

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## UVI Partners With DVSAC To Fight On-Campus Sexual Assault

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Ernice Gilbert **October 29, 2015**



ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council announced today via press release its formal collaboration with the University of the Virgin Islands to promote sexual violence prevention education and awareness initiatives at both St. Croix and St. Thomas campuses.

The agreement, a memorandum of understanding, formally established the relationship to 1), recognize DVSAC as the institution's sexual violence prevention partner; 2), ensure that UVI addresses Title IX by taking prompt and effective steps to prevent and end sexual violence and domestic violence on campus; and 3), confirm that UVI and DVSAC will work cooperatively to provide advocacy, community engagement, resource

distribution and campus campaigns for the mutual benefit of each agency and the students, faculty and staff of UVI.

"Title XI is [not] merely an Act that was established to satisfy advocacy agencies of the domestic violence and sexual assault movement; rather it is an Act that was established based on the courage and ongoing activism of college students who were assaulted on their campuses," said DVSAC's Executive Director, Khnuma Simmonds-Esannason. "These students chose to 'break their silence' by seeking justice for these heinous acts, accountability for their offenders and a commitment from universities and colleges across the nation to properly address sexual assault."

She added: "The partnership between DVSAC and UVI is one that recognizes this history while demonstrating a commitment to the students of UVI to prioritize safety and prevention, always. We commend UVI for developing their UVI Cares initiative and support them 100% with the execution of this campaign and our collaborative partnership."

According to the release, title IX of the education amendments of 1972 -- a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex which can include sexual harassment or sexual violence, such as rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion -- is a statute that all public and private elementary and secondary schools, school districts, colleges, and universities receiving any federal funds must comply with.

"This initiative at UVI and the partnership with DVSAC is important for the university," said Camille McKayle, PhD, UVI provost and vice president for Academic Affairs. "Through our #not@UVI campaign, we seek to raise awareness, educate students, faculty and staff, and implement policies that are consistent with our respect for each other."

"The DVSAC-UVI two way partnership will help each entity achieve its goals around empowerment through education about domestic violence and sexual assault. We are pleased to be a part of this," Ms. McKayle added.

The release states that DVSAC is recognized as the territorial coalition by the Office of Violence Against Women and the Family Violence Prevention Services Act. The organization says it aims to promote healthy relationships within the community by coordinating education and awareness resources that advocate for the elimination of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence in the USVI territory.

As for UVI, the institution of higher learning says it is committed to uncompromised integrity and to doing all within its power to ensure a working environment that is inclusive and respectful of diversity, and which promotes intellectual growth and development, and supports the academic pursuits of faculty, students and staff.

The educational facility says it remains critical that UVI creates a safe and supportive environment for all students, employees and visitors. The release further stated that UVI strictly prohibits any acts of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment.