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# UVI School of Education Programs Achieve New National Accreditation; Programs Commended for Persistence and Commitment to Quality

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The University of the Virgin Islands School of Education announced Monday that it has been awarded full 7-year accreditation by the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP). National accreditation assures the quality of professional preparation programs through a non-governmental, non-regulatory process of self-study and peer review, UVI said.

According to the release, after reviewing the evidence collected through the self-study and peer review process, the AAQEP Accreditation Commission determined that UVI's programs for teacher education, school counseling, and educational leadership met all four of AAQEP's standards and granted them full accreditation. The commission cited the programs' attention to

workforce needs through a “grow-your-own” approach and accessible, inclusive admission practices; significant investments in improvements to benefit candidates, such as a more robust data collection and analysis system; and close collaboration with stakeholders to strengthen the education system throughout the region.

The commission also pointed out the programs’ adaptability and resilience amidst adversity. It affirmed the university’s “persistent and successful commitment to program quality in the context of numerous recent challenges” that include not only a dispersed geographic service area but also weather disasters and loss of key staff, UVI said.

“I wish to thank our faculty and staff led by School of Education Dean, Dr. Karen Brown, for their hard work throughout this rigorous process which has reaffirmed UVI’s commitment to excellence and ongoing improvement,” said UVI President, Dr. David Hall. “I commend you all for maintaining the highest level of academic standards and for the important role you play in developing future generations of educators.”

According to UVI, the School of Education received accreditation for the first time under the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in 2013. “We chose to change accreditation agencies because we align with AAQEP’s values of high expectations for continuous improvement, building the culture to support this work, and considering local contexts as a form of cultural competence,” said Dr. Brown. “Leading this process has been a labor of love! I am so proud of what we have accomplished, particularly because we are holding our own as a small academic unit in the American Caribbean alongside larger Schools and Colleges of Education in the U.S. mainland. I am grateful for my lead authors of the graduate program Quality Assurance Reports (QARs), program directors Dr. Xuri Maurice Allen (School Counseling) and Dr. Clinton Valley (Educational Leadership) for their quality work. I am also appreciative of the local practitioners and VI Department of Education partners that served as members of the AAQEP Quality Review Team for each program (Dr. Renee Charleswell – initial teacher certification, Dr. Yvette McMahon-Arnold – educational leadership, and Ms. Tiana Wilson-Mathew – School Counseling).”

AAQEP President and CEO Mark LaCelle-Peterson, said, “Congratulations to the University of the Virgin Islands and to all of the faculty, staff, and stakeholders who have achieved their goal of national accreditation by AAQEP. The School of Education addresses the educational workforce needs of its region with a comprehensive set of programs, providing low-barrier access to quality professional preparation guided by solid evidence.”

AAQEP currently has members in 32 states and other jurisdictions with over 180 educator preparation providers participating in the accreditation system. UVI Peer institutions that are AAQEP-accredited include the University of Guam, according to the release. UVI Aspirational peers with AAQEP accreditation include Alfred University and the University of Hawaii – Hilo.