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UVI to Graduate More Than 300 Students During Virtual Commencement December 11; U.S. SBA Inspector General Will Deliver Keynote Address

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2018 UVI Commencement Ceremony on the St. Croix Campus By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM

The University of the Virgin Islands said Thursday that it will host its virtual commencement ceremony on December 11 at 1:00 p.m. During the event, the institution of higher learning will commemorate degrees earned by more than 300 graduates in the Class of 2020.

Last Spring, in consultation with the members of the 2020 Graduation Class, the university decided to postpone the May 2020 Commencement ceremonies until December, UVI said. The decision was made on the assumption that by December 2020, COVID-19 would have receded

and UVI would be able to safely resume normal activities. The University continues to monitor incidents of the coronavirus in the territory, and ultimately decided to convene an online commencement ceremony.

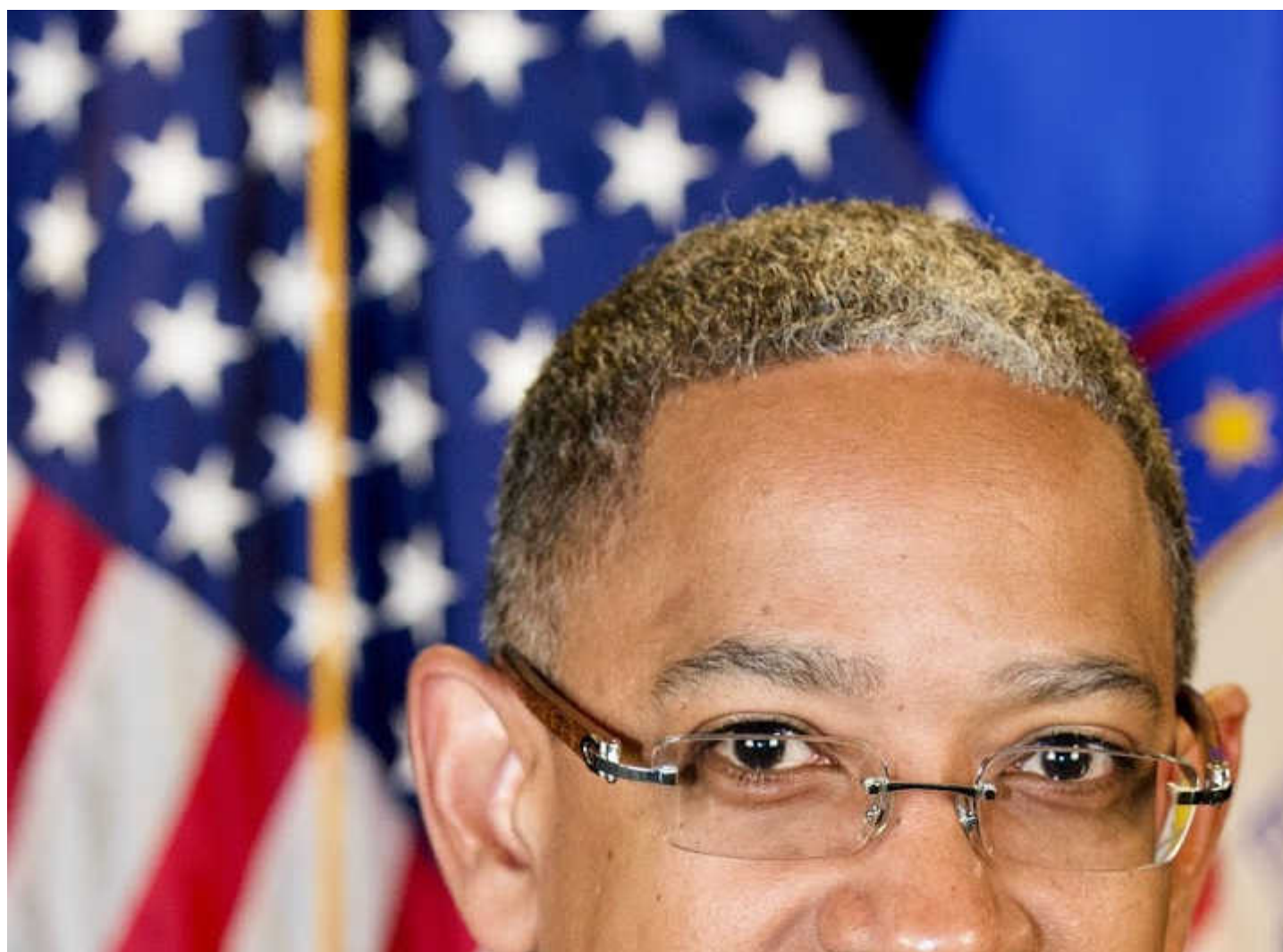
According to UVI, typically, two commencement exercises on both campuses occur in May, but the St. Thomas and Albert A. Sheen Campuses will celebrate with a joint ceremony at 1 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 11.

