INTRODUCTION

The Title III Part B Grant Program, formed through the Higher Education Act of 1965, was designed by the to assist Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in strengthening their infrastructure in areas such as their physical plants, financial management, and student services and resources. The University of the Virgin Islands, which holds the distinction of being the only HBCU outside the U.S. mainland, has been a recipient of Title III funding since the inception of its relationship with the U.S. Department of Education in 1968. There are 16 legislatively allowable activities for which these funds provided to UVI and other institutions can be used, including the purchase of scientific equipment, construction or renovation of classrooms, purchase of books and periodicals and student services such as tutorial sessions and counseling.

BACKGROUND

The University of the Virgin Islands was chartered on March 16, 1962, as the College of the Virgin Islands (CVI)—a publicly funded, coeducational, liberal arts institution—by Act No. 862 of the Fourth Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands. According to that law, the College’s cornerstone objective was to provide for “...the stimulation and utilization of the intellectual resources of the people of the Virgin Islands.
and the development of a center of higher learning whereby and wherefrom the benefits of culture and education may be extended throughout the Virgin Islands.”

The first campus opened on St. Thomas in July 1963, on 175 acres donated by the federal government, with the first board of trustees taking office in August of that year. In 1964, the college founded a second campus on St. Croix, on 125 acres also donated by the federal government. Through purchase and other donations, the University has increased its real property to 295 acres on St. Croix and 390 acres on St. Thomas. The majority of this acreage, particularly the initial holdings and the immediately contiguous areas, houses the academic, research and outreach programs and services and technical assistance that are integral to achieving mission elements, including the responsiveness to community that is embedded in the mission.

The College of the Virgin Islands began by offering only associate of arts degrees. In 1967 it added bachelor’s degree programs in liberal arts and education. The first baccalaureate degrees were awarded in 1970, and in 1976 the college awarded its first master’s degrees in education. Two years later, master’s degree programs in business administration and public administration were instituted on both campuses.

CVI was designated as a Land-Grant institution in 1972, when then-President Nixon signed the Education Amendments Act. As a part of a network of such institutions, the College of the Virgin Islands assumed the responsibility for implementing (in the US Virgin Islands) the concept that a practical education should be available to all interested students, not just the wealthy. With both the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the institution continues its agricultural research and information dissemination activities.
In 1986, the College of the Virgin Islands was renamed the University of the Virgin Islands to reflect the growth and diversification of its academic curricula, community and regional services, and research programs. That same year, the United States Congress named UVI one of America’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU); therefore, it holds the distinction of being the only HBCU outside of the continental United States. UVI is also the Territory’s only accredited institution of higher learning.

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

The University of the Virgin Islands is comprised of two campuses; one on the island of St. Thomas and the other on the island of St. Croix. The University has a population of over 2,600 students (as of Spring 2011), where the St. Thomas campus accounts for 60%, while the remaining 40% are on the St. Croix campus. Although UVI has a diverse demographic, 75% of the student body is Black/African American, while 7.5% are of Hispanic descent, and 5% are Caucasian. Based on gender, females represent 74% of the student body, while males account for the remaining 26%. As the only institution of higher learning, UVI offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Over 90% of the student population (as of Spring 2011) is enrolled in undergraduate degree programs, and less than 10% are attending graduate courses.

One of the most recent changes at UVI was the renaming of its five academic units to Schools and Colleges to include the School of Business; School of Education; College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; School of Nursing; College of Science and Mathematics. The Schools and Colleges offer a wide range of Bachelors of Science and
Art as well as Associates of Arts degree. The School of Business offers Bachelors of Art and Associates of Arts degrees in Business Administration, Accounting, and Management. Additionally, the school also hosts a Master of Business Administration program. The School of Education awards degrees in Elementary Education and Inclusive Early Childhood Education. With its Master of Arts in Education program, degrees are offered in Teaching, Educational Leadership, and Counseling and Guidance.

