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UVI Communication Students Establish First NABJ Student Chapter in Caribbean

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The University of the Virgin Islands Communication Department students have founded the University of the Virgin Islands Association of Black Journalists (UVIABJ) student chapter, becoming the first student and only NABJ affiliate chapter in the Caribbean, UVI has announced.

At its annual October meeting, the executive board of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) made a unanimous decision to officially grant UVIABJ chapter status, according to the release. NABJ is committed to; strengthening ties among Black journalists, sensitizing all media to the importance of fairness in the workplace for Black journalists and expanding job opportunities and recruiting activities for veteran, young and aspiring Black journalists, just to name a few.

UVIABJ joins 883 professional and student journalists from 11 states and 33 student chapters as part of Region III of NABJ UVI said. “Welcome to the NABJ family,” said Dorothy Tucker, NABJ president. “We are thrilled to have our first NABJ chapter from the USVI and ‘tickled black’ it’s a group of young aspiring journalists.”

“Congratulations to our students in the Communication Department,” said Dr. Kimarie Engerman, dean for the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS). “Being granted membership exposes our students to careers in journalism, the chance to network with other Black journalists, as well as scholarship and internship opportunities. I encourage all students at UVI to take advantage of this opportunity.”

Founding members Maxiene Cabo, Jada Roberts, George Francis, Kalyna Nielsen, Lana Cuffy, Aja La-Fleur Scott and Nikiyah Gerson will serve as executive board members under the largest organization of journalists of color in the nation, UVI said.

“Indeed, this is a monumental achievement for students in the Communication Department,” said Dr. Sharon Albert Honore, associate professor of communication and faculty advisor. “The founding members of UVIABJ demonstrated tenacity and dedication in their initiative to establish affiliation with NABJ, renowned for its efforts to increase racial diversity in the media arena.”

NABJ chapters primarily comprise of full-time, freelance and student journalists as well as media-professionals. UVIABJ and other student chapters agree to follow strict journalistic guidelines which include adherence to ethical rules of conduct. In alignment with NABJ rules, UVIABJ plans to execute programs which benefit student journalists as well as members of the community.

“We look forward to serving our community and representing the department, our University and the VI in newsrooms across America and the world,” said Maxiene Cabo, UVIABJ chapter president. The UVIABJ student chapter consists of more than 20 active members on the St. Thomas and Albert A. Sheen campuses.

“We are proud to be affiliated with NABJ,” said George Francis, UVIABJ secretary. “We hope being granted chapter status encourages other professional and student journalists on neighboring islands to also establish NABJ chapters.”

Founded on Dec. 12, 1975 by 44 men and women in Washington D.C., NABJ is an organization of journalists, students and media-related professionals that provide quality programs and services to and advocates on behalf of Black journalists worldwide.