

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Welcomes 50 Doctoral Candidates In The First Ph.D. Cohort

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The University of the Virgin Islands said today that it welcomed the inaugural cohort for the university's Ph.D. in Creative Leadership for Innovation and Change. The inaugural cohort, composed of 50 students from the Virgin Islands, the Caribbean and the United States, met on Sunday, Aug. 22, for a welcome reception at the President's Guest House. Participants will be able to complete many of the program requirements online, but residency dates are required each semester. The Ph.D. cohort will meet this week, from Aug. 22 to Aug. 26, as they officially begin their coursework.

"In the Virgin Islands, we need to create a place where we are nurturing creative leaders," said UVI President David Hall. "When we think about the future, if we can be a

resource for the development of powerful creative leaders, then many of the issues that we face could be addressed.”

Dr. Hall said that he wanted this new Ph.D. to be multidisciplinary, which would allow the program to cut across the University and allow everyone to participate.

Dr. James Maddirala, UVI associate provost for Graduate, Global and Academic Affairs, welcomed doctoral candidates to the University of the Virgin Islands, Buffalo State University and Fielding Graduate University. “This Ph.D. program is unique,” Dr. Maddirala said. “There is nowhere in the world where three institutions come together to create a noteworthy educational program at this level.” UVI has partnered with Fielding Graduate University and Buffalo State University to make this Ph.D. program a reality.

“I cannot tell you how gratified I am to see this dream of creative leadership come to fruition at this level,” said Dr. Gerard Puccio, Buffalo State University department chair and professor of the International Center for Studies. “I think that the world would be a better place – a world that is fraught with judgment, criticism and fear would be a better place if we had a more creative leaders. That is what you 50 are about. Because imagination conquers fear.”

UVI’s Ph.D. candidates include education, business and private sector leaders who are in different stages of their career. Some participants have been waiting for a Ph.D. in Creative Leadership to be developed, while others have been waiting to advance their education, but did not find a program that fit their professional goals. Some were waiting to be able to do this at an Historically Black College or University.

“This seemed like the perfect step in expanding what the field of curatorial practice is,” said Rhea Beckett, who recently completed a Master of Fine Arts in Curatorial Practice at Maryland Institute College of Art. Beckett is entering the program with her mother, Monica Rae, who comes from a long line of educators. Rae is the chief education officer for a publishing company. “I am really excited to be here with this cohort,” said Rae. “I look forward to learning and contributing 200 percent as we matriculate through.”

UVI Alumna Patricia Williams traveled from St. Maarten to participate in the program’s launch. Williams also earned her bachelor and masters’ degree from UVI. Currently, Williams works as a policy officer who is involved with innovation and change in the education system in St. Maarten. She said she is really looking forward to earning her Ph.D. in innovation and change at UVI. “We will be the first 50,” said Williams to her classmates. “We will do it together.”

The Ph.D. Program in Creative Leadership for Innovation and Change is designed to offer extensive leadership knowledge toward developing innovative practices in leading institutions and other complex human organizations. Learners are encouraged to study organizations from a trans-disciplinary perspective that would transform communities in local and global venues.

UVI’s Ph.D. program offers three specialized tracks:

- Creativity and Leadership For Change
- Organizational Development and Leadership
- Educational/Academic Leadership for Change

Program participants in the Creativity and Leadership for Change track will receive a Ph.D. from UVI and a graduate certificate from Buffalo State University. Participants in the Organizational Development and Leadership Track will receive a Ph.D. from UVI and a graduate certificate from Fielding Graduate University. Students in the Educational/Academic Leadership for Change track will receive a Ph.D. from UVI.

Dr. Maddirala said he would like to see all 50 candidates graduate together. The University is expected to be able to offer this new Ph.D. program globally, including in India and China. The Ph.D. in Creative Leadership for Innovation and Change and the University of the Virgin Islands are accredited by the Middle State Commission on Higher Education.

Feature Image: Shauna Matthew, UVI Ph. D. candidate, introduces herself to fellow students in the inaugural cohort of the Ph.D. program. (Credit: UVI)

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