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UVI and RTPark Break Ground on Solar Farm to Train Students and Cut Fossil Fuel Use by 60%

The 423kW solar farm, supported by a FEMA mitigation grant, will advance UVI's energy strategy while offering students immersive training in clean energy installation, monitoring, and innovation through a dedicated teaching array.

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More sustainable power generation capacity is coming to the Virgin Islands, with the University of the Virgin Islands and UVI's Research and Technology Park officially breaking ground on their solar farm project this week.

During the ground-breaking ceremony on Monday, RTPark Executive Director Eric Sonnier spoke about the impact this project will have on the territory. "We are not only reducing our

carbon footprint but also creating hands-on learning opportunities that will equip UVI students with the skills needed to thrive in the green economy,” he declared. “Ultimately, it is about empowering the next generation of innovators and ensuring a resilient future of the Virgin Islands.”

The new ground-mounted, 423kW solar farm will replace a previous roof array that sustained significant damage during the 2017 hurricanes. The project, funded by A Federal Emergency Management Agency Hazard Mitigation grant, “directly aligns with UVI's broader Energy Management Strategy, which targets a 60% reduction in fossil fuel use across the institution,” noted a press release from RTPark.

In keeping with UVI's mandate as an institution of higher learning, the project will also include a 2kW modular teaching array, which will allow students enrolled in UVI's Renewable Energy Technology associate's degree program to learn “in-demand technical skills in system monitoring, installation, and clean energy innovation,” the press release notes.

“This kind of immersive learning is essential,” said UVI's Caribbean Green Technology Center Director Dr. Gregory Guannel.

“Projects like the UVI RTPark Solar Farm are integral to our GRAND Momentum strategic vision,” UVI President Dr. Safiya George noted. “We are preparing our students to lead in industries that are vital to our region's resilience and sustainability.”

The solar farm, which is being built by VOLT Energy, LLC, is expected to be completed by August 2026.