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UVI Remains Accredited but Must Show Cause by Sept. 1 Over Delayed Audits and Board Oversight

Middle States says UVI must prove compliance on financial planning, delayed audits from fiscal years 2022 through 2025, Title IV duties and board oversight; President Safiya George says operations and aid continue as Senator Marvin Blyden demands answers.

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The University of the Virgin Islands remains accredited, but must show by September 1 why its accreditation should not be withdrawn after the Middle States Commission on Higher Education issued a Non-Compliance Show Cause Action tied to delayed financial audits, financial planning, institutional resources, board governance and fiduciary oversight.

Following Middle States notice, UVI announced that it remains accredited while responding to the action. The university received notification on June 29, following MSCHE's June 25 review of UVI's Self-Study and evaluation visit. The Commission's representatives visited UVI's main campus at John Brewers Bay on St. Thomas from March 22 through March 25, and also visited the university's branch campus on St. Croix.

A Show Cause Action is a formal step in the accreditation process that requires an institution to demonstrate compliance with specific accreditation standards identified by the Commission. Institutions remain accredited while doing so.

MSCHE has directed UVI to submit a Show Cause Report by September 1 demonstrating compliance with Standard VI, Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement, specifically related to delayed financial audits, and Standard VII, Governance, Leadership, and Administration, specifically related to board governance and fiduciary oversight of the financial audits. A follow-up evaluation visit is scheduled for October 2026.

The Commission's June 29 action letter requires UVI to document that it has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with accreditation standards, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and applicable federal requirements. The required evidence includes documented financial resources, a funding base and plans for financial development adequate to support UVI's educational programs and financial stability; a financial planning and budgeting process aligned with the university's mission, goals and strategic plans; and a record of responsible fiscal management, including a multi-year financial plan.

MSCHE also directed UVI to provide completed audited financial statements for fiscal years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025, along with follow-up on cited concerns and corrective measures taken to address any material findings in audits or accompanying management letters. The Commission also requested evidence that UVI has fiscal and human resources, as well as physical and technical infrastructure, adequate to support operations, including the timely completion of audited financial statements.

The action also requires UVI to address compliance with federal Title IV and state laws and regulations, including any required financial aid audits and updated financial information related to the university's Heightened Cash Monitoring 1 status. It further requires evidence that UVI's governing body plays a basic policy-making role in financial affairs, including timely review of audited financial statements and other documents related to fiscal viability, and that the governing body operates according to principles of good board governance and its bylaws.

MSCHE also asked UVI to provide further evidence of strategies to measure and assess the adequacy and efficient use of institutional resources to support the university's mission and goals.

The Commission directed UVI to immediately notify the university community of its status, including governing board members, students, faculty, staff and others with significant roles. It also required public disclosure of the non-compliance action to current and prospective students within seven calendar days of receipt of the notification.

MSCHE further directed an on-site show cause visit after the report is submitted. The purpose of that visit is to verify the information in UVI's report and determine whether the university has achieved ongoing and sustainable compliance. The visit will include UVI's St. Croix branch campus.

The Commission also required UVI to submit, by September 1, a comprehensive and implementable teach-out plan and signed teach-out agreements with appropriate partner institutions. According to MSCHE, the teach-out plan must provide for the equitable treatment of students so they can complete their education or transfer to another institution if the Commission were to withdraw accreditation.

The action letter also says UVI will be invited to present before the Commission when it considers the university's show cause report. The university is required to inform the Commission within 30 calendar days if it intends to appear. MSCHE also said the university may submit an optional institutional statement within 60 calendar days, and may notify the Commission within 30 calendar days if any information in the action appears to be factually incorrect.

"This is a serious process, and we are responding with urgency, transparency, and accountability," said UVI President Dr. Safiya George. "Our University remains accredited, and our focus continues to be on providing our students with an exceptional educational experience while demonstrating our compliance with MSCHE's standards."

George emphasized that the Show Cause Action does not interrupt the university's academic or administrative operations.

"Students should know that classes, academic programs, student services, federal financial aid, the Virgin Islands Higher Education Scholarship Program (Free Tuition), research activities, admissions, and campus operations continue without interruption. Our commitment to student success remains unwavering," she said.

UVI said work to address the Commission's findings began before the Show Cause Action through implementation of the GRAND Momentum Strategic Plan, which focuses on strengthening institutional effectiveness, financial stewardship, governance, operational excellence and long-term sustainability.

