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# UVI Launches Culinary Arts Program on St. Thomas Campus, 'Hopes' to Do the Same on St. Croix 'In Near Future'

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The University of the Virgin Islands said Tuesday it is serving up a brand new program that will appeal to aspiring culinary artists, food industry professionals, and anyone who enjoys a good meal: The long anticipated Culinary Arts Program officially launched on Sept. 26 welcoming its first class of culinary students to the Orville E. Kean Campus on St. Thomas.

The university said it hopes to extend the program to the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix in the near future.

A multifaceted concept that is unique to the Caribbean, the Culinary Arts Program gives students an opportunity to prepare for the workforce while providing industry professionals with leading

industry certifications, UVI said. It offers a connection between high school, post-secondary, and real-world experiences while providing internship experiences that will introduce the student to all aspects and careers in the culinary industry.

“We are extremely pleased and excited to roll out this program, something the community has been requesting for quite some time,” said UVI President Dr. David Hall. “We’ve spent a considerable amount of time making sure our curriculum will produce well-rounded culinary professionals and address labor shortages within the local hospitality industry.”

According to the university, the program will be housed under UVI CELL and operate from the recently opened 13D Research and Strategy Innovation Center, located at the former West Bay Supermarket building. It will feature a small state-of-the-art kitchen for students to gain hands-on experience through the primarily student-run restaurant, Wild Sage, due to open in the Spring of 2023.

Training will start with the Certified Fundamentals Cook (CFC), a 6-month program for beginners and chefs. The CFC combines hands-on learning and immersive industry experience to prepare students to work in a food-service setting. Students will study food safety/sanitation, nutrition, kitchen skills, food preparation skills, management and cost-control, cooking/baking techniques, plating techniques, and front-of-house service that will culminate with an in-house internship.

“We’ve assembled a dynamic team of industry professionals under the leadership of Chef Kerish Robles who has worked tirelessly to bring this project to fruition,” said Dr. Suzanne Darrow Magras, director of UVI CELL. “We want to ensure that our curriculum provides our students with a comprehensive culinary experience that is on par with any other program across the nation.”

“I’m excited to have been given the opportunity to develop this wide-ranging program for our community. We have such amazing potential in the food industry in our territory and even more talented people in our community that will benefit from this program,” stated Chef Kerish Robles, program manager for the Culinary Program. “This unique concept in the Caribbean will hopefully allow our team to educate and broaden the understanding of the world of food and service while producing quality leaders in the industry.”

UVI said the program is aligned with industry standards and will offer certification courses through the American Culinary Federation and other industry organizations. Courses will be geared to suit community needs and will include refresher courses for culinary professionals, community cooking classes for hobby cooks, and nationally recognized certificates for those entering the workforce.

For more information on the Culinary Arts Program, visit the Culinary Arts website at <https://cell.uvi.edu/programs/culinary-overview.aspx>. Questions about the program can be directed to Chef Kerish Robles at [culinaryarts@uvi.edu](mailto:culinaryarts@uvi.edu).