INTRODUCTION

For more than two decades, the University of the Virgin Islands has used funding made available the Title III program to develop its infrastructural capacity (physical and administrative) and provide services to its students. The supplemental funds, made available through the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2010 will likewise be used to strengthen the institution’s delivery of academic programs pursuant to the provisions of the Act.

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. The properties that initially housed the campuses were a donation from 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 Overview

The majority of students (75% in the fall of 2009) at UVI are of African or African-American heritage. Another 7% of the students are either Hispanic, Native American/Alaskan Native or Asian/Pacific Islander, while the remainder of the population are white, mixed heritage or unknown. The instructional component of the University of the Virgin Islands is comprised of five academic schools and colleges—the School of Business, the School of Education, the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, the School of Nursing, and the College of Science and Mathematics.

UVI offers Bachelor of Arts degrees in accounting, biology, business administration, chemistry, elementary education, English, humanities, inclusive early childhood education, marine biology, mathematics, music education, psychology, social sciences, social work, and speech communication and theater. The University also awards BS degrees in the areas of applied mathematics, biology, chemistry, computer science, marine biology, mathematics, and nursing. Associates degrees are also available in several disciplines, including accounting, business management, computer information systems, hotel and restaurant management, nursing, and process technology.

The institution offers five masters degree programs in business administration, public administration, education, and its two newest cohort-driven programs, mathematics education for secondary school teachers and marine and environmental science. It also offers a cohort-driven Education Specialist degree.

The US Virgin Islands has been designated by the National Science Foundation as one of 25 states and territories eligible for funding under the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), and the program is hosted by UVI. According to the program’s UVI web site, EPSCoR “is a partnership between the
National Science Foundation and the higher education, government, and business communities of the U. S. Virgin Islands to promote the development of the Territory’s science and technology resources through targeted research, education, and outreach activities.”

In November 2006, under the auspices of EPSCoR, in collaboration with the Division of Science and Mathematics and the Center for Marine and Environmental Studies, a new Masters degree in marine and environmental sciences was approved by the UVI Board of Trustees. This program admitted its first students in fall 2007, and has graduated three students thus far. Also within the Division of Science and Mathematics, a cohort-driven Master of Arts in Mathematics for Secondary Teachers has been initiated. Since its inception in 2006, eight persons have completed the degree program. A second cohort is scheduled to graduate by December 2011.

**STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS**

Commencing in 2004, the University of the Virgin Islands engaged in its third strategic planning process. With its most comprehensive outreach to stakeholders ever in this type of endeavor, UVI engaged the Board of Trustees, students, faculty and staff on both campuses, and the wider community (including alumni) on the three major islands to obtain input regarding the path that the institution will take to realize greater institutional effectiveness.

A SWOT (Strength and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis identified those areas in which the institution holds competitive advantages and disadvantages. Focus group and town hall meetings were conducted with both internal
and external stakeholders, gathering input at various stages of the planning process and reporting progress toward a final plan.

Additionally, a standardized national survey of student satisfaction gathered input regarding the factors perceived to be important to students. The survey was meant to discern those things that are important to students and to understand whether and to what extent UVI is meeting those expectations. Areas examined included campus support services; effectiveness of academic advising; instructional effectiveness; recruitment and financial aid; registration effectiveness; and safety and security. The largest gap between expectations and satisfaction was with those issues related to safety and security, while student’s expectations were most readily met with matters connected to campus life.

The Board of Trustees approved the VISION 2012 Strategic Plan Framework on March 11, 2006.

One of the factors that constrained implementation of the 2000-2005 Strategic Plan was the plethora of strategic thrusts that had been prioritized. Recognizing this weakness, the University has chosen only four strategic areas on which to focus VISION 2012. Each area has measures of accomplishment outlined under each specific goal.

**STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW**

**SWOT Analysis**

Beginning in the fall of 2004 and continuing through spring 2005, the University of the Virgin Islands conducted an environmental scan and internal analysis, closely examining its internal strengths and weaknesses, along with external opportunities and threats, to determine its competitive advantages and disadvantages. External factors were grouped into six broad trends: economic trends, higher education/market trends, technology trends, political trends, US Virgin Islands social trends, and legal trends.
Additionally, a total of eleven internal institutional strengths and eleven weaknesses were identified.

Among the strengths that this analysis identified were:
- a dedicated faculty and staff;
- strong employee desire to enhance institutional effectiveness and performance;
- an administration committed to institutional change;
- effective community outreach and public service programs;
- a board that is committed to excellence and performance; and
- improved physical plant facilities.

