

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Medical School Hits Major Roadblock As Accreditation Is Denied

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ST. CROIX -- The University of the Virgin Islands attempt to open a medical school in the territory has hit a major roadblock as the Liaison Committee for Medical Education's (LMCE) Advisory Board has voted to not grant preliminary accreditation to the UVI School of Medical (SOM).

That's according to a press release the institution of higher learning issued on Saturday afternoon. It added that UVI's board is considering its options, and will first consult with Governor Kenneth Mapp, the 31st Legislature and other key stakeholders before making a final decision.

The vote to not provide the institution with preliminary accreditation stalls UVI's hurried push forward, as having an unaccredited medical school would almost certainly affect the institution's legitimacy, and as a consequence, its ability to generate economic activity.

UVI submitted accreditation documents to the LCME in November 2014. The university's initial application in November 2014 ran to over 1,600 pages, according to the release. The LCME named UVI a candidate school in February 2015. In June, a four member team representing the LCME examined the School of Medicine's (SOM) educational programs, leadership, facilities and faculty. They also examined the school's clinical affiliates – the Roy L. Schneider Hospital and the East End Medical Center on St. Thomas, and the Juan F. Luis Hospital and the Frederiksted Health Care, Inc. on St. Croix. The team consisted of three senior academic physicians and an executive from the LCME.

The LCME has 128 standards and UVI was judged based on its progress at the time of the [site visit in May/June](#) 2015. If the University had been accredited, the school would have opened in August 2016. The LCME found various areas of insufficient progress towards compliance/noncompliance.

Some key examples are:

- In order to shorten the timeline for the University's application, UVI purchased curriculum and assessment tools from a new school, the University of Central Florida (UCF). In so doing, it also allowed UVI to concentrate as much on how it teaches as what it teaches. The site visit team felt that the university had not allowed sufficient time for UVI to absorb the UCF curriculum.
- No scholarship funding to reduce the debt burden of the students when they graduate
- To ensure medical student diversity, the University needed to show that UVI has pipeline programs
- The faculty and student handbooks were incomplete
- The application described the curriculum committee membership that was not consistent with the school's by-laws
- Insufficient support staff hired by June 2015
- UVI had appointed too many medical school full professors (40 out of 137).

An underlying theme to their comments was that UVI has been working to create a School of Medicine in a very short period of time. Other schools undergo this process, normally, in two to three years.

"The University of the Virgin Islands remains undeterred by the decision, because we believe that a new medical school in the territory will have a major impact on the next generation of physicians in the medically underserved U.S. Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean," Dr. Hall said. "The medical school project is one of the most transformative undertakings in the history of UVI and has the potential to improve the quality of healthcare throughout the Virgin Islands. We are appreciative of all the support received thus far and look forward to the next steps."

