

TESTIMONY OF PRESIDENT DAVID HALL
UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
29TH LEGISLATURE
OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

HONORABLE RONALD RUSSELL, ESQ.
PRESIDENT AND COMMITTEE CHAIR

FRITZ LAWÆTZ LEGISLATIVE HALL
ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Good morning, Senate President Russell, Chair Committee of the Whole and ; other members of the 29th Legislature present, other testifiers, members of the Press, persons in the viewing and listening audiences, ladies and gentlemen. My name is David Hall and I am President of the University of the Virgin Islands. It is indeed an honor for me to appear before the Committee of the Whole of the 29th Legislature and I welcome the opportunity to offer testimony on the University's receipt and use of ARRA funds.

Accompanying me this morning are Mr. Vincent Samuel, Vice President for Administration and Finance; Ms. Tina Koopmans, Chief Information Officer; Ms. Dianne Piper, Campus Executive Administrator, St. Thomas Campus; Ms. LilyMae Durante, Associate Campus Administrator for Operations; Mr. Claude Steele, Campus Executive Administrator, St. Croix Campus; Ms. Nereida Washington, Associate Campus Administrator for Operations; Ms. Muriel Smith, Controller, and Mr. Gerard Buggy, Capital Projects Manager.

In presenting testimony regarding ARRA funds received by the University, I will first identify the grants received and the source of the funds. For each grant that was received the following information will be provided:

- ❖ A synopsis of the accomplishments to date;
- ❖ A brief discussion of remaining activities for the grant period; and,
- ❖ The current status of funds received in terms of expenditures, encumbrances, and unencumbered balances.

I will end my testimony by speaking to the University's strategy moving forward to ensure that all ARRA funds are timely expended and all project objectives met.

Grants Received

Over the life of the funding available to the U.S. Virgin Islands through ARRA, the University of the Virgin Islands has received two direct grants. The first grant in the amount of \$600,000 was received in September 2009 from the National Institutes of Health-National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH-NIMHD). The second grant received is a part of a larger State Fiscal Stabilization Grant applied for by the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands (GVI). UVI received a total of \$8,797,800 in State Fiscal Stabilization Funds, with \$5,000,000 earmarked for restoration projects and \$3,797,800 targeted to five capital projects across the two campuses.

National Institutes of Health Grant

The grant received from the National Institutes of Health is to fund a project entitled *A Collaborative Response to Public Health Challenges linked to Climate Change Impacts in the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean*. The grant specifically addresses the University's Caribbean Exploratory Research Center's (UVICERC) aim to "enable academic institution and community partners to evaluate interventions designed to improve the health of Virgin Islanders". The project is based on a collaborative partnership comprised of UVICERC, the Medical University of South Carolina Office of Public Information and Community Outreach (MUSC-PICO) and the USVI Department of Health.

Major Accomplishments to Date

To date, there has been significant progress towards the achievement of the major objectives of the grant. First, the collaborative partnerships have been solidified through the execution of a subcontract between UVI and MUSC-PICO as well as

through regular meetings with key Department of Health personnel, including the Commissioner and the Epidemiologist. Additionally, both teleconference and face-to-face planning meeting with MUSC-PICO partners have occurred.

Additionally, with respect to the project's focus on climate change and its impact, the Co-Principal Investigator has completed a background research paper entitled *Climate – Health Linkages under conditions of Climate Variability and Change in the Caribbean*. This research was presented at the first of three Institutes that are a part of the project. The project was also launched publicly on July 16, 2010. Other related accomplishments include the following:

- ✓ Focus group meetings were conducted on St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas in November 2010 where community members received information on climate change, dengue, and ciguatera (fish poisoning). The meetings also provided an opportunity for mini-surveys to determine the community's knowledge of the climate change, dengue, and ciguatera.
- ✓ Key project personnel participated in the VI Health Disparities Conference and Advisory board meeting – October 2010

In 2010, contracts were also executed with a web developer and a television producer. Project personnel provided background information to the web developer and the project's website was launched February 2011. For those of you interested, the URL of the website is www.myhealthwhatsclimategottodowithit.com. In addition to the launching of the website, the project has been meeting its objective to provide information to the public as the Co-Principal Investigator has made radio appearances and individual presentations in fall 2010 and spring 2011 to discuss the project. Also in February of this year, the project held Institute II, a Town Hall meeting which focused on

the collection of recommendations and suggestions from community members on the best ways to mobilize Virgin Islanders to follow guidelines that would make them safer from dengue fever and ciguatera.

Because one of the purposes of the ARRA funds was to stimulate the economy, we are pleased to report that this project has resulted in full time employment (initially a part-time position) for one individual and part-time employment for two other individuals within the community.

With respect to grant funds, over 50% of the grant award has been expended, specifically \$331,148.78. The balance to be encumbered and expended is \$268,851.22.

Remaining Activities

As the project moves into its last six months, only three outstanding outputs remain to be completed. These are:

1. The production of a television program, which is scheduled to be completed March 6, 2011.
2. The production and dissemination of media products (DVDs and Public Service Announcements) on climate change and public health issues.
3. The convening of Institute III, which will be a Technical Workshop, geared toward community organizations and groups to assist them with grant writing.

