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Energy Office Endows \$150,000 UVI Scholarship Fund to Expand Renewable Workforce

The \$150,000 endowment will support scholarships, courses, and internships in UVI's Renewable Energy Technology program, preparing students for photovoltaic installation careers as the territory expands clean energy systems and workforce capacity.

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From left, Michael Jaffurs, Kyle Fleming, and Dr. Greg Guannel hold a \$150,000 check supporting renewable energy training at the University of the Virgin Islands. By. VIEO

The V.I. Energy Office has committed \$150,000 toward expanding renewable energy workforce training in the territory, endowing the University of the Virgin Islands' Renewable Energy Technology Scholarship Fund to support students pursuing careers in the clean energy sector.

The donation was formally presented Wednesday during a check presentation ceremony held at the newly commissioned UVI RTPark Solar Farm and Teaching Array.

VIEO Director Kyle Fleming and Deputy Director Michael Jaffurs presented the contribution to Greg Guannel, director of UVI's Caribbean Green Technology Center. The funding will support 10 specialized courses and one internship within UVI's Renewable Energy Technology Associate of Applied Science degree program, strengthening what officials described as a direct pipeline into the territory's renewable energy workforce.

According to Fleming, the investment reflects a deliberate alignment of federal funding with local workforce development priorities. "By leveraging a DOE grant to invest \$150,000 in scholarships for UVI's Renewable Energy Technologies program, the Virgin Islands Energy Office is doubling down on a common-sense synergy: aligning our federal funding with a homegrown workforce development pipeline that will build, maintain, and expand the clean energy systems our community continues to embrace," he said. Fleming added that the scholarships will help reduce financial barriers for Virgin Islanders seeking training critical to the territory's energy transition.

The scholarship funding supports a two-year course of study designed to provide students with practical, job-ready skills. Participants in the Renewable Energy Technology program receive instruction in foundational electrical concepts, renewable energy technologies, and the installation and repair of photovoltaic systems. Graduates are expected to be prepared to sit for the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners photovoltaic system Associate examination, an industry-recognized credential.

UVI officials welcomed the donation as a catalyst for increased enrollment and broader participation in renewable energy education. Dr. Guannel said the funding will help remove cost barriers that often prevent students from entering technical fields. "This generous investment from the Virgin Islands Energy Office ensures that more Virgin Islanders can access the training needed to participate in the territory's clean energy transition," he said. "By reducing financial barriers, we can help students gain the technical skills that are urgently needed in our community and across the region."

The renewable energy sector in the Virgin Islands has expanded significantly in recent years, driven by demand for clean backup power, energy storage solutions, and utility-scale renewable generation projects. With both residential and commercial markets continuing to grow, officials project sustained demand for trained renewable energy technicians.

The donation was made possible through support from the U.S. Department of Energy under a grant awarded to the territory through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Registration for the Spring 2026 semester is currently open. Interested individuals may enroll or request additional information through UVI's Registrar's Office.

The Renewable Energy Technology program is offered primarily online, with required in-person laboratory sessions held on the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix. Efforts are underway to establish a renewable energy laboratory on St. Thomas, which would allow future lab sessions to be conducted on the Orville E. Kean Campus.