



University of the Virgin Islands School of Nursing

FROM THE DEAN'S DESK



Newly admitted University of the Virgin Islands students are welcomed by deans, faculty, and student affairs staff during New Student Orientation on the Albert A. Sheen Campus for the Spring 2026 semester.

A New Semester, We Begin Together

As we begin a new semester, I want to extend a warm welcome to all of our students and a special congratulations to 28 newly admitted students to the University of the Virgin Islands Bachelor of Science in Nursing program (see page 2). Each January brings with it fresh beginnings and renewed purpose. It is a moment to pause, to set intention, and to remember why we chose the path of nursing. Nursing education is not only about mastering content and clinical skills. It is about belonging to a community that believes in who you are becoming and is committed to helping you grow into the responsibilities of this profession. Recently, I published a love letter reflecting on the strength, perseverance, and quiet courage I witness daily among our UVI nursing students. I wanted to share a brief excerpt here as we begin the semester together, as my love letter was inspired by what I see you all accomplish each and every day.

"...I want readers to understand that when a student here earns a BSN, it is more than a degree. It is evidence of brilliance that persisted through barriers. It is evidence of commitment that held through literal storms. It is evidence of strength that grew in the space between sea and struggle."

Read the full love letter on the Medium Blog: <https://medium.com/@dr.lewisuvi/when-beauty-and-barriers-meet-caribbean-nursing-students-and-the-strength-they-carry-d827034ad1b1>

This spirit is reflected throughout this issue. It is visible in the names of our newly admitted BSN students, in the work of our faculty, and in the creativity and leadership of students like Ms. Kiana Joseph, whose performance in *Bottled Love*, a short film addressing gun violence in the U.S. Virgin Islands, reminds us that nursing students bring their full humanity into every space they enter. The Student Spotlight featuring Ms. Kiana Joseph appears on page 5.

We are also pleased to welcome a new faculty member to our School of Nursing this semester - Professor Melisia Hanley, whose expertise and commitment to nursing will strengthen our teaching and learning community. At the same time, we pause to express our sincere gratitude to a Dr. Vivian Palmer-Lewis who, after several years of dedicated service, departed the University in December 2025. We thank Dr. Palmer-Lewis for the contributions she has made to our students and our School and wish her continued success in the next chapter of her professional journey. Faculty updates are featured on page 3.

In addition, this issue highlights both a new funding initiative and a continuing gift that reflect sustained confidence in the mission and work of the UVI School of Nursing. These investments are expanding experiential learning opportunities and strengthening the academic and clinical preparation of our students. Details on these funding updates are shared on page 4. As you begin this term, know that you are part of a community that sees your effort, honors your perseverance, and believes deeply in your capacity to succeed. We are proud to walk alongside you as you continue your journey.

With pride and optimism,
 Lisa M. Lewis, PhD, RN, FAAN, FAHA, FADLN
 Dean, School of Nursing



WELCOME TO OUR NEWLY ADMITTED CLASS OF 2028 BSN STUDENTS



AAS CAMPUS

Laurie Armstrong
Lizmarie Arno
Alaina Austrie
Kiarah Austrie
Delca Dubois
Jahkeishma Felix
Veronica Henry
Dominique Jenkins
Carla Krupa
Keijhenae Petersen
Makayla Smith
Mekaya Williams
Jacinda Dubois
Anna Gilbert
Darlenny Sotomayor

OEK CAMPUS

Mallak Azzam
Shavia Berkley
Sarah Boyd
Kyra Clarke
Maleah Davis
Kanya Esprit
Charlz Gilbuena Luke
Destiny Lambert
Tishanna Rabsatt
Samantha Rey
Gillian Thompson
Te'Asia Haarmann
Gedesha McFarlande

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We are proud to welcome 28 newly admitted students to the University of the Virgin Islands BSN program. Your acceptance into this program reflects your commitment, perseverance, and readiness to take on the responsibilities of the nursing profession.

