

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Energy-Efficient Projects Save UVI More Than \$800,000 In 2014

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ST. THOMAS – The University of the Virgin Islands realized savings of more than \$800,000 on its electric bill last year thanks to the institute's ongoing energy projects, according to UVI's Energy Manager Courtney Mayes.

The news came last Tuesday during a Caribbean Clean Energy Technology Symposium pre-gathering, organized by the Virgin Islands Energy Office, at the Frenchman's Reef and Morning Star Marriott Beach Resort.

According to Mayes, those savings began back in 2002 – eight years before her tenure – when the university began looking at energy efficiency in an effort to lower its

consumption.

While on-campus facilities have been renovated for greater energy efficiency since then, the West Hall residential building on St. Thomas was the first to be constructed with energy savings in mind from the onset, she said.



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s said.

UVI's Energy Manager

#### Courtney Mayes

The West Hall, according to Mayes, is UVI's first air conditioning dormitory equipped with AC controls, a high efficiency chiller and occupancy controls, or sensors that turn switches on or off depending on whether people are nearby.

"All those things [are] allowing us to have savings," she said.

Although there's been some action towards energy saving renovations and construction on St. Thomas, the St. Croix campus hasn't seen new construction for some time, according to Mayes. But the goal for the sister campus, she said, is for all new construction to produce "green buildings."

Energy efficient investments into new buildings are more worthwhile than "hard and labor-intensive" efforts to renovate older, less efficient buildings, Mayes explained. Keeping this in mind, UVI will pool most of its efficiency efforts into new buildings.

However, there are plans to implement a solar project that is expected to save the university enough money to start a "sustainability budget." Ideally, this budget will allow UVI to convert all lights to LED lights and install more occupancy controls in older buildings, Mayes said.

Finding creative ways to invest in energy efficiency is a consequence of the university's struggle to latch onto the necessary funding for major, energy-saving advances. Mayes said the lack of funding has hindered UVI from going even further into energy-saving projects.

"It's just a matter of funding, she said. "The more money I get, the more projects I can do."

Mayes said that while the university, including all its campuses, saved over \$800,000 – university has realized "a little over 9 e began in 2002.



West Hall is the newest

residence center on the St. Thomas campus. It overlooks Brewers Bay Beach

The energy czar, as Mayes is called at UVI, revealed that it was the university's initial goal to have 50 percent reduction in fossil fuel dependency by the end of 2015. But as the current pace of progress would have it, those plans will have to change.

"Ideally, in a perfect world, we'd like to get to 100 percent, [but] is that realistic with the technologies available today? Possibly not, but [we'll] make steps that we can be carbon neutral at the very least," she said.

With the available technology, Mayes predicts that the university can get up to 80 percent reduction by 2020.

Mayes' 2020 vision, however, will have to be approved by UVI President David Hall, and the institution's board.

*Feature Image: A UVI landmark greets students and visitors entering the lower campus on St. Thomas*

*Image Credit: UVI*