The university cited several recent accomplishments, including completion of the Fiscal Year 2021 audited financial statements, continued progress on subsequent financial audits, strengthened financial management practices, expanded Banner and financial systems training, implementation of standard operating procedures, enhanced fiscal oversight and the engagement of nationally recognized higher education finance experts to support operational improvements.

UVI said it is preparing a comprehensive Show Cause Report that will document progress already achieved and additional actions underway to demonstrate continued compliance with MSCHE accreditation standards. The university said it remains committed to transparency, continuous improvement and providing an exceptional educational experience while working with Middle States during the accreditation review process.

The Commission's action has also drawn legislative scrutiny. In a July 1 letter to George, Senator Marvin Blyden said he was writing with "deep dismay and serious concern" after learning that Middle States had placed UVI on a non-compliance show cause action requiring the university to demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn.

Mr. Blyden said UVI holds a unique place in the territory as its public university and "is not merely another institution of higher education." He said the university is one of the primary vehicles through which young Virgin Islanders and students from the region prepare for service, leadership, professional advancement and economic independence.

“For that reason, any threat to UVI’s accreditation is a matter of the highest public concern,” he wrote.

The senator said the Commission’s action raises questions about UVI’s financial management, audit compliance, institutional planning, board governance, Title IV responsibilities and overall capacity to demonstrate sustainable compliance. He said he was particularly concerned by the requirement that UVI provide completed audited financial statements for fiscal years 2022 through 2025, as well as evidence that audit findings and management-letter concerns have been addressed.

“I fail to see how the Legislature can responsibly proceed with the University’s budget hearing on July 13, 2026, without a full and clear understanding of how this situation developed, what institutional failures or delays led to the Commission’s findings, and what corrective actions are now being taken to protect the University’s accreditation,” Mr. Blyden wrote.

He requested that UVI provide a detailed written response before the July 13 budget hearing and asked that it be transmitted to his office no later than July 9.

His request asks UVI to explain the circumstances that led to the Middle States action, including when the university first became aware that non-compliance findings were likely or possible. He also asked for a timeline of all communications, warnings, requests, visits, reports or other interactions with Middle States concerning the issues identified under Standards VI and VII.

Mr. Blyden also requested the current status of the audited financial statements for fiscal years 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025, including the reasons each audit has not been completed on time, the parties responsible and firm dates for delivery. He also asked for a summary of all material findings, management-letter concerns, internal-control weaknesses or other audit-related issues identified in recent years, along with corrective actions taken or planned.

The senator further asked for a copy or detailed summary of UVI’s multi-year financial plan, including revenue assumptions, expenditure controls, debt obligations, projected deficits or surpluses, and long-term financial stability plans. He requested an explanation of how the university’s budgeting process is aligned with its mission, strategic plan, academic programs and unit-level objectives.

His letter also seeks a full explanation of UVI’s current Title IV status, including its Heightened Cash Monitoring 1 status, any financial aid audits required by federal or local law, and any compliance concerns raised by the U.S. Department of Education or other regulatory authorities.

Mr. Blyden also asked for a description of actions taken by the UVI Board of Trustees to oversee financial affairs, including review of audits, financial statements, fiscal viability, compliance matters and corrective-action plans. He requested a statement on whether the board has operated in full compliance with its bylaws and accepted principles of good board governance, and whether changes have been made or will be made to board policy, practice, committee structure or reporting in response to Middle States’ concerns.

The senator also requested details on the Show Cause Report now being prepared, including the internal team responsible, outside consultants or auditors involved, the work plan, deadlines and evidence UVI intends to submit. He also asked for information on the teach-out plan and signed teach-out agreements required by Middle States, including institutions being contacted, programs covered and measures being taken to protect current students.

His final request asked UVI to provide a clear assessment of what additional resources, legislative action, executive action, personnel or outside assistance the university believes are necessary to ensure that accreditation is retained.

“The people of the Virgin Islands deserve to know the plain truth. Students and parents deserve reassurance grounded in facts, not general statements. The Legislature deserves the information necessary to determine whether public funds are being properly managed and whether additional oversight or support is needed,” Mr. Blyden wrote.

He added, “Let me be clear: the objective is not to embarrass the University, but to protect it. UVI is too important to the future of this Territory for any branch of government, any board, or any administration to treat this matter as routine. The Commission’s letter makes plain that this is not routine. It is urgent.”

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