Applied Mathematics, Computer Science, Biology, Marine Biology and Chemistry are some of the major degrees offered by the College of Science and Mathematics. This school also employs a Master’s program in Mathematics for Secondary Teachers as well as Marine and Environmental Science. In collaboration with the School of Education, the College of Science and Mathematics offers a Master’s degree in Mathematics for Secondary Teachers.

The former Divisions of Humanities and Social Sciences have been merged to form the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Degree programs for this academic unit include an Associates of Arts degree in Police Science and Administration, Bachelor of Arts degrees in Communication, English, Humanities, Music Education, Psychology and Speech Communication. The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences also offers Master of Arts degrees in Public Administration and Psychology. The School of Nursing is presently the only academic unit without an advanced degree program; Nursing degrees are offered at the Associates and Bachelors levels.

**THEME**

The theme selected by UVI President Dr. Hall for the Title III grant program for the 2012-17 cycle is *Building on the First 50 Years to Enhance Student Success*. There are
five projects selected by the President for the new cycle, which coincide with the
overarching theme and which address the university’s needs. They include:

- Building on the First 50 Years to Enhance Student Success in Environmental and
  Health Sciences;
- Teaching Radio Communication;
- Integrated Approach to Academic Growth and Student Success;
- It’s All About the Students; and
- Comprehensive Faculty Development Program

Additional projects consistent with both the theme for the cycle and the Legislatively
Allowable Activities may be added during the cycle as funding becomes available. These
projects will seek to:

- enhance the institution’s student services;
- improve the institution’s academic quality;
- advance the institution’s institutional management; or
- secure the institution’s fiscal stability.

**MISSION**

The mission of the University of the Virgin Islands clearly defines the
institution’s purpose within the context of higher education, explaining whom the mission
serves and what it intends to accomplish. The mission statement is:

*The University of the Virgin Islands is a learner-centered institution
dedicated to the success of its students and committed to enhancing the
lives of the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean*
through excellent teaching, innovative research, and responsive community service.

VISION

The institution's vision statement describes what the university wants to be in the future and publicly declares expected outcomes. Developed with broad institutional support, UVI's vision is responsive to the institution's dynamic environment and articulates what UVI seeks to become within the context of its mission, as stipulated by the Middle States Commission in Higher Education. The vision is:

*The University of the Virgin Islands will be an exceptional U.S. institution of higher education in the Caribbean dedicated to student success, committed to excellence, and pledged to enhancing the social and economic transformation of the U.S. Virgin Islands.*

CORE VALUES

The strength of the university lies in the value system that embodies the principles, ideals and beliefs of its key stakeholders (including students, faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees), and forms the foundation for UVI's actions. These values also speak to the institution's aim of serving the larger community and region as well. There are 10 core values adopted by the university to fulfill its mission and vision. They are:

- *Students First*—Students are the most important stakeholders.
Learning and Scholarship—Learning and scholarship for UVI students and employees, and the community at large, are valued.

Excellence—There is a commitment to upholding high academic standards and providing a nurturing and supportive educational environment.

Teamwork—Teamwork and accountability are essential to achieving institutional goals and objectives.

Collegiality and Shared Governance—The institution is committed to a partnership among students, faculty and staff.

Inclusiveness of Ideas—Mutual respect for everyone is valued and expressed through fair and equitable treatment.

Principled Leadership—The institution’s leadership is committed to achieving optimal results by collaborating with employees to solve problems and reach solutions.

Supporting our Community—There is a shared responsibility to support the local community through enthusiastic, responsible service.

Effective Use of Technology—Technology is viewed and used as a tool to enhance teaching and learning and to improve the effectiveness of UVI’s educational and administrative processes.

Equitable Reward System—The institution and its leaders support a performance-based system that recognizes and values the contributions of all employees.

**MANAGEMENT VALUES**

In addition to its core values, UVI has also adopted several management related values. During UVI’s 2009 Convocation, President Hall introduced seven management values,
which would serve as the framework for the university’s internal operation. These management values include:

- **High performance Institution with a focus on quality**—Provide quality services and products, as well as be efficient in delivering these services and programs.

