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UVI Names Charlene Navarro as Director of Medical Simulation Center Set for Grand Opening This Summer

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Charlene Navaro By. **FACEBOOK**

The University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) has appointed Virgin Islands healthcare professional, Charlene Navarro, to be the director of the UVI Medical Simulation Center, bringing the University one step closer to opening the state-of-the-art medical education facility currently under construction on the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix, the university said via release Tuesday.

Slated to open this summer, the UVI Medical Simulation Center will provide an immersive medical simulation experience to UVI students, as well as continuing education and certification courses for local and visiting healthcare professionals, according to the release.

“We are very fortunate to have Mrs. Navarro on our team to lead the opening and development of the medical simulation center which will ultimately help to improve the quality of healthcare in the Virgin Islands,” said UVI President David Hall. “Mrs. Navarro’s extensive experience, particularly in the area of medical simulation and training, makes her uniquely suited to the task of building the center from the ground up,” he stated.

Prior to joining UVI as the center’s director, Navarro worked as the director of nursing at Frederiksted Health Care, Inc. and was previously employed at UVI as an adjunct faculty member in the School of Nursing. She moved to St. Croix in 2016 following a distinguished career in the U.S. Army and Air Force capped by leadership roles in medical education and simulation training, UVI said.

As the director of Medical Education and Medical Simulation Training stationed at the Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, Navarro was responsible for more than 17 educational programs and over 300 trainees. She was both the chief learning officer and instructor of various immersive simulation programs including extensive use of low, medium and high-fidelity human patient simulators, standardized patients and virtual reality programs. In 2016, she was transferred to the United Kingdom where she served as director of the Tier 1 Medical Simulation Center at the Royal Air Force Lakenheath base until her retirement from the military.

Other highlights from Navarro’s military career include working as director of operations for patient movement in Kandahar, Afghanistan, charged with medical evacuation of military and civilian personnel from the combat zone; a three-year assignment in Germany where she was first exposed to medical simulation training while working as a critical care nurse; and a three-year assignment in the neonatal unit at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Okinawa, Japan, UVI made known.

Born and raised in New York to parents from the Virgin Islands, Navarro earned a bachelor’s degree in nursing at East Carolina University in North Carolina, and both a master of science in nursing and an MBA in healthcare management from the University of Phoenix.

“I am excited and humbled to be entrusted with what will be the crown jewel of UVI,” said Navarro. “UVI has embraced the reality of our technologic age by finding innovative ways to deliver medical education and training that is on par with what is available in the States. The Medical Simulation Center will provide a sophisticated educational experience that will propel healthcare in the Territory to the next level.”

According to UVI, the Medical Simulation Center will be modeled after the Center for Advanced Medical Learning and Simulation (CAMLS) at the University of South Florida. CAMLS is the largest state-of-the-art healthcare simulation and training center on the mainland and is now partnering with UVI to bring high-level medical certification training programs that do not currently exist in the Territory. While Navarro maintains the credentials to instruct many of the programs herself – from basic life support to more complex trainings, CAMLS will also train simulation center staff and selected local healthcare professionals to teach courses.

“Medical simulation as an educational methodology has proven benefits including increased patient safety, better patient outcomes, and improved resource and liability management,” explained Navarro. Once the center opens, local healthcare professionals will benefit from valuable training and resources that have only been available off-island. Additionally, the center hopes to attract global healthcare organizations and high-tech firms to the VI as a place to provide training and conduct research. “The UVI Medical Simulation Center will also support STEM programs for our youth with exposure to education in healthcare, medicine, science, technology,

engineering and robotics,” she added.

The one-story, 21,332 square foot center, will consist of surgical skills labs, simulation rooms, a 70-seat lecture hall, conference space, a dining hall and administrative offices. As part of UVI’s long-term vision to develop an accredited medical school, UVI is planning construction of a second building on the St. Thomas Campus that will house seminar rooms, a 100-seat lecture hall, a library, anatomy/physiology and clinical skills labs and administrative space. Adjacent to the classroom building, there are plans for a third building for biomedical research.

“The simulation center, the classroom building, and biomedical research building will be the key places where future physicians of the Virgin Islands will be trained,” said Mr. Hall. “The medical school project will not only improve healthcare for people in the Virgin Islands but will serve as an economic catalyst for growth and diversification in the Territory.”

The facilities are being supported by funding from the VI government and a \$28.6 million grant from the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce.