

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Free College Tuition Is Now The Law In The U.S. Virgin Islands

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Governor Kenneth Mapp has signed into law a number of important measures before he leaves office on January 7. Among them is Bill No. 32-0328, which provides free college tuition for Virgin Islands students who plan on attending the University of the Virgin Islands. The program will start in Fall 2019. The bill secures \$3 million from the Internal Revenue Matching Fund to the University of the Virgin Islands Scholarship Revolving Fund to keep the program operational.

In his communication to Senate President Myron D. Jackson, the Governor wrote: "While this measure is not as comprehensive as the Bill I and UVI proposed, the Bill before me does provide college tuition at the University of the Virgin Islands for our high school

graduates. This new law and the opportunities it creates will be a positive “game changer” for many families. Providing tuition for young Virgin Islanders sets them on a path of achieving their dreams and aspirations. This program will produce a larger educated workforce in the Virgin Islands as well,” he added.

The governor noted that by approving this measure, it is the first scholarship program of any territory of the United States, following the lead of only two other states that provide tuition-free Bachelor’s degrees. Additionally, the University of the Virgin Islands would be the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the nation to offer free tuition to residents of its state or territory.

“For all of the political outcry this program created during this year’s election, I’m pleased that we were able to get some measure of free tuition authorized by law. Many have sought to accomplish this task over many years past by including it in proposed Virgin Islands Constitutions and by authorizing bill requests in various Legislatures,” Mr. Mapp continued.

Mr. Mapp also signed 16 other bills and resolutions. See the full transmittal letter below:

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