- **Service Oriented**—The quality of our service and programs must meet the needs of our core customers (students) and also increase their level of satisfaction.

- **Uncompromised Integrity**—The University must demonstrate moral and ethical standards.

- **Informed Decision Making**—For informed decisions to be made, information must be available, transparent and shared.

- **Fiscal Responsibility**—The University has to manage its resources responsibly and efficiently.

- **Performance Assessment**—Evaluating the performance of employees to ensure that standards are met and training can be provided where necessary.

- **Emotional and Spiritual Health**—To nurture the emotional and spiritual well-being of employees and to provide support as needed.

**STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS**

As the current strategic plan (VISION 2012) is scheduled to expire at the end of the 2011-12 fiscal year, the University of the Virgin Islands is tasked with creating a new
strategic plan for the next five year period, 2012-17. In crafting the new strategic plan, input was solicited from faculty, staff, students and persons from the community. UVI has embraced a “shared governance approach to its decision making and its implementation is evident in this process. The university also hired consultants whose expertise lies in the areas of higher education administration, to facilitate a number of workshops and training sessions to engage faculty and staff members into sharing their views of the institution. Another key part of the strategic planning process was to assign faculty and staff members into several task forces. Also, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis was performed to review the internal and external factors impacting on the university, and a number of trends, issues and events were also studied.

TRENDS, ISSUES AND EVENTS

Events:

The continued deterioration of the economic climate both locally and nationally has had an adverse impact on the university as Virgin Islands Government appropriations to UVI have continued to decrease. Reduction in financial support limits the university’s ability to implement new initiatives to better serve its students, the community and the wider Caribbean region.

Trends:

One of the most alarming trends for UVI is the increased number of colleges and universities providing online educational access. In fact, in April of 2012, a group of Ivy League institutions announced that they would offer free online courses in collaboration
with a California-based online education company. With limited resources, current and potential students enroll in classes with online offerings to gain access to degree and certificate programs not offered here at the university. Enrolling in online higher education programs allows students to maintain their employment while attending classes at their leisure, an arrangement that proves difficult in the traditional academic setting.

Additionally, students in the Caribbean region are also opting to attend other Caribbean universities such as the University of the West Indies (UWI), as this institution has several campuses and offers a wide range of degree programs. Additionally, for students from supporting Caribbean countries and territories, there are no visa requirements for students to attend.

**Issues:**

Is UVI truly preparing its students for the future? Are the programs being offered coincides with the needs of the workplace? Is there a need for vocational training? Questions such as these highlight the need for the university to review its degree programs to ensure that curriculum content prepares its graduates to make a contribution to workplace. A recurring issue for the University of the Virgin Islands is the impact of the funding sources at the national level, which could result in a reduction in allotments from the various federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Education.

**SWOT Analysis**

One of the key processes of the university’s strategic planning exercise is to conduct a SWOT analysis. Key stakeholders and focus groups, participated in this

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important exercise to identify the internal and external factors that would impact the university’s ability to fulfill its objectives and mission. A key strength for the institution is the leadership of the current administration and the Board of Trustees; one of the positive attributes of their leadership is transparent processes and involvement of employees in important issues pertaining to the university through the shared governance process.

Figure 1. UVI Shared Governance Model

The University has always maintained a strong partnership with the Virgin Islands Government. Among the institution’s chief strengths are the affordability of its degree
programs as well as its size; students enjoy the small class sizes, which bolster communication and learning in the classroom.

While the university can reap the benefits of some of its core strengths, its weaknesses and limitations must be addressed. Some of UVI’s setbacks include limited number of faculty members with Ph.Ds; this can have an adverse impact on the institution as accreditation boards strongly encourage the hiring of new faculty with Ph. Ds. The dearth of faculty members with Ph.D. degrees also results in the unavailability of courses, which in turn impairs the product and services that the university desires to provide to students. Due to the economic climate, UVI is unable to compete with other universities for faculty and staff who may opt to leave for higher salaries elsewhere.

