

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Juanita Gardine Students Tour Their Future Alma Mater: University Of The Virgin Islands

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ST. CROIX -- They were welcomed to the University of the Virgin Islands with hugs and handshakes by Dr. David Hall, president of the institution, and ran across the lawn located to the east of the facility's cafetorium, visibly excited to be out of their classrooms and on unfamiliar grounds, learning and exploring.

The students, all from the Juanita Gardine Elementary School, toured UVI on Friday morning from 9:15 a.m. and throughout the day, visiting the university's many facilities, but not before listening to a motivational speech from Dr. Hall and encouraging words from an alma mater who currently attends UVI.



Six grade Juanita Gardin

Elementary School students pose for a picture with Dr. David Hall, president of UVI

"Does anyone know what a star is, and where they are?" asked President Hall to the over one hundred students in attendance, some sitting on the lawn while others stood undistracted. They said yes.

Building a narrative to drive home his point, Hall, knowing the answer would be no, asked the students whether they had been able to physically grab a star.

"The reason stars are so special is because they seem so far away, and they provide such beauty and light, and they keep the universe moving in the right direction. But there are other types of stars, and one of those stars that we want you to reach for is the star of higher education," Hall said.

The president encouraged the students to imagine that a star of higher education was right above their heads yet beyond their reach. "I want you to reach and stretch yourself as much as you can, to get the star of college and higher education," he said, speaking on a small stage as his voice beamed through speakers.















Six grade Juanita Gardin Elementary School students pose for a picture with Dr. David Hall, President of UVI



Keeping his speech short and to the point as the day ahead was long, Hall told the
r, the president sat on stage with students from
banner representing the year their class would



Janelle Royer, vice president of the Student

Government Association at UVI.

Janelle Royer, vice president of the Student Government Association (SGA) at UVI, and a member of the [Golden Key International Honor Society](#), revealed to the students that one of her alma maters is the very school they attend, and encouraged them to strive to become members of GKIHS.

"The Golden Key is a society for kids just like you," Royer said. "You guys who are reaching for the stars, you guys who have those minds -- it's for brilliant kids, smart children," she said.

Making known the basis upon which GKIHS was founded as leadership, academic, and service, Royer urged the students to be their best in each criterion. She ended her speech with a song that all the students knew: Juanita Gardine's theme song. They all sang aloud.

Arige Shrouf, Golden Key secretary for the 2014-2015 school year, said GKIHS is more than good grades. "We're about building leaders, building our community and the communities around us," she said.

Following the speeches, *VI Consortium* caught up with Dr. Hall seeking information about the event. He said although the SGA has a program on the St. Croix campus that is

executed every year, and brings elementary students chosen from schools throughout the island to the university, it's extremely rare to host an entire school.

Hall said the program is carried out yearly to "plant seeds", and that he's "always felt that UVI is the university of the territory and it is for everyone. And when elementary school kids could come here, feel at home, learn something and be inspired, then we are carrying out our mission."

The students took walking tours of UVI's [RT Park](#), NWW Great Hall, the Research Extension Center, Commencement Tent, Tilapia Farm, the Melvin Evans Center, Building E (Agriculture Experimental Station) and the School of Nursing.

Feature Image: Dr. David Hall, UVI's president, shakes the hands of elementary students arriving at the university.