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# UVI Adopts Amended Sexual Harassment Policy, Falling in Line With U.S. D.O.E. Action Strengthening Protections for Survivors of Sexual Misconduct

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American college student. By. GETTY IMAGES

In the regular session of its quarterly meeting on Saturday, via Zoom, the University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees voted unanimously to adopt amendments to the University's Sexual Harassment Policy, UVI has made known.

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 is a federal law that states that no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal assistance. Title IX applies to all educational institutions that receive federal funds. The

Office of Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education (US DOE) enforces Title IX regulations.

In May 2020, the U.S. D.O.E. took action intended to strengthen Title IX protections for survivors of sexual misconduct and to restore due process in campus proceedings to ensure all students can pursue an education free from sex discrimination. The new regulation, which was slated to go into effect in August 2020, required the board's executive committee to review and ratify the university's amended sexual harassment policy.

Board Attorney Marie Thomas Griffith said changes to the policy, mandated by Title IX, included changes to the definition of sexual harassment, the hearing process, the formal complaint structure, kinds of responses to the accused and due process in regard to the accused.

The board also voted unanimously to set the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 fundraising goal at \$3 million and the alumni giving rate at 20 percent.

During the meeting, UVI Board of Trustees Chairman Henry Smock welcomed four new members of the Board:

- Trustee Lois Hassell-Habtes, educator and culture bearer
- Trustee Reginald Vigilant, chief operating officer of Omni Systems and UVI alumnus
- Trustee Dr. Verleen McSween, who will serve as the Faculty Representative
- Hadiya Lang, who will serve as the Student Representative.

Additionally, the board of Trustees voted unanimously to extend the presentation of the FY 2020-2021 budget to November 2020 to be followed by consideration and approval of the executive committee one week later. University spending in the interim will be capped at the FY 2019-2020 Operating Budget revision one level.

The board voted unanimously to authorize the enhancement of opportunities of UVI's retirement plan with Teacher's Insurance and Annuity Association-College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF). The current retirement plan contract will be modified to close underperforming funds and replace them with similar funds in the same asset category that are better performing options.

As is customary, UVI President Dr. David Hall highlighted the excellence and commitment of UVI employees or units that have performed exceptionally with the President's Appreciation Award. This quarter's award was presented Mavis Gilchrist, who administers the Virgin Islands Academic and Cultural Award Endowment Scholarship (VIACAE), which is managed by the University.

The chairman of the UVI Board of Trustees, the governor, Senate president, commissioner of education and the chief Justice are the key board members for this program that supports Virgin Islanders who are pursuing professional and advanced degrees or developing cultural projects that preserve and advance Virgin Islands culture. The UVI Board chair also chairs this prestigious Board of Directors.

The endowment provides funding to applicants and must track their progress and compliance with the award agreements. For the last five years, Gilchrist, who previously served for numerous years as the director of Financial Aid at UVI, has administered the program, UVI said.

“Her leadership, managerial skills and financial aid expertise advanced the operation of the VIACAE to levels never reached prior to her arrival,” said Dr. Hall. “The applications, progress of recipients and overall records of the program were professionally managed and numerous Virgin Islanders benefited from Ms. Gilchrist’s knowledge and superb management skills.”

During Saturday’s meeting the Board also heard key performance indicators before going into executive session.

While in executive session, the board approved the June 20, and Sept. 20, 2020 executive session minutes; approved candidates for honorary doctoral degrees for May 2021; approved the commencement speaker list for May 2021; approved a candidate for special tenure; ratified actions taken by the executive committee regarding administrative changes to the Plan for Reopening of the University for the Fall 2020 Semester, the Collective Bargaining Agreement and presidential assessment and 2021 presidential goals; received an update from the president regarding personnel matters and received an update on legal matters from legal counsel.

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Saturday, March 6, 2021. A complete list of board meetings is available on the Board of Trustees page of the UVI website [here](#)