

Report on Reaffirmation of Accreditation for the University of the Virgin Islands

November 28, 2007

In keeping with the established practice of reporting significant University accomplishments to internal stakeholders, the Office of the President has released the following information pertaining to the University of the Virgin Islands' application to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education for reaffirmation of accreditation.

At its session on November 15, 2007, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) acted to reaffirm accreditation to the University of the Virgin Islands, until the year 2017, with follow-up. The next self-study evaluation will be conducted in 2016.

The specific statement from the Commission reads as follows:

“At its session on November 15, 2007, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted:

1. To reaffirm accreditation and to request a progress letter, due April 1, 2008, documenting the development and implementation of a faculty handbook that includes policies related to promotion and tenure (Standard 10)
2. To further request a monitoring report, due March 1, 2009, documenting (1) steps taken to strengthen shared governance (Standard 4), (2) progress in the implementation of the new administrative structure and reorganization (Standard 5), and (3) steps taken to improve communication to all campus constituencies regarding shared governance and the new administrative structure (Standards 4 and 5). A visit may follow submission of the monitoring report
3. To direct an early staff visit to discuss the Commission's expectations for reporting.
4. To direct the completion of a Periodic Review Report, which is due June 1, 2012.”

“The process of going through reaffirmation of accreditation fits into the University's efforts to continue to fulfill its mission at the highest level,” UVI President Dr. LaVerne E. Ragster said. “I must publicly thank all of the members of the University community for their diligence and hard work during the reaffirmation process and congratulate the members of the institution for the many commendations that were received from Middle States, even as I thank them for their openness and willingness to work on our areas of growth.”

The Commission's decision represents the culmination of the accreditation reaffirmation process, which started with the University's completion of its self-study, followed by a site visit from an evaluation team configured by MSCHE; and the site visit team's final evaluation report. Information from all these sources was taken into account in the Commission's final decision.

According to the Commission's "Explanation of Commission Actions," a progress letter (due April 1, 2008) is being requested because the Commission needs assurance that the University of the Virgin Islands is carrying out activities that were planned or were being implemented at the time of the evaluation team's on-site visit (April 19-24, 2007). Typically, a monitoring report (due March 1, 2009) is requested, "when issues are more complex or more numerous; or issues require a substantive, detailed report."

The Evaluation Team's final report proposed the recommendations noted by the MSCHE Commission and a number of commendations. These included commendations for:

- transforming UVI's mission into an outcomes driven statement with an increased focus on the learners to be served;
- using University resources to create a welcoming and pleasant environment;
- forming a partnership with Florida International University and Global Crossing leading to a plan for connection to Internet2;
- increased retention of science majors, noteworthy faculty productivity and increased use of technology to support academic endeavors;
- faculty focus on the natural and social environments of the Caribbean region as a core to the general education program; and,
- the broad participation evident in the development of the general education curriculum.

Both the self-study report and the site visit Evaluation Team's report are available internally on the UVI Announcements page of the UVI website.

"The accreditation process afforded the University the opportunity to critically assess our activities in key areas of emphasis and provided us the opportunity to showcase our areas of strength and articulate areas where we would need to focus attention and work together to strengthen the institution," President Ragster said. "The report of the visiting Evaluation Team re-affirmed our understanding of

our areas of strengths and challenges. We are poised to take the opportunity that this reaffirmation process has given us to continue our efforts towards fulfilling VISION 2012 and our mission.”

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is the unit of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools that accredits degree-granting colleges and universities in the Middle States region, which includes Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and several locations internationally.

The Commission is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that defines, maintains, and promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources. It examines each institution as a whole, rather than specific programs within institutions.