



USVI Health: Eliminating Health Disparities in the Caribbean

Territory *Resilience* for a Healthy Future

A partnership of UVI, USVI Department of Health (DOH), in association with clinical care providers (hospitals, federally qualified health centers), and a biomedical research innovation network for creating new jobs related to the new methods and tools for health care delivery systems, wellness, resilience, preparedness and response reflecting unique attributes of the Caribbean health context.

Background and Rationale

The USVI, with an estimated population of over 88,000, is about twice the land area and Washington DC and racially (76% African American), ethnically and linguistically diverse. The USVI's geographic position makes it susceptible to climate change, human and natural disasters, including environmental risks and accidental injuries (e.g., dilapidated oil refinery, aluminum mining waste and marine-related and industrial accidents). Historically, the USVI experiences a major hurricane every three years. Further, 2 million visitors come through each year, placing stress on health and environmental infrastructure.

The USVI has unique health and healthcare needs: disease prevention, mitigation and disaster response, environmental, energy and water resources challenges, preventable, communicable and chronic disease (diabetes, obesity), mental and behavioral health (violence, substance abuse), and faces acute shortages of trained primary, allied and mental health care staff. Further, USVI is situated at the crossroads of socio-geographic transit issues such as drug and human trafficking, as well as pandemic disease spread (e.g., Zika, African swine flu).

The USVI's long-standing health disparities, coupled with historic distrust of health and medicine, a persistent negative view of quality of available care and the combination of multiple social determinants of health risk factors have resulted in poor health, broadly defined throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands and surrounding populations.

While the need is formidable, new UVI facilities and programmatic resources such as the biomedical simulation center, the nursing program and nursing school expansion on St. Croix, the newly constructed medical school building and biomedical research building on St. Thomas, along with UVI's health, mental health, agricultural degrees and training programs, position UVI and Department of Health to be major partners in leading a health transformation for the territories, and greater Caribbean region.

Therefore, UVI in partnership with Department of Health, is embarking on a comprehensive plan for ***Future Health Resilience***, responsive to persistent and imminent vulnerabilities threatening the well-being of the Caribbean region and USVI's unique social, geographic determinants of health.

It is important to situate and fully explore the possibilities in context. Therefore, as next step, we invite you to advise and to recommend the BEST POSSIBLE Biomedical and Health research and education agenda for the territory, and aligned strategically with UVI's, DOH and partners' capabilities.



WELCOME EXTERNAL ADVISORS

To catalyze action, UVI and DOH invited you, a revered expert in your field, to visit the Territory in April 10-12, 2024 to make specific recommendations for building out a focused biomedical and health research, education and community action agenda.

Advisors are requested to align their recommendations, in part, with the National Advisory Council on Minority Health and Health Disparities cross-cutting NIMHD research priorities found here: <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/funding/approved-concepts/2023/index.html>. As advisors, you represent major areas of interest for strengthening the health of the U.S. Virgin Islands and surrounding areas.

During your visit, you will see the facilities, and receive information about the health challenges facing the territory and greater Caribbean. You will have an opportunity to meet UVI faculty, government and healthcare stakeholders, to assist UVI, DOH and partners to prioritize and draw synergies from among multiple health challenges, and to make recommendations on strategies for addressing priorities through models, partnerships, and alignment of local, federal and private funding.

Pillar 1- Epidemiology, Disease and Health Insights to capitalize on USVI's geo-strategic location unique in the Caribbean Region—Environmental-Human Health, Basic Biomedical Research and Pre-clinical, vivarium, -omics, other laboratories, Monitoring & analysis, e.g., a Sentinel for diseases and vectors transiting the Caribbean, Scenario Building.

Pillar 2- AI/Data-driven, Digital solutions to Climate-driven Health Disparities to enable precision health and wellness for Caribbean, remote, and insular populations, to focus on innovations that are important to economic development, and positively impact health solutions for small islands.

