

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Unveils New Dock At Center For Marine Science

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ST. THOMAS -- The University of the Virgin Islands unveiled a new dock at the MacLean Marine Science Center overlooking Brewers Bay on the St. Thomas Campus Friday, the institution of higher learning has announced. The opening ceremony, which took place at 10 a.m., involved presentations on land and tours of the dock and boat ramp. The upgraded infrastructure will greatly increase the University's Center for Marine and Environmental Studies (CMES) ability to safely conduct marine research.

"The old dock was literally held together with straps, because none of the wood was in good enough shape to hold a screw," said Dr. Paul Jobsis, director of the CMES and associate professor of Marine Biology. "We can now easily remove boats from the water for storms or simple servicing. We can dock larger boats with greater capabilities for

near shore and offshore research. And no stairs means that we can use carts to move heavy equipment. This is a big step forward for UVI and marine science research.”

UVI President David Hall elaborated on the theme of growth by reflecting that the new dock could be viewed not only as a significant physical development, but also as an expression of continuity, expansion and transformation. “The new dock is measurably larger and stronger than the one we had before, but it is also symbolic of the various ways in which the CMES has grown along with the reach of the University as a whole,” said Dr. Hall. “This is a chance for one of our strongest departments to move toward an even higher level of scholarship through expanded research opportunities. Its existence is a testament to the collective energies of our community.”



(Left to Right) Former President Emerita Dr.

LaVerne Ragster, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Camille McKayle, Vice President of Administration and Finance Shirley Lake King, Director of the CMES and associate professor of Marine Biology Dr. Paul Jobsis, UVI President David Hall and UVI Professor Dr. Richard Nemeth assist with the cutting ribbon at UVI’s new dock.

The new concrete dock is 170 feet long, approximately 90 feet longer than the last dock which was built in 1997, following Hurricane Marilyn. It has space for eight boats at one time. The depth at the end is 12 feet. It greatly increases the amount and size of boat operations at UVI, and is much safer than the old dock which required workers to carry heavy diving equipment up and down stairs. “Our research will flourish with this newfound ability to accommodate an oceanographic vessel appropriate for expanded scientific research and diving,” said Dr. Jobsis.

Funding for the new dock came from two separate National Science Foundation (NSF)-Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) grants. The majority of the funds came from the current grant, NSF award Mare Nostrum Caribbean: Stewardship through Strategic Research and Workforce Development. The total cost of the project was just over \$1 million, which covered the dock, boat ramp, road work, shed and landscaping.

Ten years in the making, the new dock project was a genuine team effort that involved many extraordinary contributions by members of the UVI community and the Virgin Islands community at large. Such efforts were recently capped off with the anonymous gift of a 34-foot power boat called “Gentle Princess,” which was on display beside the new dock throughout the opening ceremony. This vessel, worth approximately \$100,000, will be used primarily for research and undergraduate diving courses.