“The Class of 2020 is worthy of this University’s sincere admiration and respect, and I hope this reimagined Commencement Ceremony, though different than what we initially planned, will remind them of the wonderful journey they successfully completed, and the wonderful people that made it all possible,” said UVI President David Hall. “The Class of 2020 is like no other, and they are an exemplary of resiliency and success.”

He added, “Though students already received their degrees, they are still deserving of a ceremony that recognizes their outstanding achievements. Though this remote ceremony will not equate to what they would normally receive, we still want this gathering to convey a powerful and compelling message of achievement, celebration and undying gratitude”

Keynote Speaker

UVI alumnus Hannibal Ware, U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Inspector General and accomplished financier, has been selected as the keynote speaker, UVI said. A native of the Virgin Islands, Hannibal “Mike” Ware holds a bachelor of arts degree in accounting from the University of the Virgin Islands, earned in 1991. He is also a graduate of the senior executive service career development program. Ware has received numerous awards throughout his career, including several awards from Council of the Inspectors on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), as recognition for his significant work in the Inspector General community.



Hannibal Ware (Credit: UVI)

Ware was sworn in as U.S. SBA Inspector General on May 24, 2018, following his confirmation by the U.S. Senate. He is responsible for independent oversight of SBA programs and operations, which encompass more than \$100 billion in guaranteed loans and nearly \$100 billion in federal contracting dollars. In addition, he currently serves as the chairman of the Audit Committee for the CIGIE.

From April 2016 to January 2017, Ware served as the deputy inspector general, and he served as the acting inspector general from January 2017 until his appointment to be the inspector general.

Ware has 30 years of experience within the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) community, the first 26 years being with the Department of Interior (DOI) OIG. In 1990, he joined the DOI OIG's Virgin Islands field office as an auditor and later became the field office supervisor. Throughout his long and distinguished oversight career, he performed increasingly challenging and vital roles within the OIG community.

From the Virgin Islands field office, Ware was promoted to eastern regional manager, where he provided leadership of all phases of the technical and administrative operation of the region, including planning and managing audits, inspections, evaluations, and joint investigations. Ware later moved to DOI OIG's Office of Management and served as the deputy assistant inspector general for management. In this capacity, he executed DOI OIG's independent operating budget and managed the logistical concerns for the office's nationwide presence. In April 2016, he was appointed to the senior executive service as the SBA OIG deputy inspector general.

Honorary Degree

UVI said it will bestow an honorary degree upon a prominent native Virgin Islander – Dr. Eugene A. Petersen. His educational career includes attending the St. Patrick- Elementary School, Claude O. Markoe Junior High School and St. Croix Central High School. Borne out of his affection for horses and other animals he matriculated at Tuskegee Institute (University) where he studied veterinary medicine and was the first Virgin Islander to earn a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Degree in 1975. Dr. Petersen returned home to practice his profession, and established the Princesse Veterinary Hospital in La Grande Princesse, St. Croix where he practiced for 25 years.



Dr. Eugene Petersen (Credit: UVI)

Dr. Petersen is known in the St. Croix community as an avid horse-racing fan, having raced horses for many years on St. Croix. He also managed the Randall “Doc” James Racetrack as the president and chief executive officer for the Virgin Islands Racing Corp., where he was instrumental in introducing simulcasting and account wagering to the Virgin Islands. Apart from his career, Dr. Petersen is a devoted music and entertainment lover. His interests were identified when he began singing as a teenager and learned to play the guitar to accompany his singing. He excelled in the cultural music of the Caribbean, calypso, but is also a balladeer and sings various genres of songs.

“Doc Petersen,” as he is affectionately known, has travelled worldwide as a solo artist or with small groups. His travels have taken him to places such as India, Denmark, most of Western Europe and many places in the United States.

Presently, he can be heard as a solo artist in several clubs and restaurants on St. Croix or at major events such as carnivals and festivals. He is a recording artist and has written and produced four music albums and several musical plays.

Dr. Petersen is also a published author of his book “Tan Tan Tails and Tan Tan Tails” and has hosted a popular local radio and music show for many years.

He remains a notable name in the local community, having served on many boards of directors. These boards of directors include: the Virgin Islands Veterinary Board, The Frederiksted Economic Development Board, WTJX Public Television, and Island Center for the Performing Arts, where he served as executive director for eight years.

During his tenure with the Island Center for the Performing Arts, he was an integral part in the production of Sunset Jazz, Wednesday evening in the Park, Blue Bay Jazz Festival, and the Virgin Islands Cultural Expose` and Extravaganza.

UVI said it awards an honorary doctoral degrees to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments. Honorary doctoral degree nominees can be nominated by any member of the University administration, faculty, student body, staff, alumni, or Board of Trustees.

Visit www.uuv.edu for details on UVI’s virtual commencement ceremony, which will be hosted on Zoom and livestreamed for public viewing at 1 p.m. on Dec. 11, 2020.