Some of the more prominent weaknesses included:
- the absence of student-centered practices;
- a silo orientation to managing student and administrative processes and systems;
- a limited number of academic programs;
- inadequate technological infrastructure; and
- a need for more transparency.

Economic trends that were noted during the environmental scan included continued financial challenges for the Virgin Islands Government (a major source of funding for the University of the Virgin Islands as a public institution), declining median income and rising unemployment, uncertainty among companies that have relocated to the Territory for tax benefits, and rising energy costs. While opportunities, such as a greater demand for workforce training and the ability to explore alternative funding sources, arise from these trends, several threats are also evident. These include: a declining market for fundraising and a decrease in support from the VI Government.

Among the Higher Education and market trends acknowledged in the review were the globalization of education and a growing proportion of Hispanics in the VI population. With opportunities to develop Hispanic-oriented programs and to “internationalize” the institution’s offerings, administrators need to be mindful of the
The growth in online education and the growing use of technology in the marketplace were the two important technology trends discovered in the environmental scan. These represent important threats of decreased traditional enrollment and raised student expectations of technology-infused instruction, but offer the opportunities of utilizing e-learning to the institution’s advantage, while using in-house technology expertise to address Territorial community issues.

Two national political trends that were identified as having the potential to impact on the University of the Virgin Islands are the uncertainty regarding the future growth of federal aid for students and the greater demand for institutional accountability and outcomes. With a sizable proportion of the student body requiring financial aid, the former trend could lead to decreased enrollment; however, inability to satisfy the latter could result in loss of accreditation. UVI continues to use the accreditation process and compliance with accreditation standards to forge stronger external relationships with members of the accrediting body, while marketing the institution’s potential.

Continuing demographic changes in the Territory was cited as the single important social trend that could significantly impact the institution. UVI can capitalize upon these changes to guide program alignment, but rapidly changing demands on UVI structure and services may be difficult to accommodate.

By using increased requirements regarding accountability and compliance to drive the institution’s process redesign efforts, UVI can create opportunities. The increased
compliance requirements however, serve as a threat to continued external funding of various programs and projects.

VISION 2012 seeks to build on the internal strengths and maximize the institution’s ability to capitalize on opportunities while improving on its weaknesses and reducing the potential for negative impacts due to external factors.

**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**

UVI's strength lies in a value system that embodies the principles, ideals and beliefs of its students, faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees, and forms the foundation for UVI's actions. These ten values reveal what UVI strives to become as a University and are essential to ensuring the fulfillment of UVI's mission and vision. The institution’s core values include:

- *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.

**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.*

**Strategic Areas of Focus**

VISION 2012 is being implemented subject to four strategic areas of focus, each with its own strategic goal, operational objectives and measures of accomplishment. In order to effectively implement the plan, UVI was challenged to develop an integrated planning, assessment and evaluation system that allows each employee to align his/her job-related tasks with the strategic priorities that have been established in VISION 2012.
As an initial step in this process, the University linked the annual budget to VISION 2012. Measures of accomplishment were assigned to each component of the University which is held accountable for the fulfillment of the measures in their areas of responsibility. The University has also developed service charters inclusive of specific standards and targets, and has initiated the process of implementing departmental assessment plans and timelines. The next step of visibly linking the standards to individual performance objectives is expected to commence implementation during summer 2010, as performance objectives for the 2010-11 fiscal year are developed by staff.

**Educational Excellence**

This strategic area of focus highlights the institution’s dedication to educational offerings that display academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate for its higher education mission. The strategic goal for this area of focus is to create a learner-centered experience that fosters academic excellence and student success through innovative, effective teaching strategies and high quality academic and student support programs.

**Institutional Improvement**

The second strategic area of focus recognizes that UVI needs to improve its processes and systems as well as policies and procedures in order to strengthen institutional performance and effectiveness. Strategic goal #2 is to ensure that the strategic goals and objectives are met by enhancing the University's capacity to achieve results.
**Financial Sustainability**

As the only public institution of higher learning in the US Virgin Islands, one of the most challenging issues for UVI has been the uncertain and volatile financial picture of the Virgin Islands Government. Reduced allotments have limited the University's capability to respond to demands from the community for expanded educational programs, while thwarting efforts to increase compensation for employees, and hampering growth in human resource development and hiring. The financial sustainability strategic goal is to *enhance and diversify the University's financial base through the development of new revenue streams and realization of cost savings.*