There are a number of excellent opportunities for the University of the Virgin Islands to exploit for improvements to its resources and infrastructure. Engaging in scientific research has always enabled UVI to stimulate student interest in research as well as to generate revenues. With more students enrolling in online universities, UVI has to consider this avenue as a possible revenue source, especially with the improvements to its facilities and technological capabilities.

There are a number of threats facing UVI but one of the most critical is the reduction in available funding from the local government. The university has seen its government funding allotment decreased as a means of absorbing its proportionate share of the financial burden the government is experiencing. Another significant threat to the UVI is the reduction in student enrollment and retention rates. Tuition is an important revenue stream for the university; however the reduced tuition revenue that results from lower enrollment, coupled with the constant reduction in funding from the local
government, will eventually lead to UVI being unable to meet its objective of serving the students and the greater community.

![SWOT Analysis Hierarchy Chart](image)

**Figure 2. SWOT Analysis Hierarchy Chart**

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUS AREAS**

The University of the Virgin Islands’ strategic plan for the 2012-17 period includes six (6) focus areas. During the planning stages of the new strategic plan, sub-groups of the Planning Task Force constructed a list of goals, objectives and outcomes for each of the focus areas. Additionally, timelines and resources needed to implement these objectives were also considered. The focus areas include:

- Academic Quality and Excellence
To support its stance as a learner-centered institution, UVI must continue to enhance its academic programs through more investment in technology, more research initiatives, and having the right faculty and staff in place to implement these improvements. Lastly, the university has to continue to seek and obtain accreditation for its degree programs.

- **Organizational and Human Development**

  This component of the strategic plan reviews university-wide policies and procedures as they relate to employee development and well-being. Opportunities for growth and professional development and succession plans will be given careful consideration as these factors impact the university’s ability to preserve its intellectual capital.

  While employees’ skill sets are important for carrying out the day-to-day tasks, their spiritual and emotional state must be nurtured; it is the goal of the university to ensure that the well-being of its employees are respected and maintained. Additionally, this focus area will review UVI’s desire to encourage and increase the level of input of employees’ views and opinion on the direction of the institution through optimization of the shared governance process.

- **Community Engagement and Globalization**

  The University of the Virgin Islands has to engage the community in activities to promote development as well as to advertise some of the activities and programs to show who were are and what we do. The university must also
continue to foster existing relationships with local public and private schools, as well as its relationship with government agencies and private organizations. UVI also has to develop and maintain partnerships with colleges and universities regionally and nationally to attract students from the Caribbean region and the U.S. mainland.

- **Modern and Safe University Environment**

One of the key focus areas of the strategic plan is the need for the university to continue to upgrade its facilities and infrastructure. Considerable progress has been made over the years to improve several critical facilities at the institution; however UVI still has some work to do in this area to provide a safe working and learning environment for its employees and students. The university will also continue to implement environmentally friendly upgrades, especially through investment in newer technologies.

- **Student Development and Success**

The University of the Virgin Islands has always recognized students as one of its most important stakeholders. This focus area of the strategic plan places an emphasis on the university’s ability to stimulate the interest of students by offering a wide range of programs and an improved customer service base to stimulate and encourage academic growth and development. Being able to better serve its student population and future students could also lead to improved retention rates.
• Financial Stability and Sustainability

Given the state of the current economic climate, especially locally where the university has seen a reduction in its allotment from the Government of the Virgin Islands, the management of financial resources as well as the ability to obtain additional support is critical for the survival of this institution. This area of the strategic plan emphasizes the need to identify potential funding sources in addition to entrepreneurial investments, the comprehensive Capital Campaign, and continual support from major grant programs.

TITLE III FOCUS AREAS

Overview

The Title III Part B focus areas serve as the framework for the design and implementation of the projects and activities that will be selected for the five-year grant period described in this Comprehensive Development Plan. The institution is in the process of completing its new strategic plan, which covers the same time frame as this Plan, 2012-17. As such, institutional values and objectives must be aligned with the core Title III focus areas: Academic Quality, Student Services, Fiscal Stability and Institutional Management.

