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## UVI Appoints New Leadership Team to Drive Academic Excellence, Innovation, and Financial Stewardship

The University of the Virgin Islands has appointed new leaders in academics, finance, innovation, and administration, a move President Dr. Safiya George says will strengthen research, expand opportunities, and drive the institution's next phase of growth.

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Top row, left to right: Guadalupe Valencia, Lora Bailey, and Nelson Pizarro. Bottom row, left to right: Owen Mtambo and Kelly Harrigan — newly appointed leaders at the University of the Virgin Islands. By. UVI.

The University of the Virgin Islands has announced a series of senior leadership appointments in an effort the institution says is aimed at advancing its academic mission, strengthening financial

management, and expanding its innovation and research agenda. The appointments include new leaders in academic affairs, administration, finance, entrepreneurship, and data science, along with a seasoned university administrator serving as Board Liaison.

“These appointments represent a bold step forward for UVI,” said President Dr. Safiya George. “Each leader brings unique strengths that will help us deliver on our mission to be a student-centered university driving innovation, research and economic development.”

### **Dr. Lora Bailey Named Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs**

Dr. Lora Bailey has been appointed Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, becoming UVI’s chief academic officer. She oversees six schools and colleges, enrollment management, and athletics, and will lead academic planning, research development, and innovation across the university.

Since joining UVI in July 2025, Dr. Bailey has begun refining academic strategy and advancing quality initiatives across departments. She brings more than 25 years of higher education leadership experience, having served at Virginia State University, Indiana University Northwest, and Virginia Commonwealth University. Her record includes securing more than \$7 million in external funding and guiding multiple institutions through national accreditation.

Dr. Bailey holds a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, an M.A. in Teaching, and a B.S. in Business Finance, all from Auburn University.

“Dr. Bailey’s experience in academic leadership and federal research funding will strengthen UVI’s programs and expand opportunities for students and faculty,” said Dr. George.

### **Guadalupe “Lupe” Valencia Appointed Interim Vice President for Administration and Finance & CFO**

Guadalupe “Lupe” Valencia has been named Interim Vice President for Administration and Finance & Chief Financial Officer, bringing decades of experience in higher education finance and administration.

Valencia has held senior leadership roles at the University of Texas at El Paso, the Texas Tech Health Sciences Center at El Paso, the University of Washington, the University of Arizona, and the University of Alaska Anchorage.

A Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM), she is a Past President of the Western Association of College and University Business Officers (WACUBO) and previously served on the board of the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). She holds both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting from the University of Texas at El Paso.

### **Dr. Nelson Pizarro Promoted to Assistant Vice President for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development**

Dr. Nelson Pizarro, an established figure in innovation and entrepreneurship at UVI, has been promoted to Kiril Sokoloff Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation and Assistant Vice President for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development.

In his expanded role, Dr. Pizarro will lead initiatives to attract business partnerships, foster public-private collaborations, and position UVI as a regional hub for entrepreneurship and innovation.

At UVI, Dr. Pizarro has launched the Certificate in Entrepreneurship, secured over \$375,000 in external funding, and modernized student innovation competitions that have awarded more than \$20,000 to emerging entrepreneurs. He earned his Doctorate in Business Administration from the Grenoble School of Management and an MBA from the University of Florida.

### **Dr. Owen Mtambo Joins UVI as Postdoctoral Fellow in Data Science**

Dr. Owen Mtambo has joined the University as a Postdoctoral Fellow in Data Science, where he will advance interdisciplinary research and help expand UVI's capacity in data analytics and applied sciences.

Dr. Mtambo brings nearly 20 years of teaching and research experience, having previously served as Biostatistician and Head of the Data Science Department at the Training and Research Unit of Excellence (TRUE) in Malawi. He also lectured in statistics and biostatistics at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) and the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST).

He holds a Ph.D. in Statistics from the University of South Africa (UNISA), with advanced degrees in biostatistics and mathematical sciences, and has authored more than a dozen peer-reviewed publications in public health and data science.

### **Kelly Harrigan Appointed Board Liaison and Administrator**

After 17 years of service to UVI, Kelly Harrigan has been appointed Board Liaison and Administrator, effective October 6. In her new role, she will serve as the principal contact for UVI's Board of Trustees, facilitating communication and coordination between the Board, university administration, and external stakeholders.

Harrigan brings more than 30 years of professional experience in information technology, project management, and higher education administration. She previously led the university's Information Technology Department, managed the \$20 million NSF VI-EPSCoR grant, and has also worked at Temple University, Florida International University, and AT&T Wireless.

President George described the new appointments as a strategic alignment of leadership and vision. "These leaders bring the expertise and vision needed to propel UVI into its next chapter of growth," Dr. George said. "Together, we are strengthening our foundation and expanding opportunities that will benefit our students and the Virgin Islands for years to come."