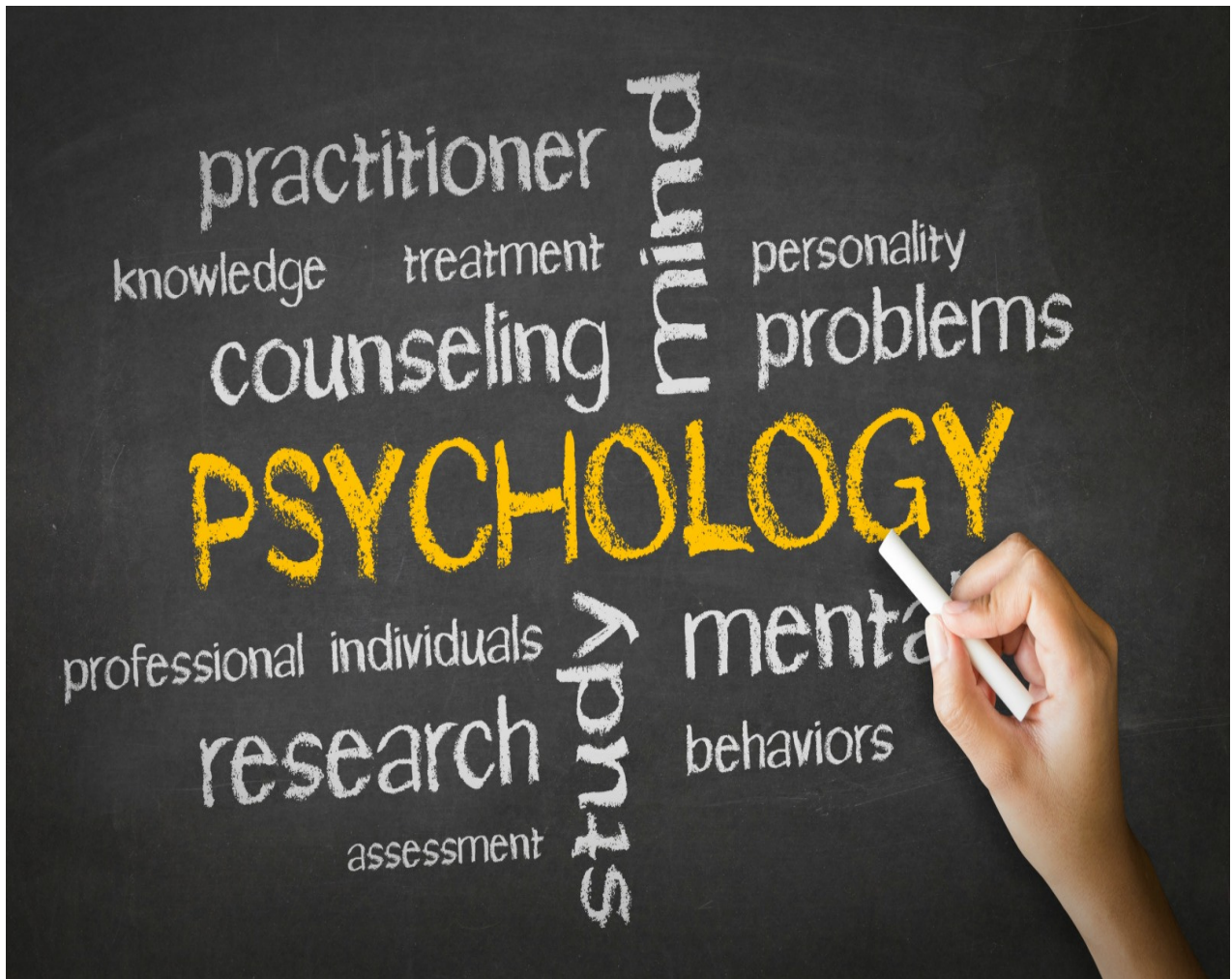


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Professional Certification Now Possible For U.V.I. Graduate Psychology Majors

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Graduates of the University of the Virgin Islands Master of Arts in Psychology program will now be eligible to become licensed counselors in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Bill no. 31-0134, which passed the 31st V.I. Legislature on Jan. 26, establishes the Virgin Islands Board of Licensed Counselors and Examiners to provide licensure to those who intend to work as private counselors in the territory.

“This measure will permit more graduates of U.V.I. to provide important psychological services to the people of the Virgin Islands,” says U.V.I. President David Hall, SJD. “Our mental health needs in the Territory and the mainland continue to grow, and we need qualified individuals, who are licensed by an independent body, to properly address those

needs. I applaud Senator Sanes, the other members of the 31st Legislature, and Governor Mapp for supporting this important initiative.”

Prior to this development, the only licensing available to professional counselors was a kind of business license, which forced U.V.I. graduates to leave the territory for proper certification and credentials – or go to work for an agency. “The new legislation is going to be a huge boost to consumers of mental health services in the Territory,” said Dr. Evelyn Carlin, visiting assistant professor and program coordinator of the Master of Arts in Psychology program at U.V.I. “It is also invaluable to this graduate program, and should increase enrollment.”

The licensure exam will test each candidate’s training, academic knowledge and grasp of professional ethics. The VI Board of Licensed Counselors and Examiners will be composed of seven members appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the Legislature. Once a counselor has obtained a license, she or he must follow all of the rules, regulations, and ethical codes of the new Board of Counselors, along with meeting the continuing education requirements established by the board.

“This measure will allow for the sound regulation and licensure of persons seeking to provide counseling services,” said Gov. Kenneth E. Mapp. “As the Territory embarks to rebuild and strengthen its mental health division and access to mental health treatment, such a measure is a necessary catalyst to ensure that we have qualified individuals in the Territory to supply the demand of the Territory.”

The process started in the 1990’s with the American Counseling Association of the Virgin Islands (A.C.A.V.I.) advocating for a bill that would establish a board to license counselors. Berlina Wallace-Berube, a student in the U.V.I. MA Psychology program who testified before the Senate in support of the bill and who is also the president of A.C.A.V.I., said that she is grateful to Sen. Samuel Sanes for proposing the bill; to Sen. Marvin Blyden for co-sponsoring the bill; and for the additional support of Edward L. Browne, chairperson of the .A.C.A.V.I. Licensure and Government Relations Committee.