Academic Quality

Striving to provide quality education to students locally and regionally by nurturing academic excellence has been the core of the university’s focus as it pertains to academia. However, one of the major pitfalls identified by participants of the strategic planning
sessions was the limited faculty the university has to serve its students. As such, some plausible solutions to ensure that UVI achieves this goal were developed, including:

- Increasing the number of programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels;
- Expanding the degree programs and seeking collaboration with other universities and other partners;
- Increasing students’ exposure in learning through outreach activities and research;
- Attracting and retaining qualified faculty and staff; and
- Accreditation of all schools and colleges.

The Title III project *Comprehensive Faculty Development Program* will provide professional development opportunities especially to faculty and staff, with an emphasis placed on part time faculty who are responsible for teaching a significant number of courses here at the university. Research and publication opportunities will be offered to students and faculty members through the facilitation of the *Parallel Computing* and the *Building on the First 50 Years to Enhance Student in Environmental and Health Sciences* projects.

**Student Services**

UVI maintains a “students first” approach to the services and programs it offers to students. This approach is supported by the university’s management values as it pertains to recognizing the need to provide a superb service package to its most important client, students. The Student Services focus area is geared towards improving students’ success here at the institution, which would assist in addressing enrollment and retention rates, as well supporting the university’s role in developing future leaders of the territory.
The university’s strategic plan has identified several goals that would address the enhancement of student services including:

- Designing and implementing research based approaches to improve student retention and graduation rates;
- Designing curricula to facilitate employability or advancement in chosen field;
- Publicizing student success and achievements;
- Enhancing the integration of the Center for Student Success throughout the university; and
- Utilizing the data collected from the student satisfaction survey to enhance existing programs and develop new ones.

For the upcoming Title III grant cycle, the Integrated Approach to Academic Growth and Student Success project will direct its efforts to combine a number of activities including counseling, mentoring and tutorial services to students, toward the improvement of the institution’s retention and graduation rates.

**Institutional Management**

Faculty and staff have voiced their opinions during the strategic plan sessions about the need for the university to improve its technology infrastructure. UVI needs to invest in more technology to improve processes and functionality to efficiently serve its students and the community. However, UVI must be able to attract and retain the personnel to do so. Additionally, in order for the university to pursue this undertaking, there must be funding in place, and with the current financial crisis looming over the territory and the university, this may seem to be an insurmountable task. The Title III
project *It’s all About the Students* will address a number of the university’s technology related issues as it seeks to continue to strengthen the use of technology in the classroom as well as improve UVI’s e business processes.

In addition to enhancing its technology infrastructure, another area that requires improvement is the university’s human resources. The retention of faculty and staff has been an ongoing issue for the university as they opt to leave for better opportunities and compensation at other universities and agencies. Some of the solutions devised to assist the university in addressing this dire need are:

- Implement transparent retention and compensation practices based on effective and implemented evaluation process.
- Provide an excellent research-based child care program linked to the university’s early childhood education program.
- Better utilize existing technical resources to implement and synchronize training for faculty and staff to better ensure compliance with federal and other regulations.
- By 2017 replace the nomenclature of the UVI by using the term “We” instead of saying “the university”.
- Create a Salary Fund similar to the institution’s plant fund, thereby - making fair compensation a priority.
- Salary adjustment to market level
- Objective evaluation measurement system (Data –Standards)

**Fiscal Stability**
Given the state of the economy, both locally and nationally, the financial picture painted for the University of the Virgin Islands appears unmoving. The university has been operating on a reduced budget to achieve a wealth of objectives to offer competitive services to students and salaries to its dedicated employees. Some of the goals outlined in the Plan for UVI to paint a brighter picture for its fiscal stability and sustainability are:

- Improve institutional effectiveness through the use of appropriate assessment and decision making tools.
- Create an institutional culture of entrepreneurship.
- Increase revenues from new client bases, new products, and other entrepreneurial activities.
- Increase revenues from transfer-in of graduates from regional educational institutions.
- Increase revenues from enrollment through the offering of online and doctoral programs.
- Expand the funding base of the University through increased philanthropic support.
- Increase the number and dollar value of federal grants awarded to the University.
- Restore local government funding to 2009 levels and higher.
- Enhance revenue productivity and profitability of auxiliaries.

