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\$1 Million National Science Foundation Award Received by UVI to Support Marine Science Graduate Students and Workforce Positions

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The University of the Virgin Islands announced Monday that it has received a \$1 million award from the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) to support UVI students who wish to pursue a master's in Marine and Environmental Science at UVI and to secure workforce positions in marine and environmental science in the territory.

The award, entitled, Securing STEM Island Pathways, is led by Dr. Kristin Wilson Grimes, research assistant professor in UVI's Center for Marine and Environmental Studies and Dr. Lawanda Cummings, STEM education director for the Virgin Islands Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (VI EPSCoR), UVI said. It builds on past investments in the territory by the NSF, including the NSF INCLUDES SEAS Islands Alliance, VI EPSCoR's Ridge

to Reef: Processes and Interdependent Drivers of Small Island Resilience, and the Florida-Caribbean Louis Stokes Regional Center of Excellence.

According to the release, for over four years, Securing STEM Island Pathways will support 13 post-degree recipients in graduate school at UVI and local workforce positions. Graduate students will receive tuition, fees, and a graduate research assistantship stipend, plus additional mentoring and other non-financial supports. Those entering the workforce will have the opportunity to gain experience in either 8-week or year-long positions. Year-long positions are salaried and receive full benefits. Past workforce fellows have been placed with territorial partners (Department of Planning & Natural Resources, Divisions of Coastal Zone Management and Fish & Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy) on both St. Thomas and St. Croix.

“We are excited by this investment in the territory by the National Science Foundation and hope the project will serve as a model program for how we can stabilize STEM career pathways, lessen unemployment, and retain talented, emerging scientists within the U.S. Virgin Islands,” said Grimes. “Because UVI is one of only three Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States with a master’s program in marine science, the project bridges a critical period of uncertainty for many underrepresented groups in the geosciences.”

“I am grateful for the collaborative culture at UVI that allows us to build upon past successes and innovate on how we support our emerging scientists with more holistic development models and pathways for inclusion in the local STEM workforce,” shared Cummings.

UVI said eligible students are UVI graduates (B.A., B.S., M.Sc.) in STEM fields.

For more information about this award or the NSF INCLUDES SEAS Islands Alliance, please email: genae.gonsalves@uvi.edu. To learn about the NSF INCLUDES SEAS Islands Alliance, please visit <https://www.seasislandsalliance.org/> or VI EPSCoR, please visit <https://viepscor.org/>.