

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## J.F.L. Board Names Okolo As C.E.O. With \$360,000 Annual Salary

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ST. CROIX -- Dr. Ken Okolo was named chief executive officer of the Juan F. Luis Hospital at a board meeting held on Monday. Dr. Okolo, who served as interim CEO after the tenure of former head Dr. Ken Griffith stepped down in November, 2015, will be paid \$360,000 annually -- more than Dr. Griffith's \$300,000 annual salary -- and over \$400,000 once bonuses are added.

At the meeting, Dr. Okolo is said to have thanked the board for choosing him as the permanent C.E.O., and promised to make J.F.L. a first-rate medical facility.

Dr. Okolo has been praised by J.F.L. Board Chairman Troy De Chabert-Schuster, who described the new C.E.O. to The Consortium recently as someone who hit the ground running during his tenure as interim chief executive, and as a hard and dedicated team member while holding the position of chief operating officer.

And Dr. Okolo inherits a C.E.O. position that is much less strenuous than when Dr. Griffith was in charge. Dr. Griffith oversaw the hospital's operations during its most difficult season, including the dreaded Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [decertification](#).

In an exclusive interview with The Consortium late January, Dr. Griffith said while he enjoys his new life, he misses being able to affect change at the hospital.

"There were still some things I wanted to accomplish. For instance, full information technology implementation," Dr. Griffith said, adding that the effort was around 60 percent complete. However, "I'm proud of the fact that when we came on at J.F.L., we were collecting between \$2 million to \$2.5 million a month, and at the end of my tenure, we were at \$4.5 million, and the month after I left, we went to \$5.4 million. And we had had four months of positive cash flow."

Dr. Griffith said the changes did not eliminate the hospital's debt, "but at least the changes had been put in place to ensure that we were no longer bleeding money," he said.

He also had some advice for the hospital's new C.E.O.

"I would tell him to take care of his employees and listen to them. A lot of the solutions actually come right from the rank and file. And don't forget to be transparent with them," Dr. Griffith said.

He added: "The second advice I would give is to include the community in the growth of J.F.L. Because all the success that we've had with maintaining our certification, wasn't just Dr. Griffith or the board, or the executive team. It was a combination of efforts of a lot of people. You had the rank and file at J.F.L. -- all the staff, doctors and nurses and everybody else at J.F.L. -- you had the hard work of the board, and in particular, even before we had a quorum, you had three board members who just carried the weight of J.F.L. -- Dr. Anthony Ricketts, Joyce Heyliger and Philip Arcidi -- when there was no one else.

"And then you had the senators who helped pass legislation to get us the funding we needed to make those changes necessary for the Systems Improvement Agreement. And then you had the past governor, and [current] governor, who signed off on legislation giving us the authority to get the monies necessary to implement the S.I.A.," Dr. Griffith concluded.

Dr. Okolo will serve a three-year term, after which his position will be examined by the board.

**Correction: March 1, 2015**

*A previous version of this article, because of a text error, included 2014 as the date that Dr. Kendall Griffith stepped down. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.*

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