The Title III Part B program will serve as an auxiliary funding source for the institution, enabling it to engage in activities and projects to improve functionality processes. The projects approved for the 2012-17 grant cycle will help to address the areas for UVI that need improvement and through grant funds.
Focus Areas Matrix

The Focus Area Matrix illustrates the relationship between UVI’s core values, its strategic plan core values and the Title III, Part B focus areas. The Title III focus areas serve as the heart of the matrix to show how it relates to the institution’s core values and strategic plan focus areas. There are four core focus areas for the Title III Part B program which includes Student Services, Academic Quality, Institutional Management and Fiscal Stability. On the other hand, there are six (6) areas of focus developed to chart the course of the institution over the next five years. The UVI strategic plan focus areas are delineated by the color pink, while the core values are identified by the color light blue.
**PROJECT MONITORING**

To ensure that the University of the Virgin Islands Title III Part B program maintains a high level of integrity and accountability as it pertains to the use of federal funds received from the U.S. Department of Education, the Title III Coordinator will ensure that all Activity Directors adhere to the Policies and Procedures Manual. Most importantly, all Activity Directors must consult with the coordinator before utilizing the funds to ensure consistency with their Phase II work plans and budgets. The monitoring system that will be implemented by the Title III Coordinator involves:

- review of expenditure requests for goods and services;
- quarterly meetings with PI and Activity Directors;
- quarterly progress reports;
- periodic meetings with individual Activity Directors;
- provision of information to Activity Directors; and
- formal evaluation.

**EXPENDITURE MONITORING**

The purchase of all goods and/or services must first be approved by the Title III Coordinator. As such, the coordinator must make sure that all requests are consistent with the cost principles, the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), university policies and procedures and the Title III Policies and Procedures handbook. On a monthly basis, the Title III Coordinator will provide an expenditure
report for the President, who is the PI for the Title III grant, to show the spending progress for each activity.

**ACTIVITY QUARTERLY REPORTS AND MEETINGS**

Title III Activity Directors are required to submit a quarterly progress report to illustrate the level of progress made for each quarter of the fiscal year. Additionally, on a quarterly basis, meetings are held with the Activity Directors and the President to provide a verbal synopsis of the individual project happenings. These meetings allows the President to keep abreast of all the events and issues occurring on each projects and more importantly, they afford Activity Directors an opportunity not only to communicate their progress but also to express concern and issues that may hinder the progress of the activities.

**FORMAL PROJECT EVALUATION**

During the course of the grant cycle, there will be three evaluations conducted—two formative and one summative evaluations—where the former will serve as a mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of the program and identify areas where corrective actions are required to make certain that the approved Title III projects are serving their intended purposes and that established targets and objectives are met. The formative will also allow for corrective action to take place in a timely manner before the end of the grant cycle. The summative evaluation will be conducted in the latter part of the cycle; it will assess the final progress of each approved Title III activities.
CONCLUSION

As the University of the Virgin Islands embarks on its five year mission for 2012-17, it will be accompanied by its Title III program, augmenting a number of the institution’s goals and objectives through the projects approved for the grant cycle, which are aligned with the institution’s strategic plan focus areas.

The funding made available by the U.S. Department of Education for the university through the Title III Part B grant program will serve as a much needed source, given the reduced availability of appropriation dollars from the Virgin Islands Government. Additionally, each year UVI will update the Department of Education on the progress of its Title III program by completing the required annual performance reports. Lastly, as another measuring stick for the progress of the UVI Title III Program, formative and summative evaluation will be conducted.