

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Carrion-Sponsored Bill Allowing Part-Time UVI Students to Receive Government Scholarships Moves Forward

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University of the Virgin Islands logo at the entrance of the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

The category of students able to benefit from scholarships offered by the government of the Virgin Islands attending the University of the Virgin Islands has been extended to part-time learners.

On Monday, senators on the Committee on Education and Workforce Development voted in favor of the amendment which would allow qualifying students who have graduated

from a secondary school in the USVI, and who want to attend college part-time, to receive financial aid.

The mover of the bill, Senator Samuel Carrión said it would assist people affected by economic hardships but who are trying to do better. “What we’re proposing really speaks about equity and providing opportunities,” he said.

According to Mr. Carrión, the bill is about eliminating barriers and making higher education accessible to a section within the community pursuing higher education but are met with the realities of life.

“This is focused to those young single mothers, those caretakers, those individuals that because of the reality of the high cost of living in the Virgin Islands, the reality of inflation, the reality of having to hold two jobs in order to survive,” he explained.

All senators present agreed for the amendment to be sent to the Committee of Rules and Judiciary for further consideration, even while acknowledging that there must be guidelines as to which students qualify.

Currently, 422 students attend the part-time program at the university, however, it is not yet clear how many will qualify to benefit. The university’s board must therefore clearly outline the minimum credit requirement and the maximum number of years that a student can be afforded financial assistance.

Meanwhile, Camille McKayle, provost/vice president of academic affairs at UVI said enrollment numbers have been down over the last few years due to a decrease in the overall population, according to the latest population census.

“The overall population in the Virgin Islands has decreased almost 20 percent and I believe other numbers are telling us that our high school graduating seniors decreased almost 30 percent. So, we’ve seen a decrease in actual population in the Virgin Islands impacting the greater level – the high school graduating class,” she said.

Ms. McKayle also acknowledged the effects of online learning, which gives students the option to enroll in universities around the world. In addition, [an controversial Covid-19 policy](#) enacted by the university’s board that required all students and staff to become vaccinated or undergo testing has affected enrollment numbers. That policy has since been reversed.