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## Nearly 300 Degrees to be Conferred During UVI's First In-Person Commencement Since Covid Pandemic; Proof of Vaccination or Negative Covid Test Required to Attend

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**UVI's 2017 commencement ceremony. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM**

The University of the Virgin Islands will confer close to 300 degrees at its 58th Commencement Ceremonies being held in person this week, UVI made known Wednesday.

The ceremonies will take place on Thursday, May 12, 2022, at the Sports and Fitness Center on the Orville E. Kean Campus in St. Thomas and on Friday, May 13, 2022, on the grounds of the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix. Both ceremonies will begin at 1:00 p.m.

“We are so pleased to be able to celebrate our graduates’ collective success live and in-person this year. As an institution, we treasure the time-honored tradition of launching our newest alumni into the world with pomp and circumstance, and this year it is especially rewarding in light of all that our students have endured and overcome to arrive at this day,” said UVI President Dr. David Hall.

Dr. Robert Franklin, Jr., former President of Morehouse College, will deliver the keynote address.

In addition to celebrating the academic achievements of its newest alumni, the University will bestow honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees upon Dr. Franklin and two distinguished Virgin Islanders: Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith and USVI Commissioner of Health Justa Encarnacion, signaling the University’s appreciation for their outstanding accomplishments and contributions in their respective fields of professional endeavors.

This year’s class speaker on the Albert A. Sheen Campus is Rex Cazaubon III, who will earn a bachelor of science degree in Computer Science with the honors of Magna Cum Laude. Graduating Suma Cum Laude, Kasem Thompson, Jr., will earn a bachelor of arts degree in music education with a minor in communication and will address the Class of 2022 as the class speaker on the St. Thomas Campus.

According to UVI, all graduates, university employees, participants and guests, including infants, will be required to present a ticket for entry to commencement on both campuses. In addition, individuals (except children five years old and under) will be required to submit a valid negative result from a Covid-19 test taken within 24 hours of the ceremony or proof of Covid-19 vaccination to enter the ceremony.

Parking on the St. Thomas campus will be available in the parking lot of the Reichhold Center for the Arts. Shuttle service will be provided to accommodate persons parking at Reichhold Center, the Administration and Conference Center (ACC), and the upper campus.

The ceremonies will be live-streamed on UVI’s YouTube page - <https://www.youtube.com/user/UVIvideos>, Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/UVI.edu/> and Twitter page- [https://twitter.com/uvi\\_edu](https://twitter.com/uvi_edu). The ceremony’s live stream can also be found on the homepage of UVI’s website – [www.uvi.edu](http://www.uvi.edu).

[DaVybe 107.9](#) FM will broadcast the commencement ceremonies, and a stream will also be available using the TuneIn App.

### **Covid-19 Protocol for UVI In-Person Commencement Ceremonies**

All graduates, participants and guests will be required to show proof of Covid-19 vaccination in order to gain entry to the commencement ceremonies. Attendees must be prepared to present a physical or digital vaccination card together with valid identification; a QR code representing a vaccination record is not acceptable for entry. The vaccination record must indicate that the bearer has received the full dose of protection against Covid-19 (i.e., two doses of Moderna or Pfizer vaccines or one dose of Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen vaccine). For commencement entry purposes, a booster is not required.

UVI said unvaccinated individuals and those who are unable to present acceptable proof of vaccination will be required to present a negative result from a Covid-19 rapid antigen or PCR test taken within 24 hours at a valid lab, physician or the V.I. Department of Health, together with a valid I.D. Results from self or at-home tests will not be accepted, and results from tests taken

outside the 24-hour window will not be accepted.

Children aged five or under are not required to present proof of Covid-19 vaccination or a test result.

With large crowds expected to attend both ceremonies, the use of face masks is not mandatory but strongly encouraged. Attendees are encouraged to be diligent and to take the necessary precautions to be protected from potential exposure to viruses. Where possible, social distancing should be maintained, and guests are encouraged to remain seated with their group of family and friends.

UVI said it has partnered with the V.I. Department of Health to provide free Covid-19 testing the day before each ceremony. The testing schedule and instructions for registering online can be found at: <https://www.uvi.edu/coronavirus/uvi-inperson-covid19-protocols.pdf>. A limited number of walk-ins and drive-through appointments will be accepted. Do not wait until the last minute. Individuals without a valid 24-hour negative test result or proof of COVID-19 vaccination will not be permitted to enter the ceremony.

### **A Glimpse at the UVI Class of 2022 – Graduate Stories**

Nicholas Durgadeen: Leaving no UVI opportunity unturned?

While completing the requirements to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Biology, Durgadeen took advantage of the many co- and extra-curricular opportunities UVI had to offer, including research, internships and study abroad.

“Coming from a single parent household, I saw and learned about hard work firsthand from my mother. Because of her, I put blood, sweat and tears into working and saving money so that I could help manage the expenses of my college education,” said Durgadeen, who started his UVI career at the Albert A. Sheen Campus in St. Croix before transferring to the Orville E. Kean Campus in St. Thomas to complete his studies.

“My UVI experiences have influenced my growth and development as a scientist. I have a more nuanced understanding of the type of work I'd like to contribute to the world,” he said. “Living on a small island it's easier to see the impact you're having on your local community. It's another thing to see people operating in different environments and learning how you can apply those lessons to your own community.”

### **George Francis II: Writing his own success story**

Coming to UVI with some real-life experience under his belt, Francis had his sights set on pursuing his passion for all things related to communications. However, his highs and successes were counterpoised by criticism and discouragement along the way. “I was told that I didn't have what it takes to be successful in communications or to work in the news industry. Some of those pronouncements introduced a sense of self-doubt in me, and at one point I felt that I should stop pursuing communications entirely,” he stated.

“The personal attention I received and the strong relationships I was able to develop at UVI played a major role in allowing me to succeed at my goals. I will miss the sense of family and community connection most,” said the new graduate.

Francis is the 2022 UVI Student Employee of the Year on the Kean Campus on St. Thomas, and is the Secretary (and a founding member) of the University of the Virgin Islands Association of Black Journalists (UVIABJ) chapter.

### **To 74-Year-Old Graduate Gretlyn Joseph: Age is Just A Number**

“Age is just a number,” this is the motto that Gretlyn Jannette Joseph is living by. This Friday on the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix, Joseph will earn a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication at the age of 74.

Joseph, a native of Antigua, set sail to earning her college degree in 2014 after graduating from the Adult Education program on St. Croix. “When I graduated from the adult education program, my counselor at the time Ms. Rashida Lester, encouraged me to enroll at UVI,” said Joseph. “Enrolling at UVI, was something that never really crossed my mind, because at my age I didn’t really think I could enroll in UVI.”

Despite having a little self-doubt, Joseph heeded the words and advice of her former counselor and enrolled at the University in the Fall of 2014 at the age of 66. “I decided to major in Communication because I enjoyed writing and reciting poems and writing letters and short stories.”

“I am honestly grateful that I decided to give UVI a try, because now I feel as though I am a new and improved Gretlyn Jannette Joseph,” she says.

She thanks her advisor Dr. Sharon Honore and Dr. Chenzira Kahina for their mentorship, support and guidance throughout her time at UVI. Joseph is looking forward to walking across the stage on Friday with her daughter and family members cheering her on.

“I want my story to encourage others to not sit back and allow others to dampen your dreams because of your age. Earning my degree clearly did not happen overnight, it took some time,” says Joseph. “If you have a dream, go after it and put your all into it. Although Joseph did encounter challenges while working towards earning her degree, she stated that, “failure is inevitable, but it is not the end of your story.”