**Community Engagement**

The fourth and final strategic area of focus in VISION 2012 is community engagement. The institution considers this area to be the cornerstone of its dedication to student success and to an enhanced quality of life for the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean. UVI’s fourth strategic goal is to *become a leader and partner with the community to address social, economic, environmental, political, educational and cultural issues impacting the U.S. Virgin Islands through a range of higher education initiatives.*

**TITLE III/SAFRA AREAS OF FOCUS**

**General Overview**

During the five-year period of this development plan, the University of the Virgin Islands SAFRA Mandatory Funds program will concentrate on those aspects of the strategic plan where institutional resources must be supplemented in order to realize success. The theme of the University of the Virgin Islands’ SAFRA program—“Supporting Students First”—builds on that of the five-year Title III HBCU project for
the period 2007-2012—“Enhancing Institutional Infrastructural Capacity for Support of Student Success”.

There are common characteristics between the strategic areas of focus established in VISION 2012 and the institutional outcomes areas of focus that are incorporated into the Title III program that the SAFRA program partially mirrors. This is represented in the matrix below and further explained in the sections that follow.

**VISION 2012 AREAS OF FOCUS**  
**TITLE III AREAS OF FOCUS**

- Educational Excellence
- Institutional Improvement
- Financial Stability
- Community Engagement

- Academic Quality
- Student Services
- Institutional Management
- Fiscal Stability

Because the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2010 focuses on only two of the four focus areas—Academic Quality and Institutional Management—this Comprehensive Development Plan is limited to a discussion of the institutional goals that are related to those areas of focus.

**Academic Quality Goals**

The institution’s overarching goal in this Area of Focus is to “create a learner-centered experience that fosters academic excellence and student success through innovative, effective teaching strategies and high quality academic and student support programs.” This goal supports the desire for high quality educational programs, activities and processes linked to UVI's mission components. In order to achieve this goal, the University of the Virgin Islands will:
Offer high quality outcomes-based academic programs that are flexible and responsive.

Accedit all professional programs and develop internal standards to assess the quality of programs consistent with best practices.

Increase enrollment by enhancing recruitment, registration and enrollment-related services.

Increase scholarly research and outreach activities that enhance student learning, respond to community needs, and/or generate new knowledge that also meets peer-reviewed standards.

Provide on-going professional development opportunities for faculty through the Center for Teaching and Learning and within the context of a learning community.

Establish a comprehensive student learning outcomes assessment model to monitor the effectiveness of the learning experience and use the results to improve avenues for student success.

The project proposals submitted as a part of the accompanying grant application will pursue some of these goals, while addressing those weaknesses and threats that were identified in the SWOT Analysis, including the shortcomings in the institution’s academic programs; an inadequate technological infrastructure; and the raised student expectations of technology-infused instruction.

**Institutional Management Goals**

During the planning process, faculty, staff and students concluded that the University needs to improve its processes and systems as well as policies and procedures in order to strengthen institutional performance and effectiveness. The University community articulated a need for excellence in the execution of business processes and practices, higher performance standards, greater investment in faculty and staff development, and better internal and external communication systems.

Through a number of initiatives that have been established since 2006, the institution’s aim has been to ensure that strategic goals and objectives are met by enhancing the University's capacity to achieve results. In so doing, UVI will continue to:
• Support superior performance and foster individual and group success through advancement of compensation strategies and investment in training, professional development and cross-functional activities.

• Ensure enhanced customer service delivery and improved operational results (with specific measurements to be defined) by redesigning administrative and educational processes.

• Facilitate institution-wide information and data flow by enhancing the internal communications infrastructure and implementing a comprehensive University strategic communication plan.

• Institute the University’s seven management values i.e., high performing institution that focuses on quality, service oriented, uncompromised integrity, informed decision making, fiscal responsibility, performance assessment, and emotional and spiritual health.

• Expand the involvement of faculty, staff, students, and administrators in shared governance approach to leadership and management.

• Provide alternative dispute mechanisms to address issues related to workplace conflict and the resulting impact that such activities may have on the efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of University personnel.

During the five-year grant cycle, the projects that are devised to focus on these goals will address several institutional shortcomings and perceived threats, such as an inadequate technological infrastructure; but will also exploit those opportunities to build on the institution’s strengths in order for UVI to expand its capabilities. One means of doing this will be to improve and expand the institution’s physical plant in ways that enhance the instructional environment and enhance support systems that promote student success. Another will be to optimize the use of technology in the delivery of instruction.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Those methods and measures that are utilized by the Title III project administration office to monitor the progress of the five-year HBCU program will be employed with the CCRAA to ensure that the programmatic and financial components of the program are operating pursuant to the approved work plans and budgets and the
requirements of the US Department of Education. Included in this system are the following procedures:

- review of expenditure requests and reporting of spending;
- 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.

