

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Organization Formed To Stimulate Competitive Research Hires New Director

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Ernice Gilbert **July 10, 2017**



The University of the Virgin Islands' Virgin Islands Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (VI-EPSCoR) welcomes Dr. Kim Waddell, above, as incoming director.

Dr. Waddell served with VI-EPSCoR in 2009 - 2010 as program administrator and then interim director of the Integrated Caribbean Coastal Ecosystems grant. During the last seven years, Dr. Waddell was working at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington D.C., but a 40-year love affair with the US Virgin Islands encouraged his return. As a former College of the Virgin Islands student, he has always felt an affinity with the Virgin Islands and is thrilled to be back once again.

Dr. Waddell said he is most impressed by the progress that has taken place in marine research at UVI during his hiatus. The level of research at the Center for Marine and Environmental Studies (CMES) is of the highest caliber and is not going unnoticed on the national stage. Likewise, Outreach and Education has blossomed and matured, touching the USVI community on many levels.

Another area in which Dr. Waddell observes growth is in STEM, also known as The Virgin Islands Institute for STEM Education Research and Practice (VI-ISERP). With the support of VI-EPSCoR, STEM researchers at UVI work directly with Territory educators on several levels including through summer learning programs and with year-long support via mentorship. These collaborations have been encouraging and fruitful examples of how a few well-placed individuals can have a tremendous and lasting impact in a focus area.

Dr. Waddell looks forward to impacting the program in the areas of Citizen Science, which is the collaborative with the general public to collect and analyze data concerning the natural world. Citizen Science is ripe with potential and is ready to engage fully with the territory. Coupled with a stronger online presence and greater community partnerships, it is anticipated that VI-EPSCoR will become a recognizable symbol of successful engagement.

“Science is an interdisciplinary field which blends with all areas of learning,” said Dr. Waddell. “In an era of shrinking public investment in scientific research, researchers need to be prepared to be more accountable- meaning, illustrate more clearly how their work is relevant or how it addresses community, societal or environmental needs.”

As the new director, Dr. Waddell will guide VI-EPSCoR through its fourth year of the five-year National Science Foundation Mare Nostrum Caribbean grant to the end and ideally, onto another EPSCoR grant shortly thereafter.

He emphasizes that for young folks interested in science, it is essential to be broadly trained and capable of communicating effectively across disciplines. The challenges researchers tackle are complex and will require multidisciplinary teams to solve. Success in this arena is achieved through discipline, a broad educational base, and the ability to work in partnership. This type of learning is gained through internships and experiential opportunities.

Dr. Waddell can be contacted at kim.waddell@uvi.edu and (340) 693-1628.