

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Hall: "A Medical School Will Be On St. Croix"

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During the question-and-answer segment of Wednesday night's town hall meeting held on the St. Croix campus of the University of the Virgin Islands to discuss the construction of the territory's medical school, University President Dr. David Hall stated, "A medical school will be on St. Croix."

Hall's statement seemed to catch many in the sizable audience off guard, as Dr. Benjamin Sachs, the man tapped for the interim CEO post at the school, had just 20 minutes before expressed his strong recommendation, with the aid of PowerPoint presentation, that the facility many in the public had been referring to as 'the medical school' be constructed on St. Thomas.

Hall went on to explain that there will be "a medical school for the Virgin Islands," with the classroom component recommended for St. Thomas and the simulation center recommended for St. Croix. Both facilities, Hall said, are essential, equally important parts of any medical school, and it was incorrect to frame the discussion otherwise.

In his 15-minute presentation, Dr. Sachs pointed out part of his recommendation to have the classroom facility placed on St. Thomas stems from the fact that of the 27 people needed for medical instruction, whose names are required to be submitted by a December deadline, 24 already live on St. Thomas and three live on St. Croix.

Sachs said the vision for constructing a medical school in the territory, which would be the only accredited school of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean, is to "improve the healthcare of the people in the territory and the wider Caribbean and to deal with pressing national and international issues."

He explained that in the first two years of training, students will take classes at the St. Thomas facility, while having some, but limited exposure to the simulation center on St. Croix. During the third year of schooling, students will receive hands-on training at the St. Croix facility, and will also engage in rotations at hospitals and clinics across the three islands under the guidance of doctors. In their fourth and final year of medical school, students will complete their training at an affiliate school in Florida.

Both Hall and Sachs fielded attendees' questions, with many presenting impassioned pleas to have what they had been referring to as 'the medical school' be built on St. Croix. Many of those statements came before Hall clarified that the recommended simulation center for St. Croix should be viewed as a component of the territory's medical school, and not as a separate entity from it.

As for the timeline, Sachs said in order to have the school ready to receive its first students in August 2016, preliminary paperwork must be submitted by December 2014. If approved, Hall said both components of the medical school will begin construction simultaneously on each island.

While Dr. Sachs has provided UVI's Board of Trustees with his recommendations, a final decision has not yet been made as to where the classroom facility and simulation center for the university's medical school will be built.

The second of two town hall meetings to discuss the location of both components of the medical school will be held tonight at UVI's St. Thomas Campus, Administration and Conference Center, Room 146 A, from 6 to 8 p.m. Following tonight's meeting, a final decision will be made by the Board of Trustees.

A \$30 million gift was given to the university on behalf of New Generation Power and its Chairman, Dr. Chiranjeev Kathuria, that serves as a major part of the seed money for the medical school.