

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Board Approves New Tuition Pricing for O.E.C.S. Students; FY 2020 Budget And Grants Trustees Emeritus Status Also Approved

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In the regular session of its quarterly meeting on March 2, on the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix, the University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees unanimously approved new tuition pricing for selected members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States under terms of individual Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), UVI said in a release issued Sunday.

The Board also voted to approve the individual MOUs which were between UVI and H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC), Anguilla Community College (ACC) and Dominica State College (DSC). The University entered into these agreements on various dates in January and March of 2019.

These MOUs establish, for a period of ten years, tuition rates to be charged to the undergraduate and graduate students from the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and Dominica, including those graduating from their respective colleges as per the terms of their MOUs.

According to the release, the tuition rate for such students to enroll in undergraduate and graduate programs at UVI will be 1.75 times the tuition rates established for residents of the United States Virgin Islands to enroll in undergraduate or graduate programs at UVI effective fall 2019 and for the duration of the MOU.

UVI President David Hall said the University recognized a pricing issue with the institutions mentioned in the MOUs. Previously, the non-resident tuition rate was three times what the resident rate was. Students were getting better offers from institutions in Europe and the U.S. mainland. "This is an attempt to attract those students from those countries," Mr. Hall said.

In other business, the board unanimously voted to grant trustee emeritus status to former members of the Board of Trustees Jennifer Nugent-Hill and Edward E. Thomas. Ms. Nugent-Hill served for 12 years during the administration of two presidents of the university, and participated in numerous activities held by the institution of higher learning, the release said. During her service on the board, Ms. Nugent-Hill served on the Audit Committee, Development Committee, Governance Committee, and Finance and Budget Committee. She also served on the Executive Committee of the Board for 10 years.

Mr. Thomas was appointed and confirmed to the Board of Trustees in November 2009. He served continuously on the board until February 2015. Mr. Thomas served as the Chair of the Audit Committee and of the Finance and Budget Committee during his tenure, according to the release.

After his service on the Board of Trustees, Mr. Thomas was nominated and confirmed as a member of the Governing Board of UVI's Research and Technology Park. He is currently serving as the chair of that board. He provided those committees and boards with the benefit of his knowledge and experience gained during his service in the private and public sectors in the Virgin Islands and his knowledge of financial management.

Persons granted Trustee Emeritus status are forever invited to participate in Board of Trustees meetings, but they do not have voting power, UVI said. They are also routinely invited to important University events.

"These are distinguished individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the Board. This is the best way to help create a legacy for them and help keep them connected to the University," Mr. Hall said. "We look for them to continue to provide us with their wisdom and their support."

During the president's report, Mr. Hall outlined many of the university's recent achievements based on the efforts of UVI's students, faculty and staff.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded UVI \$4.9 million for the development of a Territorial Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMRP) for the U.S. Virgin Islands. UVI's Virgin Islands Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (VI-EPSCoR), led by Dr. Kim Waddell, and the Caribbean Green Technology Center, led by Gregory Guannel, will work in conjunction with VITEMA on the development of the hazard mitigation plan over the course of the three-year project.

"We view this effort as an opportunity to enhance the position of the University as a key resource of intellectual and technical capacity for the Territory and the region, as part of our collective recovery and rebuilding efforts," Mr. Hall said. "This goal aligns with the University's strategic plan to develop a Disaster Mitigation and Resiliency Center." This is a joint effort between the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) and the University. UVI will be serving as lead on the project.

UVI was also awarded \$500,000 in funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Environmental Literacy Program (ELP) for its U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) Storm Strong Program. The five-year project will create the territory's first sustained, community-based, hurricane hazard preparedness program, according to the release. Through the development of this program, middle- and high school youth and their families across the territory will engage in on-the-ground projects that increase individual, family, and community preparedness for hurricanes.

"What is unique about this half million dollar grant is that it will be working with the youth and their families to make sure that there are projects in each household to prepare individuals for future hurricanes," Mr. Hall said.

The university was selected by the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct the data collection requirements of the 2020 Census for the U.S. Virgin Islands. UVI will execute and manage all activities associated with the collection and reporting of the decennial census data to include demographic, social, economic and housing characteristics of the territory, UVI said. The total estimated contract award amount is \$15.4 million. As part of the scope of the contract, UVI will establish U.S. Census Virgin Islands offices on both St. Thomas and St. Croix. The University project lead for the 2020 VI Census is Dr. Frank Mills, vice provost for Research and Public Service.

As customary, Mr. Hall recognized UVI employees, individually or collectively, who have performed exceptionally with the President's Appreciation Award. This quarter's award was presented to 46 principal investigators at the university, who represent a wide cross-section of individuals spanning various schools and departments across the University. Over the past year, UVI has received an increase in external funds.

"For the fiscal year 2018, UVI received \$19.3 million in externally funded grants and contract awards as compared to the prior fiscal year of \$7.7 million," Mr. Hall said. "This substantial increase is due to the hard work, creativity and dedication of numerous principal investigators at UVI."

The president credited faculty researchers who he said have made a significant contribution to this increase as well as other administrators and teaching faculty.

At Saturday's meeting, Board of Trustees Chairman Henry Smock welcomed new Board of Trustees members Racquel Berry Benjamin, VI commissioner of Education designee and Arah C. Lockhart, VI Board of Education chair. Ms. Lockhart was welcomed in absentia, as she was unable to attend the meeting.

In other business, the board voted to approve the Fiscal Year 2020 appropriation of \$38.3 million; ratified their Jan. 23, special session vote to approve the FY 2019 Proposed Operating Budget for the University and heard a report on the key performance indicators.

While in executive session, the board approved the Oct. 27, 2018 executive session minutes and ratified actions taken by the executive committee on Nov. 15, 2018. The Board also authorized settlement negotiations in a particular piece of litigation (UVI did not reveal details of the litigation), authorized the administration to negotiate a sublease, addressed a personnel matter and received an update on legal matters.

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Saturday, Oct. 27, 2019.