

UVI Says it Will Delay On-Campus Re-Opening Plan for Fall 2020

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The University of the Virgin Islands said Friday that it will delay the implementation of the Fall 2020 on-campus reopening due to concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 Reopening Plan was approved by the UVI Board of Trustees on June 20.

The plan had included guidelines for the University to resume in-person instruction, while utilizing a mixed modality approach that would allow for some virtual and in-person instruction. Additionally, on-campus living and work would have commenced with the inclusion of new safety protocols and procedures, according to the UVI news release.

“It is with a sense of great disappointment, that I announce that all instruction for Fall be conducted virtually until such time that the local conditions improve,” said UVI President Dr.

David Hall. Academic leaders will review those courses that require internships, clinicals and labs and make a determination on how best to facilitate student needs in light of this proposed change. “This decision to delay is not being made lightly,” said President Hall. “At the heart of our decision is preserving the health and safety of our students, employees, and the public.”

Fall instruction will commence as scheduled on August 17. “While we operate in a virtual environment, we will monitor the COVID-19 epidemiological data to make determinations and follow the guidance of the local public health officials, as to the appropriate time to consider the full reopening of the campuses,” Mr. Hall said.

Currently, the U.S. Virgin Islands is experiencing a spike in the number of positive COVID-19 cases and the U.S. mainland has seen a surge of coronavirus cases, UVI said. The University is cognizant of the extension of the Territory’s State of Emergency Declaration through Sept. 9, 2020, which was set to expire on July 11. Furthermore, in consideration of the VI Department of Health’s issued phased-reopening guidelines in partnership with the VI Department of Education to safely support the reopening of all schools in the Territory, as well as the announcement to delay the start of public schools until Sept. 8, 2020, the University’s employees who have children in schools will be challenged in fulfilling their responsibilities at the traditional work site as the plan requires.

Another important consideration of the proposed decision to remain virtual is that no on-campus residential housing will be available to in-territory or out-of-territory students, except in compelling and extenuating circumstances, according to the institution of higher learning. Mr. Hall said, “We understand that this proposed delay comes as a significant disappointment, particularly to our students who were looking forward to resuming instruction in-person and all aspects of campus life, albeit within the conditions and confines of this new COVID-19 normal. These are by far not easy decisions to make, but please be reassured that we will be guided by local and national public health officials as well as the science and best practices in higher education.”

Additionally, new travel restrictions and quarantine protocols for traveling to the territory will negatively impact the ability of students outside of the Territory to easily and safely commence the Fall semester as planned.

The UVI Board of Trustees Executive Committee voted on Thursday, July 23, to accept the Administration’s recommendation to delay the on-campus reopening plan. Mr. Hall presented the Executive Committee with recommendations to delay the planned on-campus reopening after input from UVI’s COVID-19 Task Force, Cabinet and other leaders, in conjunction with a candid review of the evolving circumstances and current climate of the public health crisis. The Executive Committee of the Board is authorized to approve decisions of the Board subject to ratification in between scheduled meetings of the Board of Trustees.

Though many staff are working and meeting remotely, the university said it remains open with staffers reporting to work while adhering to established COVID-19 safety guidelines. Meticulous campus public health practices including hand hygiene, physical distancing, enhanced sanitization and cleaning protocols, symptom assessment, testing and/or temperature checks, and use of face masks and approved facial coverings are mandatory requirements that must be maintained and adhered to.

To enhance safety in the work environment, the university said it is also installing protective barriers in high traffic areas and many offices. While many employees work remotely, the

University will work to ensure that quality customer service to students and others is not adversely impacted by this telework option and that service is being delivered in a consistent and thoughtful manner.

For questions related to class schedule and enrollment, email Access and Enrollment Services at

[http://admissions@uvi.edu](mailto:admissions@uvi.edu). Virtual orientation is currently being held for new students from July 23 to Aug. 14. Visit <http://orientation.uvi.edu> for more information.

UVI is among the growing number of universities reversing their plans for Fall in-person and hybrid plans due to escalating COVID-19 cases nationwide.

For more information visit www.uvi.edu or email the Public Relations Office at pr@uvi.edu.

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