Pillar 3- Health “Resilience” Disparities in Community Health Crosscutting biomedical (clinical), public (including mental) and environmental health. Disaster health and emergency medicine (sanitation, energy, health logistics, communications, triage, etc.) Resilience for climate, marine, environment, animal and human health, violence prevention and health in school or community-based settings with at-risk populations addressing Socio-geographic determinants of health.

Our request is to ask you to advise and prioritize, refine and focus these pillars, identifying the most salient needs to be addressed given UVI is starting this journey. Please also be up front about the investment required for any and all recommendations. We have taken the liberty to assign you to breakout groups on the three pillars, as follows:

Pillar 1 Epidemiology, Infectious Disease and Health Insights

1. Ming Lei, Senior Associate VP for Research and Graduate Education
<https://wvutoday.wvu.edu/stories/2023/07/19/nih-leader-to-head-research-and-graduate-education-efforts-at-wvu-health-sciences> ming.lei@hsc.wvu.edu
2. Scott Lillibridge, Associate VP Global Health, Texas A&M Health Sciences
<https://health.tamu.edu/about/leadership/lillibridge.html> lillibridge@tamu.edu (Virtual)
3. Dr. Bhaskar Das, Professor of Pharmacy and Medicinal Chemistry, Mt. Sinai SOM, Long Island University bhaskardas19@gmail.com <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bhaskar-das-5a46147/>



4. Olveen Carrasquillo, Dean of Clinical and Translational Research and former Chief of General Medicine <https://med.miami.edu/faculty/olveen-carrasquillo-md-mph> (Virtual) OCarrasquillo@med.miami.edu

Pillar 2 AI/Data-driven, Digital Solutions for Climate-driven Health Disparities

5. Lataonya Brown-Robertson, Howard University, NDSA Northeast Hub Lead <https://profiles.howard.edu/latanya-brown-robertson> L.Brown-Robertson@howard.edu
6. James Washington, Program Director, AIM AHEAD (NIH) <https://msmcvri.org/about/staff/jwashington@msm.edu>
7. Robert F. Murphy, Professor, Carnegie Mellon University murphy@andrew.cmu.edu [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_F._Murphy_\(computational_biologist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_F._Murphy_(computational_biologist))

Pillar 3 Health “Resilience” Disparities in Caribbean Community Health

8. Sonjia Kenya, University of Miami Medical School, Director of the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement <https://med.miami.edu/faculty/sonjia-kenya-harris-phd/skenya@med.miami.edu>
9. Saria Hassan, Emory School of Medicine <https://che.emory.edu/who-we-are/faculty-staff/hassan-saria.html> saria.hassan@emory.edu

Cross-cut: Innovation/Transdisciplinary/Training/Education/Community Health

10. Robin S. Broughton, Founding Director, HHMI Center for the Advancement of Science Leadership and Culture <https://www.linkedin.com/in/robinshepardbroughton/robinsbroughton@gmail.com>
11. Craig Blakely, Dean Emeritus, University of Louisville, School of Public Health and Information Sciences <https://louisville.edu/sphis/news/dean-craig-blakely-retires> craig.blakely@louisville.edu

Hosts

David Hall, President of the University of the Virgin Islands
<https://www.uvi.edu/directory/administrator/david-hall.html>

Justa Encarnacion, Commissioner, VI Department of Health
<https://doh.vi.gov/about-us/office-of-the-commissioner/>

Honorary Host: The Honorable Donna Christensen, MD, Former Delegate to the United States Congress representing the U.S. Virgin Islands (Invited)
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/donna-christensen-8b411713/?originalSubdomain=vi>

Organizing Committee

Richard Nader, UVI VPRGS, Co-Chair
Tai Hunte-Cesear, VIDH, Co-Chair
Tessa Liburd, Administrator tliburd@uvi.edu



Possible Additional UVI and USVI Participant/observers (To be confirmed)

Pillar 1 Epi, Omics and Insights

1. Tai Hunte-Cesar, Medical Director, VIDOH
2. Verleen McSween, UVI Biology
3. Michelle Cox, UVI Biology
4. Lavida Rogers, UVI
5. Paul Jobsis, CMES Director
6. Kim Waddell, EPSCoR Director

