

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Brand New Inclusive Childcare Laboratory and Diagnostic Center Opens at UVI on St. Croix Campus

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Picture collage of UVI's Inclusive Childcare Laboratory and Diagnostic Center on the St. Croix Campus. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY/VICONSORTIUM

The University of the Virgin Islands announced Wednesday that the Albert A. Sheen Campus is now home to the university's second Inclusive Childcare Laboratory and Diagnostic Center, bringing a research-based childcare program linked to early childhood to the island of St. Croix.

University officials and invited guests on Wednesday attended a grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the event, signaling the university's vision to

play a central role along the education continuum of Virgin Islanders, beginning at the earliest ages, UVI said.

According to the release, the new facility will enhance the educational experience of pre-service teachers pursuing a degree through the School of Education, who will be supervised by UVI professors as part of their studies. It will also help to meet the needs of the university's students and employees who require childcare services to better manage the challenges of balancing parenthood and college life.

"UVI's proven model for an early childhood center that meets the practical needs of many of our students while also providing enhanced opportunities for quality early childhood education for Virgin Islanders is a 'win-win' for UVI as well as the Virgin Islands community as a whole. I am deeply grateful to and proud of the work done by our School of Education faculty and administrators to bring this vision to reality," said UVI President Dr. David Hall.

Mirroring the services provided at the Inclusive Childcare Lab and Diagnostic Center located on the Orville E. Kean Campus in St. Thomas, the new center will provide service in pre-service teacher development, childcare for UVI students, and early care and education, the release stated. Managed by the School of Education with supervisory services from faculty and certified teachers, the center will provide services that are pedagogically sound and centered around innovative research-based best practices. Available diagnostic services will address developmental milestones through screening and assessment of reading, language/communication, social and emotional behavior, cognition, and physical development.

The center will serve children between the ages of two and 11, with operating hours from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. As the need arises, evening hours will also be accommodated. Initially, enrollment preference will be given to children of UVI students, followed by the children of faculty and staff members. Space permitting, members of the wider Virgin Islands community will be invited to apply to avail themselves of the center's services.

"The faculty in the School of Education and I look forward to witnessing the transformative impact this Childcare Laboratory and Diagnostic Center will have on the learning opportunities available to our pre-service teachers, even as we simultaneously address issues in our community related to kindergarten-readiness and identifying developmental delays in our preschool children," said Dr. Karen Harris Brown, dean of the School of Education.

Pre-service student teachers will observe and engage in evidence-based classroom instruction in a research rich context under the guidance of certified teachers and University faculty. Pre-service education majors enrolled in both the Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood and Elementary teacher preparation programs will be exposed to new teaching and learning approaches and best practices.

Completion of the Childcare Center was supported by a Title III Grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

Persons interested in applying for enrollment at the center should contact janell.gainer@uvi.edu or sherryl.tongegeorge@uvi.edu. The application process is the same for the Childcare Center at either UVI campus.

