

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Final Decision: Medical School Simulation Center On St. Croix, Classrooms On St. Thomas

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The University of the Virgin Islands School of Medicine will construct its simulation center on the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix and its classroom teaching facility on its St. Thomas campus, a final vote by the university's Board of Trustees confirmed Monday.

The Board passed a resolution at the special meeting authorizing UVI President Dr. David Hall to begin the development process of the School of Medicine in the aforementioned manner.

It is expected students will begin instruction in the classrooms on the St. Thomas location during their first two years of medical school and will continue specialized, practical

training at the simulation center on St. Croix in their third year of schooling, according to a release issued by the university. Students will complete their final year of medical school at an affiliate institution in Florida.

In addition to student training, the simulation center will be used for "continuing professional development by local, regional, national and international physicians and nurses. The center will also be available for use by allied health professionals and first responders," the UVI release pointed out.

Board Chairman Henry Smock described the process leading up to the vote as "thorough and transparent." The Board first met in a special session on Sept. 11 to receive location recommendations from Dr. Benjamin Sachs, the interim dean of the School of Medicine. There, Dr. Sachs recommended that the simulation center be built on St. Croix and the classrooms on St. Thomas. During that same meeting, Chairman Smock instructed President Hall to host public forums in order for the Board to receive feedback from the general public. Those sessions were held on Oct. 1 and 2 at both the St. Croix and St. Thomas branches of UVI. The Board also met with Gov. de Jongh, senators, government officials and other stakeholders to discuss the matter.

UVI's School of Medicine will be certified by the Liaison Committee for Medical Education (LCME), making it the only LCME-accredited, English-speaking medical school in the Caribbean. The location and design of the school's facilities must be submitted to the LCME as part of the application process, which has a December deadline for preliminary submission of accreditation requirements.

Before the Board voted on Monday, St. Croix Senator Nereida "Nellie" Rivera-O'Reilly made an impassioned plea to have the classroom facility be built on St. Croix, stating that she was speaking as a regular citizen of the island and not in her capacity as an elected official. Following her presentation, the Board moved into executive session to continue discussing the agenda item and to take the vote.

The UVI statement said factors determining the final locations for the medical school components were based on accreditation standards used by the LCME, the compatibility and strengths of medical resources on both islands, the economic impact of both facilities, and the ultimate success of the project. UVI said its medical school is projected to have comparable long-term economic impacts on both St. Croix and St. Thomas.

The classrooms and simulation center for UVI's School of Medicine are expected to begin construction simultaneously on both islands, with the goal of receiving its first students in August 2016, Hall noted at a public forum held last week.

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

Board Members voting in favor of Dr. Sachs's recommendations:

- Donna Frett Gregory
- David Hall

- Luz Highfield
- Alexander Moorhead
- Gwen Norton
- Jennifer Nugent-Hill
- Oswin Sewer
- Henry Smock
- Patricia Steele
- Yvonne Thraen
- Sinclair Wilkinson
- Wesley Williams

Board Members absent from the meeting:

- Wendy Aurelien
- Carol Fulp
- Jacqueline Sprauve
- Edward Thomas

Board Member absent for the vote:

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