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UVI Approves New Associate Degree in Construction Management, Pointing to Growth of Sector in Territory Following 2017 Storms, Covid-19

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Prompted by the burgeoning construction market in the U.S. Virgin Islands propelled by federal funding pouring into the territory following hurricanes Irma and Maria, the University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees on Saturday voted unanimously to approve a new associate of applied science (AAS) degree program in construction management.

The university also approved a \$49.9 million revised fiscal year 2023 budget, its largest to date and an increase of \$10.8 million [over what UVI requested in August during its Senate budget hearing](#).

On the new associate degree, UVI Dean of School of Business, Dr. Kendra Harris, stated, "We essentially were charged by the territory to consider a construction management associate degree in large part, based on the influx of financial resources that were coming into the territory on the heels of the post-hurricane era and also into the pandemic era."

Ms. Harris said opportunities were there for individuals to be contractors and subcontractors, but individuals were not properly equipped with the appropriate certification to be able to take advantage of those opportunities. This program, she said, has been put in place to meet that need.

The AAS in construction management degree is designed to provide graduates with the skills and experience to be successful as a project manager on building construction projects, according to UVI. Students will learn principles and techniques of construction, materials and building equipment, manual and computer-aided drafting, building contracting processes, legal considerations, and cost estimating and scheduling using the latest construction and project management software.

The degree program is also intended to prepare students for positions such as construction supervisor, estimator, scheduler, or project manager from start to finish. Before this program, students interested in pursuing professional careers in the construction industry would have had to leave the territory to earn a certificate or a degree in construction management.

The VI Legislature funded a feasibility study on the AAS in construction management and the university submitted the results of the feasibility study, which included a budget, to the Legislature, UVI said.

When asked by Board Trustee Reginald Vigilant why an associates of applied science degree was proposed instead of a bachelor's program, Ms. Harris said, "The data that we gathered is that associate degrees are growing in desirability by employers."

The feasibility study revealed that people were willing to commit one to two years.

In Fall 2202, UVI launched its certificate program for construction management. Students in the certificate program can easily switch to the AAS degree program, according to the university.

"This is a very necessary program," said Board Chair Henry Smock. "We look forward to great things from it."

During the President's Report, UVI President Dr. David Hall lauded the successes of UVI students, faculty, and alumni as well as university initiatives. As is customary during Board Meetings, Mr. Hall presented the President's Award in recognition of the excellence and commitment of those UVI employees or units that have performed exceptionally within the last quarter.

This quarter's award was presented to the Access and enrollment Service (ACES) department under the leadership of Dr. Pamela Moolenaar-Wirsiy, interim vice president of Enrollment Management, and the department's former leader, David Wuinee. The department worked diligently to produce a two percent increase in total enrollment for the Fall 2022 semester including notable increases in new Freshmen of more than 13 percent, reversing a previous trend of low enrollment.

The ACES Department launched the most aggressive and comprehensive student outreach campaign to ensure that as few students as possible were purged from the University's system due

to payment related issues and that as many students as possible received financial aid resources. Thanking the entire team for their dedication and creativity, Dr. Hall stated, “Your teamwork and your collective determination has placed the University on a growth path that we must continue.”

The Board of Trustees unanimously approved a revised operating budget of \$49.9 million for Fiscal Year 2023. “We are very delighted that we have been able to submit a balanced budget,” said Mr. Hall.

After hearing a presentation from the Development Committee, the board voted unanimously to set the Fiscal Year 2023 fundraising goal at \$4.5 million and the alumni giving rate at 20 percent.

During the meeting, Mr. Smock welcomed Nashanta Lindsey-Farrell, who will serve as student representative to the board and Dr. Sharon Honore, who will serve as the new faculty representative on the board. Ms. Honore is an associate professor of communications at UVI. Mr. Smock also welcomed Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Department of Education commissioner.

While in executive session, the board completed the following:

- Approved Executive Session Minutes of the June 18, 2022 Meeting of the Board
- Received a report from the Board regarding the Vaccination Policy
- Received a report from the Academic, Research and Student Affairs Committee
- Received a report regarding a trustee committee
- Received an update regarding personnel and legal matters

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Saturday, March 4, 2023, on the Albert A. Sheen Campus.