The Institute is scheduled to be completed in July 2011.

Administratively, the Co-Principal Investigators will continue to consult with MUSC/PICO partners and the Department of Health. Additionally, administrative reports will continue to be completed as well as quarterly reports and a final report.

State Fiscal Stabilization Funds Grant

The University's State Fiscal Stabilization Fund grant was focused on meeting two sets of needs within the University: 1) restoration of the reduction in UVI's allotment by the local government; and, 2) support for five capital projects.

Status Update on Restoration Projects

Because of fiscal challenges, in FY 2010, the local government was unable to fund UVI at the level that it had in FY 2009. As such, because of the requirements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that education had to be funded at least at the level it had been funded in FY 2009, the University was able to receive State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (SFSF) to restore its funding to the FY 2009 level. All restoration projects were funded in FY 2009-10.

Accomplishments to Date

The University used the restoration funds to continue the provision of services in three vital areas. The University budgeted approximately 80% of the restoration funds received, specifically \$4,011,261, to continue to provide course offerings and degree programs towards degrees in Education, Business Administration and Nursing. These academic areas were particularly critical to restore because course offerings and degrees from the Education, Business Administration and Nursing divisions were judged to be vital in assisting the Territory with meeting the goals and objectives of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, increase enrollment and enhance graduates' employability.

The second area in which the University used the restoration funds received was the Scholarship programs that assist exceptional students as well as individuals who have made significant contributions to the government and people of the U.S. Virgin Islands. The University recognized that the scholarship programs at UVI enable

targeted students to pursue professional, undergraduate, graduate or other studies or research, or engage in cultural projects that have the potential to substantially benefit the people of the Virgin Islands. Students that were served through Scholarship programs include the valedictorians and salutatorians of the US Virgin Islands' high schools, veterans, senior citizens, and members of the Virgin Islands National Guard (VING). The restoration funds budgeted for the Scholarship programs was \$888,739.

The final program that was supported through restoration funds was the Community Engagement and Lifelong Learning (CELL) Center. The restoration funds budgeted for CELL, \$100,000, was envisioned to provide the funding needed for the Center to continue its work of coordinating local and federal resources in the establishment of a program network for the delivery of management and technical assistance through training programs to tradesmen in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Supporting this effort was particularly important, given the economic climate in the Virgin Islands and elsewhere. Through CELL, the University was able to provide workforce development programs to assist with the stimulation of the economy of the Territory, thereby contributing to the long-term economic health of the Territory.

In carrying out restoration projects, the University expended 98.3% of the total budget or \$4,912,845.

Remaining Activities

There are no remaining activities to be completed for the SFSF restoration projects.

Status Update on Capital Projects

The University received \$3,797,800 million to support the completion of five capital projects, two on the St. Thomas campus and three on the St. Croix campus.

A status update will be provided for the St. Thomas projects and then for the St. Croix projects.

St. Thomas Projects

Project I: STT Upper Campus and Library ADA Compliance Project

The services, operations and collections at the University of the Virgin Islands' (UVI) libraries are being reorganized to support a cultural shift in the delivery of library and information services. The driving concept is to enhance student, faculty and staff knowledge throughout the University and foster unlimited peripheral vision for students, faculty and alumni. The goal is to redesign the library with a focus on collaborative work environments, flexible learning spaces and enhanced staff support areas while mitigating ADA accessibility barriers. Phase I of the project is to merge IT and Library staff into one building. Phase II of the project is the addition of seating and technology to improve student and faculty training areas. Phase III of the project is to bring the interior and exterior of the library in compliance with ADA access requirements.

Major Accomplishments to Date

To date, Phases I and II of the project have been completed. Major project accomplishments in 2010 related to the completion of Phases I and II include the following:

- ❖ Purchase of equipment required to increase the bandwidth capabilities of the interisland microwave
- ❖ Installation of new entranceway and security system
- ❖ Installation of new automatic ADA Compliant Book Check out System
- ❖ Installation of new circulation desk
- ❖ Installation of narrow profile circulation system
- ❖ Installation of new carpet and VCT flooring

Additionally, in November 2010, the architectural firm of Jerryn McCray Architects of St. Thomas was selected on the basis of a competitive process to perform

design services to address the ADA compliance issues internal and external to the library. Specifically, internal design services were required to ensure ADA access to the second floor of the library and the installation of an ADA compliant bathroom on the second floor. External design services will bring the exterior of the library into compliance with ADA requirements.

Accomplishments in 2011 include the reconfiguration of existing stacks, furniture, and fixtures.

Remaining Activities

During the months of March and April, it is anticipated that the construction documents will be completed and approved. The appropriate building permits will be secured from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, the needed lifts will be purchased and the contractor selected. It is anticipated that construction will begin in May and all construction work will be completed by October 31, 2011.