As you begin this next chapter, know that you are joining a learning community that values excellence, compassion, and service. You will be challenged academically, supported personally, and prepared professionally to care for individuals, families, and communities across the Virgin Islands and beyond.

We congratulate each of you and look forward to watching you grow into confident, skilled, and purpose-driven nurses.

Faculty Updates: Welcomes and Farewells



John Smith
Software Engineering

We are pleased to welcome **Professor Melisia Hanley, MSN, RN**, as the newest Assistant Professor in the UVI School of Nursing on the Albert A. Sheen Campus. Most recently, Professor Hanley served in a clinical leadership role at Juan F. Luis Hospital, and she brings more than three decades of clinical experience across maternal-child, medical-surgical, and pediatric nursing. A proud UVI alumna, she has also been a valued contributing member of the School of Nursing as a part-time faculty member, supporting students in clinical instruction before joining the faculty full time. We look forward to the depth of experience, mentorship, and commitment she brings to our students and learning community.

At the same time, we share our gratitude to Associate Professor **Dr. Vivian Palmer-Lewis**, who concluded her service to the University of the Virgin Islands in December 2025. Dr. Palmer-Lewis devoted several years to the UVI School of Nursing and to the Territory through her teaching, service, and commitment to advancing nursing education. We thank her for her contributions and wish her continued success in the next chapter of her professional journey.



Donor Spotlight: Advancing Nursing Education Through Philanthropy



Whittier Rehabilitation Hospital Study Abroad Experience

A generous annual gift from **Mr. Philip Arcidi**, president and owner of Greenleaf VI II, Inc., provides **\$87,000** in support of the Whittier Rehabilitation Hospital Study Abroad experience in Boston, Massachusetts.

This investment supports student travel, housing, and educational expenses, enabling UVI BSN students to engage in immersive inpatient clinical learning experiences beyond the Territory. Through this opportunity, students broaden their clinical skills, professional confidence, and understanding of complex healthcare systems while preparing to return home better equipped to serve Virgin Islands communities.

Darby Nursing Initiative Fund

We are pleased to announce a new gift of **\$10,000** from **Mr. and Mrs. Jerry and Anne Darby**, establishing the Darby Nursing Initiative Fund.

This new fund supports student-centered academic and professional initiatives that enhance learning, promote student success, and strengthen the School of Nursing's commitment to excellence and access in nursing education.

Together, these investments reflect both sustained commitment and new partnership, expanding what is possible for UVI nursing students and reinforcing the importance of investing in nursing education that is locally grounded and globally engaged.





BSN Student Spotlight: Ms. Kiana Joseph

Honoring nursing students who lead with purpose, compassion, and a commitment to excellence.



BSN student Kiana Joseph, Class of '27 is featured at the December screening of Bottled Love

This semester, we are proud to spotlight Ms. Kiana Joseph, whose performance in *Bottled Love*, a short film, showcased her brilliance in talent, presence, and expressive voice. The film was presented in partnership with *Film Over Guns* and *Blue Tarp Productions*, as part of a broader effort to use storytelling to address gun violence in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Ms. Joseph's performance contributed to a project that invited reflection, dialogue, and community engagement around an issue that continues to impact families and communities across the Territory. Her ability to bring depth and authenticity to the role speaks not only to her artistic skill, but also to her willingness to engage difficult social realities with care and intention.

Her work serves as a reminder that nursing students bring their full humanity into every space they occupy. The empathy, emotional insight, and discipline reflected in Ms. Joseph's performance are the same qualities that strengthen her preparation as a future nurse.

We celebrate Ms. Joseph for representing the UVI School of Nursing with excellence, creativity, and purpose, both on and off the stage.

Check Your Vitals UVI Employee Health Screening



The Check Your Vitals Health Screening was conducted by OEK BSN students under the leadership of Professor Candace Bryan, Assistant Professor in the School of Nursing (OEK Campus), providing blood pressure screenings and health education to UVI employees while strengthening students' hands-on clinical skills.

