

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI 'Stunned' By Rape Incident On St. Thomas Campus; President Says Security Was Not Breached

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ST. THOMAS-- The University of the Virgin Islands said on Monday afternoon that it was "stunned" by a sexual assault incident that occurred on the St. Thomas campus early Saturday morning. The institution of higher learning said the young woman who was assaulted was a UVI student. However, the individual that is alleged to have committed the rape is not a student attending the university.

"We are always extremely concerned when any incident like this occurs. We take sexual assault very seriously," said UVI President David Hall. "We are providing support for the student. We are very much committed to supporting individuals when this occurs, both from a medical, counseling and security standpoint," he said.

U.V.I. said its security department and the Office of the Dean of Students on St. Thomas responded to this incident as soon as it was reported. The university further stated that its security started to investigate the matter and contacted the VI Police Department (V.I.P.D.) immediately. U.V.I. said its security arm has turned the incident over to the V.I.P.D., which has taken the lead on the investigation. The university and the V.I.P.D. will continue to work together on the investigation, according to U.V.I.

In a release [issued late Sunday](#), V.I.P.D. Public Information Officer Glen Dratte said the V.I.P.D.'s Criminal Investigation Bureau was dispatched to the Schneider Regional Medical Center where an interview was performed with the victim, who was at the medical facility receiving treatment.

The victim, a 19-year-old female, told investigators that sometime between 12:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. on Saturday, a male individual came into her dorm room at the U.V.I. campus in St. Thomas and sexually assaulted her.

Mr. Hall said the incident did not appear to be the result of a security breach. "There was not a break-in that occurred during this particular situation, which indicates there was no lapse in security," he said. "UVI's campus is one of the safest in the nation," Mr. Hall added, a claim the university said was based on CLERY Crime Statistics data submitted each year, which provide statistics used to track crime on university campuses across the nation. "However, we will monitor the campuses even more because of this incident," Mr. Hall said.

The university said its security officers are on campus 24/7, some of them with peace officer status.

"We will continue to be vigilant and increase our patrol services on campus to ensure that our students remain safe," said UVI Chief Campus Police and Security Theodore Glasford. U.V.I. said it has increased security on campus over the years, to include adding blue light emergency contact phones, additional security cameras and enhancing lighting on campus.

"We have invested quite a bit of resources in trying to improve security, but as this incident demonstrates, even when you have a very secure campus, someone can still engage in this kind of horrendous act," Mr. Hall said. "Our security does a very good job in trying to monitor who is coming on campus especially at certain hours. There is always more that can be done and in an open campus environment, we are always looking at how we can monitor the campus more and how we can do a better job."

The university told The Consortium that its cameras were functional, however Mr. Hall said he would refrain from delving too deep into details so as to protect the integrity of the case and the privacy of the student. But he stressed that the incident was not caused by a failure in security. "This is not a situation where we're wondering what happened; we know what happened," he said. "We in no way want to downplay the severity of the impact, but this was not because of a lapse in security."

Asked whether the university was taking measures to prevent such occurrences from happening in the future, Mr. Hall said U.V.I. already had stringent security measures in place, but with the campus being an "open" facility with a library that is open to the public,

as well as a sports and fitness center where non-UVI residents frequent, there will always be some level of vulnerability, he said.

Even so, Mr. Hall stressed that U.V.I., despite the Saturday morning incident, remains a safe place for students. "This is a place that I think students and their family members can feel safe," he said.

Mr. Hall said he only knew of one other reported rape incident that occurred during his 8.5 years as president of the institution. That case was "fully investigated," he said.

As for the victim, Mr. Hall said U.V.I. counselors have met with her, along with medical personnel to assure that she receives all the tools necessary to get through the trauma associated with such assaults.

U.V.I. said its administrators and staff will meet with students to discuss proper implementation of existing security measures. U.V.I. also encouraged students be vigilant and to report suspicious individuals to the security office at (340) 693-1530. Students were asked to contact Dahlia Stridiron, director of Counseling Services, should they need counseling.

The university referred inquiries for details on the ongoing investigation to Mr. Dratte.

Feature Image: UVI St. Thomas Campus (Credit: UVI)