

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Extends Academic Reach To St. Maarten

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Students on the neighboring island of St. Maarten/St. Martin can now earn a number of academic degrees from the University of the Virgin Islands without leaving their homeland, a press release the institution of higher learning issued this afternoon has revealed.

UVI entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the University of St. Martin (USM) to offer quality academic and career education that will provide students from St. Maarten/St. Martin and other locations across the region and around the world the opportunity to build a solid foundation to enter the workforce in their homeland, across the wider Caribbean or abroad.

Dr. Haldane Davies, UVI vice president of Business Development and Innovation, said the St. Martin University agreement is a different model than the other partnerships.

"This is more unique in that we have an actual presence there on the campus through 'UVI at USM,'" said Dr. Davies. "We are intricately intertwined with their academic program and they are with us. The University of St. Martin currently offers five associate degree programs. Once students complete one of the five associate degree programs and meet UVI's matriculation requirements, they can register for UVI courses and are considered UVI students." Currently USM has approximately 300 students in its regular academic and continuing education programs.

Students on St. Maarten/St. Martin and elsewhere enroll in "UVI at USM" by completing the UVI admissions application process, including the payment of fees and submittal of transcripts. The UVI access and enrollment office then registers students for their chosen programs and courses.

Students on St. Maarten/St. Martin are currently enrolled and taking classes in the Bachelor of Business Administration and Master of Education programs from UVI. Education courses offered in the Fall 2015 semester included "Group and Family Counseling," and "Curriculum Development." Business and management course offerings included "Statistics for Management Decisions," "Fundamentals of Finance," and "Organizational Behavior." It is anticipated that other programs including the masters of public administration and the bachelors of elementary education, among others, will be offered at "UVI at USM" in the Fall of 2016.

The University of St. Martin provides classroom and office space for UVI faculty who teach the courses on St. Martin and some courses are offered online. In the future, the University hopes to offer classes via videoconference, as is currently conducted between St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John.

Approximately 25 students enrolled in "UVI at USM" during the Fall 2015 semester, according to UVI Dean of Business Stephen Reames. "They are enjoying the in-person approach to instruction," Reames said.

The Fall program was so successful, UVI has planned a number of courses for Spring 2016 including, "Foundations of Guidance," "Theories, Strategies and Techniques of Counseling," "Fundamentals of School Administration," and "Labor Management Relations."

Students enrolled in any of the courses have access to UVI resources, according to UVI Provost Dr. Camille McKayle.

"They are UVI students," McKayle said. "They get UVI identification cards and they have access to the UVI library. We are always seeking ways to expand services to support our UVI at USM students."

Roberto Celestino Arrindell, is president of the St. Martin chapter of the UVI Alumni Association and a mathematics/education instructor at USM. Arrindell said "UVI at USM" has been well-received by St. Maarten/St. Martin students.

“The students love the courses and they have been readily accepted,” said Arrindell, the father of two UVI alumni, who also helps to promote the program.

“We have been promoting UVI by accommodating everyone from UVI presidents to the University’s choir, basketball and volleyball teams, and distributing UVI information through pamphlets.” He also advises students who apply to UVI, and helps them through the application process. Both institutions have agreed to engage in joint recruitment activities and students will have the option of joint enrollment in academic programs that will lead to dual degrees in specific programs.

Davies said UVI plans to expand upon its footprint and offerings at USM and is currently engaged in strategic planning with staff, faculty and the community members on St. Maarten/St. Martin. UVI is also conducting a historic study on “How Healthy is St. Maarten/St. Martin” in collaboration with the French and Dutch governments. Other work with USM includes engagements with the Social Economic Council, and the personnel division of the Government of St. Martin for the offering of the Certified Public Manager program in the spring of 2016. The UVI PULSE program is also set to be launched as part of “UVI at USM” in the Spring of 2016.

“Eventually many programs available at UVI will be available at ‘UVI at USM,’ to the extent possible,” said Dr. Davies. “St. Martin welcomes the relationship. The government, the university board, community, and students are all excited about this new initiative.”

UVI is in the process of further expanding its footprint in the eastern Caribbean by fully utilizing its “additional location” authorization status from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education to offer its programs in full at the USM.

UVI also has new memoranda of understanding with several other institutions, including The Council of Community of Colleges of Jamaica; Fielding Graduate University, California; Nantong University, China; Yangzhou University, Jiangsu, China; Anguilla Community College, Anguilla; H. Lavity Stoutt Community College, BVI; and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Existing Memoranda of Understanding continues with the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College, St. Kitts and the Nevis Sixth Form College, Nevis.