. Thomas, Dr. Lettsome brings extensive expertise and a strong educational background to her new position, according to the UVI press release. She is a UVI alumna with a bachelor of science in nursing and also holds a master's degree in public health nursing from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, as well as a doctorate in educational leadership from Case Western Reserve University in Ohio.

Her professional experience spans nearly a decade in community health nursing and three years as a Registered Nurse at Schneider Regional Medical Center on St. Thomas. Dr. Lettsome has served as an assistant professor at UVI since 2007 and has contributed to research through her role as a research assistant at UVI's Caribbean Exploratory Research Center (CERC).

Dr. Lettsome emphasized the vital role that professional associations like VISNA play in both guiding practicing nurses and mentoring future professionals. "As a nurse, it is an expectation and obligation to belong and actively participate in professional nursing associations. As professors, we are grooming our students and preparing them to enter the professional world," she explained.

In her vision for VISNA, Dr. Lettsome aims to create a more cohesive network among Virgin Islands nurses, regardless of their workplace setting. "In my role as president of the VISNA, I want to bring nurses together—whether they are working in schools, clinics, or private practice—to support them, to advocate for them, encourage further education and move the profession forward as well as make a greater impact in the health and wellness of our community," she stated.

Dr. Lettsome also stressed the need for mutual support within the nursing community, particularly in a small territory where many nurses operate independently. "We have nurses that have wonderful skills and do exceptional things in the Territory, but they do it alone. We want to be there to support them and as an association we want to give to the body of knowledge to better the quality of nursing care," she said.

Dr. Lisa Lewis, dean of UVI's School of Nursing, praised Dr. Lettsome's dedication and her new role with VISNA. "Dr. Lettsome's leadership in the Virgin Islands State Nurses Association is a remarkable achievement that reflects her passion for elevating the standards of nursing. We are immensely proud to have her as part of our faculty, guiding our students with her expertise and vision for a stronger nursing community in the Virgin Islands," she remarked.

Dr. Lettsome's leadership of VISNA comes at a significant time as the association renews its focus on advocacy, educational development, and unity within the nursing profession.