

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Gets \$4.1 Million From FEMA to Retrofit Dormitories and Library in St. Thomas

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency, through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, recently awarded up to \$4,123,164 to the University of the Virgin Islands to retrofit the dormitories and library on the Orville E. Kean Campus on St. Thomas, announced the Office of Disaster Recovery (O.D.R.) Monday.

According to the release, the wind retrofit of all five residence halls (North, South, East, West and Middle) and the Ralph M. Paiewonsky Library will encompass the hardening of structural components to include the roof, entry doors, window openings, gutters, electrical and mechanical equipment, lighting, security systems and other at-risk elements in accordance with current building codes. These enhancements will also be

constructed to meet the 180 mph Design Wind Speed requirements for the USVI and the American Society of Civil Engineers.

"After the passage of hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the University's facilities were compromised," said Shirley Lake-King, vice president for administration & finance and chief financial officer at the University of the Virgin Islands. "This project will ensure that students can remain in the residence halls during and after the passage of a storm. UVI is grateful for the efforts of FEMA and looks forward to the impact that this grant will have on its facilities and improved conditions for our students."

A firm will be procured to complete Phase 1, engineering and design. Once complete, a final determination will be made on the actual cost, and a contractor will be solicited for Phase II, construction, O.D.R. said.

"These dorms have been home to many local, national and international students over the years. Ensuring that all students are safe and secure in the face of a disaster is critical to fostering a resilient community of higher education learners," O.D.R. Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien. "The project's goal of mitigating the risks posed by hurricane winds will allow the University to recover quickly and expeditiously regain normalcy after weather events."

According to the release, the residence halls on the Orville E. Kean Campus can accommodate around 350 students and range between two to four stories of both single and double occupancy units in addition to suite-style housing.

The resources housed in the two-story Ralph M. Paiewonsky Library are comprised of instructional and research materials as well as special Caribbean and local historical collections. Funding projects that protect intellectual and cultural assets are among FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program's core functions.