These measures will be conducted concurrently with those on the five-year project.

**Expenditure Request Reviews**

The Title III Coordinator is responsible, as the President’s representative, for reviewing all requests for expenditure of Title III funds. As such, the Title III Coordinator must approve the purchase of all goods and services utilizing funds made available through the SAFRA program, including Professional Service Agreements, Travel Authorizations, Interdepartmental Service Requisitions, Purchase Requisitions or other expenditure forms.

The Title III Coordinator will report on a monthly basis to the UVI President regarding expenditure of funds from the UVI SAFRA program. When necessary, the Coordinator may recommend the reallocation of funds within the grant award in order to ensure timely expenditure. The Title III Policies and Procedures Manual provides additional information regarding specific requirements, allowability and applicability of other UVI procedures.

**Quarterly Meetings**

One of the means by which the UVI President will be kept abreast of activities in the Title III and SAFRA programs is by meeting once per quarter with the Activity
Directors and Title III Coordinator. These meetings will allow the president to get an understanding of the progress that each project is making and to obtain responses to questions as needed. The Title III Coordinator will be responsible for scheduling these meetings in consultation with the Office of the President.

**Quarterly Progress Reports**

Activity Directors will be required to submit quarterly progress reports by the 15th day after the end of each quarter in the fiscal year. These reports will provide the Coordinator with information needed to:

- assess progress regarding project objectives;
- identify obstacles to completion of objectives; and
- identify any other programmatic issues that may impact on the achievement of the established objectives.

**One-on-One Consultations**

The Title III Coordinator will meet periodically with Activity Directors, as needed, to review progress on stated programmatic objectives. During these meetings, issues that may result in slow expenditure rates or delays in meeting objectives may be identified and appropriate actions to resolve them should be devised.

**Formal Evaluations**

Two types of project evaluation will be used with the Title III program—internal and external evaluation. The internal evaluation process will be utilized to examine the effectiveness of the project for internal consumers such as the students, faculty, staff, UVI President, Title III Coordinator, and Activity Directors. Scheduled for the first and third years of the program cycle, this process will scrutinize the project’s compliance with both external and internal standards, look at progress in achieving objectives, review the effectiveness of business systems and operating procedures, and examine the strengths and weaknesses of the institution’s SAFRA program. It is planned that the
initial internal evaluation will be performed during Year 1, with a second in Year 3 of the grant cycle.

An external evaluation will review the same processes, but will be performed during the final year of the grant cycle and will be formally submitted to the US Department of Education.

Independent contractors will be hired to perform these assessments.

COMMUNICATION

The Project Administration office will utilize a two-pronged approach toward informing the institution of the impact that the SAFRA program is having at the University of the Virgin Islands. The institution’s annual Title III newsletter, *Title III Impact*, will feature the projects that have been funded by the SAFRA. Additionally, through the program’s web site at [http://www.uvi.edu/TitleIII/t3index.html](http://www.uvi.edu/TitleIII/t3index.html), UVI students, faculty and staff (along with any other visitors to the web site) will continue to have 24 x 7 access to information regarding the institution’s SAFRA program.

CONCLUSION

During the five-year grant cycle (October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2015), the University of the Virgin Islands will utilize the funds made available through the SAFRA program to enhance the institution’s infrastructural capacity in order to support the success of its current and future students. With the improvements that the institution will accomplish, the University of the Virgin Islands will be better suited to accomplish its mission of “enhancing the lives of the people of the US Virgin Islands and the wider Caribbean…”
Specific outcome-oriented objectives (that facilitate realization of the institution’s established goals) will be incorporated into each activity that will be pursued as a part of this plan, and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation plan described above will facilitate the achievement of the institution’s goals for academic quality, student services, institutional management, and fiscal stability. Project descriptions will demonstrate how each new program established during this grant cycle will be institutionalized by the end of the grant cycle.

Each Activity Director will be required to gather and report the data that will demonstrate whether there has been any progress toward the achievement of desired outcomes, and the Title III Coordinator will report annually to the US Department of Education on the progress that has been achieved. Both the internal and external evaluation processes will allow additional scrutiny of the UVI SAFRA program, thereby assisting program staff to make adjustments to any matters that may impede the progress of any approved activity.

The University of the Virgin Islands is committed to using this new partnership with the US Department of Education to improve the academic environment for students, which is a major goal of the institution’s mission.