Project II: CA Building ADA and Code Compliance Project

The Classroom Administration Building is a 3-story facility constructed over six decades ago. The building is a mixed use facility that is primarily utilized for classrooms and laboratories. It also accommodates a small performing arts theatre, a student support program, Center for Advisement and Tutorial Services (CATS), and faculty offices. Presently only the first and second floors are ADA compliant. The goal of the project is to upgrade the facility and address building code requirements including ADA compliance that will improve its accessibility and maximize usage. The project was developed in two phases. Phase I focuses on the design and construction of a new central entrance that will incorporate a three stop elevator and a new central stairway to

provide ADA compliant access to make the facility fully accessible. Phase II of the project will address building code compliance, life safety threats and the upgrade of the Little Theatre to support the academic curriculum.

Major Accomplishments to Date

Based on the competitive bidding process, the firm Steven Hutchins Architects, Inc. was selected to provide design services in support of this project. The selection process was completed on November 30, 2010. The design documents for this compliance project are 75% complete.

Remaining Activities

During the months of March and April, it is anticipated that the construction documents will be completed and approved. The appropriate building permits will be secured from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, the needed elevator will be purchased and the contractor selected. It is anticipated that construction will begin by May 15, 2011 and all construction work will be completed by November 15, 2011.

St. Croix Projects

Project III: Melvin Evans Center Improvement Project

This project essentially focuses on the retrofitting of the electrical system of the facility as well as addressing roofing issues. Specifically, with respect to the electrical system, the scope of work calls for the re-grounding of the entire electrical distribution system, as well as the reorganization of the electrical distribution system including replacement of panels, circuits, and switchgear. With respect to the roof repairs, the scope of work includes the removal and replacement of all damaged or worn roof

flashing, valley lining, ridge caps, and ridge vents, removal of damaged metal gutter and downspout system and replacement with a new gutter and downspout system.

Major Accomplishments to Date

The preliminary work necessary to begin advertising the Request for Proposals for both the electrical upgrades and for the guttering repairs in the Melvin Evans Center has been completed. The preliminary work completed for the electrical upgrade component of the project included the scope of work report previously completed by Spotts, Stevens and McCoy, as well as the project planning of systemic relocation of offices and classrooms. For the guttering repairs component, an assessment of areas requiring repairs was completed.

Remaining Activities

The next phase of the project will be to prepare the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the electrical upgrades needed and another RFP for the repair work needed in association with the deteriorated guttering. RFPs for the selection of the contractor to complete the removal and replacement of roof flashing, ridge caps, valley lining, fascia, gutters, and downspouts will be published in March 2011.

It is anticipated that the process of contractor selection will be finalized by May 2011. Once the contractor is in place, it is anticipated that the work to be done, specifically, the reground and redistribution of electrical power on the Melvin Evans Center will be completed by October 1, 2011.

Project IV: People Lift Replacement Project

People Lift Replacement Project would provide mobility access, primarily to the student population, in two high traffic common areas, the Residence Halls and the Cafeteria. The scope of work calls for the removal of the existing unit and the installation of a weather proof replacement in the Residence Halls, and a new state of the art unit. In the Residence Halls, the lift will allow for ADA compliant access from the residence quad to the residence hall lounge and study areas. In the cafeteria, it will allow for ADA compliant access from the main floor to the stage area.

Major Accomplishments to Date

The wheelchair lifts have been purchased and received on campus to replace the two non-operational units on campus. RFPs for the installation of the lifts have been sent to three elevator companies.

Remaining Activities

The next phase of the project include the review of responses to the RFP; selection of a vendor; and installation of the lifts. Vendor selection is scheduled for completion by March 20, 2011 and lift installation by May 30, 2011.

Project V: Athletic Field Establishment Project

The St. Croix Campus has no improved athletic fields of any kind for the purpose of delivering physical education classes or collegiate sports. The scope of work calls for the construction of three (3) athletic fields laid out for soccer to be established and be located by the Tennis/Basketball courts on the south side of the 130 acre property.

Major Accomplishments to Date

The selection of the engineer that will provide all design services for the establishment of the three soccer fields on the St. Croix Campus was completed upon review of the three responses to the Request for Qualifications published in November 2010.

Remaining Activities

The next phase of the project include the review of responses to the RFP; selection of a contractor; and construction of the fields. Contractor selection is anticipated by the end of April 2011 and field establishment by August 15, 2011.

University's Strategy Moving Forward

Taken together, the University has expended or encumbered \$709,316 or 19% of our capital projects budget. Although this is a relative low percentage, given that all funds are to be encumbered by September 30, 2011, I want to take this opportunity to assure the Committee (of the Whole) that the University is committed to ensuring that all SFSF grant funds received are timely encumbered and that all capital projects are completed. The University has put structures in place to ensure appropriate monitoring and reporting. We have received technical assistance from the Office of Economic Opportunity and have established internal systems whereby we will continuously monitor our progress. Additionally, as noted in several of the capital projects, we anticipate that once contractors are selected and contracts awarded, we will be in a position to encumber a substantial portion of the remaining capital projects funds. This should occur by the end of April.

I would like to end my testimony by thanking you, President Russell and the other members of the Committee of the Whole for the opportunity afforded the University to provide testimony on ARRA funds received. We are grateful for the continued support that has been given to the University and we look forward to answering questions that you may have regarding my testimony.

Thank you.