Members of the UVI Provost's Office were front and center during the screening, including Mr. Henville Pole, Chief of Staff, and Ms. Neressa Forde, Administrative Specialist. Their participation reinforced the importance of prevention, wellness, and campus-wide engagement in health promotion.

We are grateful for their support and for the opportunity this event provided our students to apply classroom learning in a real-world setting while serving the University community.



Community Engagement: Palestinian Friendship Festival Health Screening



On Sunday, November 23, UVI BSN students participated in the Friendship Festival hosted by the Virgin Islands Palestinian Friendship Association at the St. Croix Fairgrounds. As part of the festival's celebration of cultural connection and community, students provided hypertension screenings and health education to festival attendees.

The screening was conducted under the leadership of Professor Martin, Assistant Professor in the UVI School of Nursing (AAS Campus). Through this experience, students applied clinical skills in a community setting while engaging residents in conversations about cardiovascular health, prevention, and wellness.

This event reflects the School of Nursing's ongoing commitment to community-based learning and service, meeting people where they are and advancing health equity through culturally responsive care.



UVI Homecoming on the Yard

These photos capture moments from Homecoming on the Yard, held on Sunday, November 2, as part of UVI's 2025 Homecoming celebration on the Albert A. Sheen Campus. The event brought together students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members in a vibrant celebration of Buccaneer pride, culture, and connection.



Opportunities for BSN Students Scholarship Deadlines Approaching!

It would be wonderful to see UVI BSN students apply for these national opportunities. Please review the information below and reach out if you need assistance with your application.

Virtual Mentored Research Program in Cardiovascular and Health Equity Science (paid): LIVE Summer Program

Deadline: February 17, 2026

Plenty of time to apply!

The American Heart Association (AHA) is recruiting students for its paid Virtual Mentored Research Program in Cardiovascular and Health Equity Science—a unique opportunity to build your skills and network with national leaders in nursing and public health.

The Learning in Virtual Environments (LIVE) Summer Program is 10 weeks long taking place from June 1 to August 8, 2026. Check previous emails for scholarship information.

Through this fully virtual program, participants will:

- ❤ Engage in mentored research experiences focused on cardiovascular and health equity science.
- 🧠 Receive didactic instruction from national experts.
- 💬 Join interactive roundtable discussions with diverse role models conducting groundbreaking research.
- 💵 Receive a generous stipend and travel support to attend the AHA Annual Conference (or another approved professional meeting).

*Please reach out to Dean Lewis if you would like her to review your materials before submission for the LIVE Summer Program.

More information and apply here: <https://www.mountsinai.org/care/nursing-at-mount-sinai/research-and-innovation/live>

Important Upcoming Dates to Remember

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| January 12-16: | Add-Drop Period |
| January 19: | Martin Luther King, Jr Day (Univ. Closed) |
| January 20: | Start of Withdrawal (WD) |
| February 20: | Final Day to Change Audit to Credit |
| March 2-6: | Spring Recess |
| March 19: | Start of Administrative Withdrawal with Dean's Permission |
| March 26: | Early Registration for Summer and Fall 2026 |

Closing Reflections: The Power of Connection

As the semester began, our offices were filled with movement, questions, and conversation. In the midst of those early days, I had the opportunity to pause and connect with students and faculty as they moved through their first week of classes. This photo captures one of those moments, featuring Professor Patricia Burks, Assistant Professor and BSN Cohort 27 student Ms. Ky'onique Thompson (AAS Campus).

I took this photo because connection matters. Ms. Thompson's Brooklyn sweatshirt sparked a shared story, a small but meaningful reminder that relationships often begin in unexpected ways. These moments of recognition, listening, and shared experience are foundational to how we teach, learn, and lead.

As you review important dates and look ahead to the weeks to come, I hope this image serves as a reminder that nursing education is built not only on rigor and responsibility, but also on presence, care, and human connection. These are the moments that sustain us, and they are at the heart of our School of Nursing community.



Professor Patricia "Patti" Burks with BSN Cohort 27 student Ms. Ky'onique Thompson during the first week of the semester, a reminder of the connections that anchor our community.