Pillar 2 AI and Data Science

1. Deshona Liburd Williams, ECC AIM AHEAD
2. Aaron Rapp, Mathematics
3. Marc Boumediene, Computer Science
4. Michelle Francis, Director, Office of Health Information Technology michelle.francis@go.vi.gov
5. Brandon Richardson, Chief Informatics Officer, SRMC bhrichardson@srmedicalcenter.org

Pillar 3 Health “Resilience”

1. Usman Adamu, Dean, UVI School of Agriculture
2. LaVerne Ragster, President Emeritus, University of the Virgin Islands lrage@uvi.edu
3. Janis M Valmond, Deputy Commissioner, VI Department Health – Janis.valmond@doh.vi.gov
4. C. Patricia Penn - cppenn51@gmail.com – Retired nurse; former consultant to STEEMCC
5. Gloria B. Callwood – former CERC PI & Director; significant research around addressing health disparities – gcallwo@uvi.edu
6. Noreen Michael, Director, CERC
7. Hannah Carty, Deputy Commissioner, VIDA <https://doa.vi.gov/deputy-commissioner/>

Innovation/Transdisciplinary/Training/Education/Community Health Cross-cut

1. Camille McKayle, Provost UVI
2. Dara Hamilton, Professor of Psychology, Chair UVI Faculty Senate and Graduate Council
3. Pam Moolenaar-Wirisy, Interim VP Institutional Advancement
4. Charlene Navarro, Med Sim Center Director
5. Peter Chapman, RT Park
6. Janet Pointer, UVI Nurse

WELCOME LETTER- USVI HEALTH ADVISORS WORKSHOP
APRIL 10-12, 2024



Draft AGENDA **Dress Code: Business Casual**

Virtual attendance option will be sent later...

Wednesday, April 10

Arrival, Check-in to Emerald Beach

4:45p Transportation, Pick-up from Emerald Beach to Campus

5p **Medical School and BMR Facilities Tour**, Dr. David Hall

5:30 **Reception and dinner**, Hosts Dr. David Hall and Commissioner Encarnacion

Vision for USVI Health, President Hall and Commissioner Encarnacion

Thursday, April 11

Breakfast at hotel

8:15am Transportation to campus

8:30a **Welcome** from Honorable Donna Christensen, MD

Overview of the Day: Dr. Rick Nader, Dr. Tai Hunte-Cesar

9a-12p **Meetings/Briefings/Presentations, Dr. Christenson (TBC)** (includes UVI and DOH/Community)

Lunch **Speaker TBD Dr. Tai Hunte-Cesar**, Medical Director, VI DOH

1-4pm **Priorities for Future- Concurrent Breakouts** Pillars 1, 2, 3 Question to address: What are themes and directions UVI should take in biomedical/health R&D, Why and How?

4pm **Adjourn** Return Transportation to hotel-to change into sailing attire! Or to relax

4:30p sharp Pick-up from Emerald Beach Hotel for OPTIONAL Sunset Sail on VI Cat:
<https://fareharbor.com/embeds/book/thevicat/items/2102/availability/1162927590/book/?back=https://www.thevicat.com/reservations.php&g4=yes>

Depart hotel 4:30p for a 5pm check-in Marriott Frenchman's Reef until 730p

If you wish to go on the sail, **CALL 340-690-2287 reference UVI Group** (for discount rate of \$55/person) no later than April 5, 2024. They will send you forms to complete. Please complete these forms prior to arrival. Transportation provided back to hotel after the sail. Dinner on own

Friday, April 12

8a Pick-up from hotel to campus Continental Breakfast on site

9-11:30a **Reports Recommendations Pillars 1, 2, 3**

12 noon **Concluding Remarks/Next Steps [Box lunch take away] Farewell**

Questions about accommodation or travel, etc., please direct to Ms. Tessa Liburd tliburd@uvi.edu