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13D Research and Strategy Innovation Center Unveiled at UVI Campus on St. Thomas

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UVI officials and distinguished guests unveil the sign at the new 13D Research & Strategy Innovation Center. By. THE UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS.

The University of the Virgin Islands on Monday unveiled what it says is a "cutting-edge innovation center" that aims to bring together students, researchers, businesses, government leaders and other stakeholders to learn from one another and turn innovative ideas into reality.

The 13D Research & Strategy Innovation Center is the latest realization of UVI's "Greatness Through Innovation" strategic plan that is fostering a culture of innovation within the university, UVI said. The center, located in the former West Bay Supermarket building on the Orville E. Kean Campus on St. Thomas, was officially named today in honor of the St. Thomas-based,

global research firm, 13D Research.

“It is extremely fitting that the Innovation Center be named after our long-time supporter, 13D Research,” stated UVI President David Hall. “Through the past generosity of its founder, Kiril Sokoloff, UVI’s annual Student Entrepreneurial Competition is named after the company; our lone named distinguished professor, Tim Faley, carries the title of the Kiril Sokoloff Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship; and UVI has been able to make significant advances on its path of innovation and entrepreneurship.

“Now, thanks to an additional \$3 million gift, it is appropriate for the center to carry the 13D Research name as we make a bold step forward in creating a permanent hub for students and our community to ideate and innovate,” said President Hall. “Kiril Sokoloff innovates with his head and his heart. He cares deeply about the Virgin Islands and UVI, and it has been a delight to have him as a partner and supporter in UVI’s quest for greatness.”

In attendance at the naming ceremony, Sokoloff reflected on his hopes for the center quoting fellow inventor and entrepreneur Dr. William Brody, “What is the calculus of innovation? The calculus of innovation is really quite simple: Knowledge drives innovation, innovation drives productivity, productivity drives economic growth.”

According to UVI, the 18,000 square-foot Innovation Center is a multi-purpose, multi-level space designed to inspire creativity and collaboration. A reception area at the front entrance will serve both as a welcome space for visitors and recruitment area for prospective students. Equipped with a coffee station, smoothie bar, digital information boards and seating, the reception is a comfortable place to recharge between classes and meetings or to begin a campus tour.

Inside the glass-walled Creativity Lab, users will be able to delve into the creative process facilitated by certified members of UVI’s Creativity Lab Unit. With lots of imagining space, conference rooms, white boards and media tables, participants can engage in strategic planning, ideation sessions and other brainstorming activities.

At the heart of the Innovation Center is a flexible, state-of-the-art presentation platform that can accommodate a live audience of approximately 50 people with streaming capabilities. This is where students and other groups will be able to utilize 3D printers, present their work and display projects. The mezzanine level will house a classroom, discussion areas and offer a bird’s eye view into the Innovation Center. According to Dr. Haldane Davies, vice president for Business Development & Innovation who has monitored and guided the construction, “the facility is 85% complete and should be fully ready for occupancy and use within the next three months.”

The Center will also feature a teaching kitchen, a full-service restaurant and a bakery to be operated by the UVI CELL (Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning) Culinary Arts program, according to the release. Once fully operational, patrons will access the restaurant through the covered walkway on the east side of the building where they can enjoy students’ culinary creations.

“It is really exciting to see it all come to life,” said Dr. Pamela Moolenaar-Wirsiy, dean of Innovation & Student Success, who has been overseeing the project since joining UVI in 2021. “Our vision is to bring all our stakeholders together to engage in hands-on experimentation, ideation and collaboration. Our goal is to have the most cutting-edge technological equipment in the Caribbean and to make it inviting.”

UVI said one way it is planning to facilitate collaboration is by renting office space to businesses. The community can also seek out the services of the UVI Creative Lab Unit, and middle and high school students will be invited to explore career opportunities and engage in innovative technological experiences.

“The mixture of students, faculty, companies and creative thinkers will create an unmatched learning environment where imagination replaces fear, and knowledge inspires a brighter tomorrow,” said Mr. Hall.

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