

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Board Approves New B.S. Degree In Physics, Fundraising Goals For 2016-17 And Re-elects Trustees To Board

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ST. THOMAS -- In the regular session of its quarterly meeting on Oct. 22, on the St. Thomas Campus, the University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees approved a Bachelor of Science Degree Program in Physics with a concentration in astronomy, UVI announced Saturday.

The new degree program will provide educational training and research opportunities for undergraduate students who wish to specialize in physics and/or astronomy and who may intend to pursue graduate studies.

Dr. David Morris, assistant professor of physics and director of the Etelman Observatory, said the degree program will allow UVI to retain students who would normally transfer to schools on the U.S. mainland to complete their degrees. Students currently enrolled at UVI will continue to follow the applied mathematics paradigm until their sophomore year then begin taking specific courses in physics, which includes eight new courses and two seminars, toward the completion of their degrees at UVI.

"I whole heartedly support this resolution and this move to complement and strengthen our science program," said Trustee Oran Bowry.

Dr. Morris estimated that the first group of students enrolled in the program could graduate in Spring 2018.

In his report to the Board, President Hall said that one of the top priorities for the institution this year is the re-affirmation for accreditation process by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Every ten years the institution has to go through a re-accreditation process.

"We have been working really hard to prepare," President Hall said. "I am really excited about this opportunity because we have a lot to show and demonstrate in regard to progress the institution has made."

"Our summer programs this year were outstanding as always, from University Bound to Summer Bridge," he said. After the Board's June meeting, the University's campuses turn into this laboratory for developing student skills. "Both of the campuses are filled with junior and high school students, who are getting exposed to various fields and to individuals that they normally would not," said President Hall.

In his report to the Board, President Hall said that the University is working in collaboration with the Office of the Governor to address climate change. UVI has been selected to oversee the scope of work regarding the governor's climate change initiatives in the territory and to serve on the territory's advisory climate taskforce.

"UVI will play a key role in developing the territory's climate change adaptation strategy and plan," said President Hall. "This will include identifying existing vulnerabilities, risks and impacts of climate change, prioritizing adaptation and mitigation measures, fostering territory-wide community engagement and promoting inter-agency collaboration."

The Office of the Governor has been awarded a grant of \$828,050 from the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs' Technical Assistance Program to fund the project.

In other business, Trustees Yvonne Thraen and Alexander A. Moorhead were re-elected to the Board and will each serve a five-year term. According to the Board's bylaws, two board members must be elected to the UVI Board of Trustees.

Trustee Moorhead was first elected to the Board of Trustees in 1996, and was re-elected in 2001, 2006 and 2011. Moorhead served as Board Chair from 2008 to 2014. He currently chairs the Buildings and Grounds committee and the Finance and Budget committee. He also serves on the Governance and Executive Committees.

Dr. Thraen was first elected to the Board of Trustees in 1996, and was re-elected in 2001, 2006 and 2011. She currently chairs the Academic, Research, and Student Affairs Committee and serves on the Building and Grounds, Governance and Executive Committees.

“The UVI Board of Trustees plays a very important role in the development of the community, in a number of ways,” said Trustee Thraen. “I am happy to be a part of that.”

Two new Board of Trustees members were welcomed by the Board at Saturday’s meeting – Trustee Debbie Bermudez, student representative and Trustee Dr. David Gould, faculty representative.

As customary, President Hall recognized UVI employees that have performed exceptionally with the President’s Appreciation Award. This quarter’s award was presented to the University’s Physical Plant employees.

“It is very easy to celebrate the accomplishment of those who are in positions of leadership, and overlook the daily achievements and contributions of those who are critical to the operations of the University,” said President Hall. “Our Physical Plant employees on both campuses play such a critical role each day in ensuring that our campus facilities are cleaned, repaired and safe. They work long hours, indoors and in the heat.” He continued, “They come to our rescue and address the University’s needs twenty-four hours a day. They are indispensable to our success and this award is a small recognition of the great contributions they provide each day.”

The Board also set the alumni giving goal for fiscal year 2016-2017 to 25 percent. The Board voted to set the fiscal year 2016-2017 annual fund goal at \$2.5 million.

Actions taken by the Board in executive session include:

- Approval of the minutes for the June 4, 2016 Board of Trustees executive session
- Approval of honorary degree candidates
- Approval of a list of potential commencement speakers
- Approval of a proposal for the Eco Research and Industrial Development Park
- Ratification of action taken by the Executive Committee to approve the President’s self-assessment and performance goals for 2015-2016.
- Approval of the President’s performance goals for 2016-2017
- Approval of the Management Corrective Action Plan

In executive session, the Board received updates on personnel matters, legal issues, received a report from the Development Committee on the Capital Campaign and dealt with an appeal to the Board of Trustees.

Feature Image: UVI’s St. Thomas campus (Credit: UVI)