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UVI Board Elects Former Governor John P. de Jongh as New Member; Board Also Approves UVI School of Medicine Strategic Plan

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Former USVI Governor John P. de Jongh

The University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees on Saturday voted unanimously to elect former Gov. John P. de Jongh, Jr. to a five-year term serving on the board beginning on Oct. 26. Mr. De Jongh, who served as governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands from 2007 to 2015, is a prominent businessman and currently the managing member of Chilmark Advisory, LLC. — an advisory firm focused on the Caribbean market, according to UVI. “The Governance Committee believes he will make an excellent addition to the Board of Trustees,” said UVI Board of Trustees Chairman Henry Smock.

The board also voted unanimously to approve the draft strategic plan, including the mission and vision statements, for the UVI School of Medicine (UVISOM) project. With approval from the board, the university plans to submit these required documents as part of its application for preliminary accreditation to the Liaison Committee for Medical Education (LCME) in late November or early December, UVI said.

The university said it is seeking to create the first English speaking LCME accredited medical school in the Caribbean. Of the 106 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in the United States, only four have medical schools. The UVI School of Medicine would be the first new HBCU medical school to be established since 1975.

Among the key goals outlined in the UVISOM strategic plan are; through innovations in medical education, to develop students as physicians who will become lifelong learners, educators, team players and solution finders; to achieve financial sustainability and growth to develop and support the UVISOM; and to improve healthcare for the people of the Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean.

The UVI Board of Trustees voted unanimously to grant Trustee Emeritus status to Dr. Yvonne E. L. Thraen. Elected and confirmed to the UVI Board of Trustees in 1996, Dr. Thraen served on the Board for 25 consecutive years during the administrations of three University presidents. She served as chair of the Executive Committee of the Board for 24 years and on numerous committees including the Research and Student Affairs Committee, Building and Grounds Committee, and Governance Committee, as well as various ad hoc committees.

“Dr. Thraen has always been one of my strongest allies and fiercest critics. She will be sorely missed on this Board,” said Mr. Smock.

During Saturday’s meeting, Mr. Smock welcomed Dr. Glen Metts, who will serve as the new faculty representative on the Board. Dr. Metts is a professor of Entrepreneurship at UVI, who is instrumental in coordinating the annual 13D Entrepreneurship Business Launch Competition. The program mentors students and awards them valuable start-up funds to pursue their business ventures.

After hearing a presentation from the Development Committee, the Board voted unanimously to set the Fiscal Year 2022 fundraising goal at \$4 million, the Alumni Giving rate at 20 percent and a goal of 90 percent for Board of Trustees giving. This is an increase from the Fiscal Year 2021 goal of \$3 million.

“I want to applaud Vice President for Institutional Advancement Mitchell Neaves and his entire team for exceeding the fundraising goal for this year. At last count, it was at \$3.4 million. Whenever we are able to achieve and exceed a challenging goal, in this period where finances are very tight for individuals, I feel it is worth highlighting and I wish to thank everyone who made that occur,” said UVI President David Hall.

During the President’s Report, Mr. Hall lauded the successes of UVI students, faculty, alumni as well as University initiatives and degree programs. Mr. Hall noted that the Creative Leadership for Innovation and Change (CLIC) doctoral program welcomed its sixth cohort this Fall including 23 students from such diverse locations as Nigeria, Ghana and Ethiopia.

“This program is not just providing Virgin Islanders with a path to obtain their Ph.D., but it is providing a pathway for individuals from around the world,” he said. To date, 24 students have completed the program.

During his report to the board, Mr. Hall applauded the career and educational achievements of UVI alumni. “Just as our students are doing great things while they are with us, our graduates are being accepted at prestigious institutions around the country and we are proud of them,” he said.

The following graduates from the UVI College of Science and Mathematics were recognized for completing graduate degree programs:

- Murchtricia Charles — Ph.D. in Computational Medicine and Bioinformatics at University of Michigan
- Annesha King — Ph.D. at University of Alabama at Birmingham
- Juliet Ruggiero — Master of Science in Marine Science from Florida Atlantic University working at the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute
- Michael Celestine — Ph.D. in Chemistry at Old Dominion University

The following UVI alumni were accepted into or hired by graduate programs in the nation:

- D'Shaunique Walters has been accepted to Albert Einstein University.
- Joash Liburd, former UVI student and current research assistant for the VI-ISERP Center, was accepted at Florida International University's doctorate program at the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs for Economics. He began the program in August 2021.
- Joy Grant, UVI Bachelor of Arts Graduate in Social Sciences in 2019, was hired as the Program Coordinator for Morgan State University's graduate program in Psychometrics.

As is customary during the Board Meetings, Mr. Hall highlighted the excellence and commitment of those UVI employees or units that have performed exceptionally with the President's Appreciation Award. He recognized the efforts of the director of Human Resources and Organizational Development, Ron Meek and his team in implementing the Board's June 2021 vaccine requirement for students and employees.

“The thing that has defined this period more than anything else has been the vaccination requirement. It required the institution to take on another level of administrative responsibility that did not exist before and existed in an area that was very challenging because of the personal nature of this requirement and the way in which various individuals responded,” stated the UVI president. “Our Human Resources Department had to, in consultation with legal counsel, develop an entire process for individuals to indicate that they were complying, to seek exemptions, to review exemption requests, to make recommendations and to communicate with our employees consistently during this period. I am extremely thankful for the hard work, creativity and the leadership that was displayed during this period.”

Other members of the Human Resources team include Jacquiel Fredericks, Maria Edwards, Neville Williams, Shauna Matthews, Shelly Anslyn-Jones and V. Veda Richards. “Your individual and collective thoughtfulness, professionalism and integrity, made a very challenging situation run smoothy. The Board of Trustees and the administration deeply appreciate having a stellar human resources department especially during the personnel challenges that universities are facing nationwide,” said Dr. Hall.

While in executive session, the Board completed the following:

- Approved Executive Session Minutes of the June 19, 2021 Meeting of the Board
- Approved two persons to receive Honorary Degrees at May 2022 Commencement
- Approved 2022 Commencement Speaker List
- Approved two Gift Agreements
- Ratified action of Executive Committee to continue due diligence on Hotel Request for Proposal
- Approved new Federal Holiday on June 19, and to have it placed on the UVI holiday calendar
- Received an update on the Vaccine Mandate
- Gave approval to administration to resubmit application to LCME
- Received an update from the President regarding personnel matters
- Received an update on legal matters from Legal Counsel

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Saturday, March 6, 2022. A complete list of Board meetings is available on the Board of Trustees page of the UVI website www.uvi.edu and from this direct link.