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UVI to Confer 288 Degrees as Class of 2025 Celebrates Resilience, Achievement, and New Beginnings

UVI will honor 288 graduates across two campuses with commencement ceremonies on May 15 and 16, featuring addresses by top students, historic military commissions, horticulture program firsts, and keynote remarks by actor Hill Harper.

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The University of the Virgin Islands has announced that it will confer 288 degrees during its 2025 Commencement Ceremonies, which will take place on Thursday, May 15, under the tent on the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix, and on Friday, May 16, at the Elridge W. Blake Sports and Fitness Center on the Orville E. Kean Campus on St. Thomas. Both ceremonies will begin at 1 p.m.

“It is with heartfelt joy that I congratulate each of you in UVI’s Class of 2025 on reaching this powerful and proud milestone in your journey,” said UVI President Dr. Safiya George. “This achievement marks not just the culmination of years of hard work, sacrifice, and growth—it also marks a new beginning filled with possibility. You are leaving UVI as more than just graduates. You are leaders, innovators, and changemakers who carry with you the spirit, strength, and excellence of this institution.”

Student Speakers & Special Honors

Class of 2025 graduate Kyra Edwards, Summa Cum Laude recipient of a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration, will address graduates on the Sheen Campus. Joleen Buchanan, also earning a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration, will serve as class speaker on the Kean Campus.

UVI will also bestow Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees upon retired Brigadier General Deborah Y. Francis Howell and Brigadier General Sally F. Petty, in recognition of their exemplary military service and lasting contributions to the Virgin Islands community. A trailblazer in the Virgin Islands National Guard, Howell made history as the first woman to serve as Adjutant General, while Petty currently serves as Assistant Adjutant General of the Virgin Islands Army National Guard.

This year’s commencement keynote address will be delivered by Hill Harper, an award-winning actor, best-selling author, entrepreneur and humanitarian.

Commencement Broadcast & Livestream Information

The ceremonies will be livestreamed via:

- UVI YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/UVIvideos>
- UVI Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UVI.edu>
- UVI Events Calendar: <https://events.uvi.edu>
- Main site: www.uvi.edu (search “commencement”)
- DaVybe 107.9 FM will also broadcast both ceremonies live on the air and via streaming platforms.

Parking & Shuttle Service – St. Thomas

To accommodate attendees, parking regulations on the Kean Campus will be suspended from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday, May 16.

Shuttles will run from the following locations to the Blake Sports and Fitness Center:

- Classroom Administration Building (CA Building)
- Humanities Building
- Wellness Center
- ACC Building (LAR)

- Upper Campus eastern-side roadway
- Innovation Center (13D) parking lot

More commencement details can be found at <http://commencement.uvi.edu>.

UVI Graduate Stories - A Closer Look at the Class of 2025



Charting Her Course: How One Student Found Her Voice, Purpose, and Power at UVI

From St. Kitts to Canada and Beyond: UVI Opened the World to Joleen Buchanan

When Joleen Buchanan first arrived at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) in Spring 2022, her heart wasn't in it. Enrolling at UVI was a financial decision and her parents' wish to keep her closer to her family in St. Kitts and Jamaica. Joleen had envisioned a very different path for herself: studying abroad and playing college volleyball. In those early days on campus, she kept to herself, quietly focused on a singular goal—figuring out how to transfer out.

But life has a way of shifting perspectives in the most unexpected moments.

A chance encounter in the UVI cafeteria with a fellow student, Sarai Hutchinson—who would later become a UVI graduate student—changed everything. Sarai approached Joleen, undeterred by her reserved demeanor, and shared information about studying abroad as a UVI student. That conversation ignited a spark. “I give kudos to her for coming up to me that day, despite looking unapproachable. She is one of the people who truly influenced my experience at UVI,” Joleen reflected.

From that moment forward, Joleen's UVI experience began to flourish as she opened herself up to meeting new people and getting involved in the community.

To learn more about Buchanan's journey see [this link](#).



Two UVI Graduates to Receive Military Commissions at 2025 Commencement Ceremony: A Spotlight on La'Monee Morris and Jhaleek Christian

As the University of the Virgin Islands prepares to celebrate the accomplishments of the Class of 2025, two exceptional graduates will receive special recognition when they accept military commissions during the Commencement Ceremony: La'Monee Morris of the Orville E. Kean Campus on St. Thomas, and Jhaleek Christian of the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix.

These commissions—official appointments as officers in the United States Armed Forces—reflect years of academic achievement, leadership development, and service-oriented discipline. For both graduates, this honor symbolizes not just personal triumphs but also their commitment to protecting and serving their communities and nation.

For La'Monee Morris, this moment crowns an already stellar academic and leadership journey. A graduate of Charlotte Amalie High School, Morris won the title of Miss CAHS and, more recently, was crowned Miss UVI 2024-2025, taking on the role of ambassador and student leader. Inspired by her older brother's career in the military, Morris joined her high school's JROTC program, setting her on a path for UVI's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program, which prepared students to become officers in the U.S. Armed Forces. Today, Morris graduates magna cum laude earning a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a military rank of Second Lieutenant.

To learn more, see [this link](#).



Edna Alfred and Zavira Wilson Break New Ground as UVI's First Horticulture Graduates

Edna Alfred and Zavira Wilson are making history at the University of the Virgin Islands. In May 2025, they will become the first students to graduate from UVI's Associate of Science in Horticulture program—a milestone that not only honors their individual journeys but also sets the stage for a new generation of farmers in the Virgin Islands.

Their stories begin with deep roots.



For Alfred, agriculture was a way of life from the start. Raised in a family of farmers in St. Lucia, she moved to St. Croix in 2007, bringing with her a quiet determination and a deep love for the land. Before enrolling at UVI, Alfred worked in agriculture for years—first at the Gallows Bay Hardware Garden Shop, then at Island Fresh Aquaponics, where she helped cultivate bok choy, cucumbers, lettuce, and collard greens in six greenhouses. When the farm shut down, she found herself at a crossroads—but instead of stepping away from agriculture, she leaned into it.

Wilson's connection to agriculture was just as natural. Born on St. Croix and raised both in the Territory and in Oregon, she grew up surrounded by nature and farmers—her parents among

them. After finishing high school in Oregon, she returned to St. Croix to pursue horticulture at UVI. Her time in the program with its mix of traditional and adult learners exposed her to a variety of perspectives. “Many of us were learning these things for the first time,” she said. “The adult students brought insights I wouldn’t have had otherwise.”

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