University of the Virgin Islands
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

Formative External Evaluation Report
Title III/ Institutional Aid Programs
Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA)
2010-2011

Submitted by:
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INTRODUCTION

The SAFRA grant represents the special mandatory funded program of the Department of Education under the $850 million designated by the Obama Administration. This is distinct from the Title III HBCU grant funded under the 2007-2012 grant cycle. This report reflects the formative assessment of the program. In keeping with its commitment to accountability the University decided to have its program evaluated by a team of external evaluators to determine program consonance with the stated objectives and with federal regulations and guidelines. Utilizing a bid process, the University selected Associates for Institutional Development, Inc., Red Oak, Georgia, to conduct a formative evaluation of the grant period. This report represents the findings of that visit. The evaluators were as follows: Dr. Haywood L. Strickland, President, Associates for Institutional Development, Inc., Red Oak, Georgia; Dr. Gloria James, Vice President, Associates for Institutional Development, Inc., Red Oak, GA; and Ms. Tendai Johnson, Associate Vice President for Institutional Research and Assessment, and Title III Director at Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, NC. None of these consultants had other professional engagements or relationships with the University. The evaluation site visit was conducted November 7-9, 2011.

Specific objectives of the evaluation are delineated below, and they reflect the guidelines established for the evaluation as follows:

1. Assess and evaluate the status of each of the University’s Title III activities in relation to its stated objectives, milestones and performance evaluation measures.
2. Assess the internal monitoring procedures used by the Title III Director and the University to plan, manage and evaluate the total Title III efforts.
3. Review activity budgets and expenditures and assess them in regards to grant compliance and activity projections.
4. Determine the impact to date of the activities on the University.

The evaluators met with Mr. Dayle Barry, Title III Coordinator, for the purpose of discussing the evaluation process, and for determining what documentation would be needed to carry out the evaluation efforts. The evaluators reviewed the documentation and other relevant program materials provided by the Title III Office. Structured interviews and conferences were conducted with the Title III activity directors and other key personnel. Files and records were examined, and program site visits were made in order to gather the information which formed the basis of this evaluation. Extensive materials and documentation were provided by internet prior to the team visit. Other documentation was provided on-site.
The Evaluation Model

In assessing the Title III Program activities, the evaluators observed resources, procedures and outcomes of each activity. Where possible, the evaluation centered on whether the planned program goals were met in the form of observable outcomes achieved within the time frame and budget of the individual activity. In the very few cases where the observable outcomes fell short of the goals, the evaluators assessed both the procedures and the resources that were in the process of leading to the desired outcomes, as well as parts of the outcomes that had surfaced. In short, the evaluators attempted to determine the status of both the outcomes and the processes of each of the Title III activities at the University of the Virgin Islands.

Three basic questions guided the information gathering process and served as the evaluation model:

♦ What are the desired outcomes of the program and at what state of the development or accomplishment are they?
♦ What are the program procedures and activities and how are they expected to result in the desired observable outcomes?
♦ What resources (inputs) including the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of people, funding, equipment, supplies, training, initial plans and strategies are being used to form the procedures and activities that lead to the desired outcomes?

As a result of document review and interviews with appropriate faculty, staff and administrators, the following information was ascertained:

♦ Institutional goals over the Title III grant period.
♦ Institutional goals over the current academic year.
♦ Specific objectives over the Title III grant period.
♦ Specific objectives accomplished to date and corresponding performance evaluation measures with documentation.
♦ Specific objectives in progress for the year, if not completed, and projected time of completion.
♦ Specific objectives accomplished to date.
♦ Statistics (number of consultants used, number of students served, number of faculty served, workshops held or attended, etc.)
♦ Impact on the institution.
♦ Problems encountered.
♦ Staff or faculty recommendations.
Needs Assessment

A variety of procedures and studies was used at the beginning of the University’s involvement in Title III to determine the needs of students, faculty and administration. These processes have provided an ongoing needs assessment capability for subsequent Title III requests. Examples of the methodologies used are listed below:

- Studies of student performance and persistence;
- Discussions about the curriculum and academic programming;
- Classroom observations and reports;
- Studies of the University’s administration and management;
- The use of comprehensive long-range planning studies;
- Annual Reports of the University and various fiscal reports.

Documentation was provided to verify the fact that the University’s constituencies (faculty, staff, administration, and alumni and local community representatives) impacted the needs assessment process.

The evaluators concluded that the Title III Program Activities at the University of the Virgin Islands are well administered and coordinated.

The schedule reflects the on-site visit of the evaluation team, as they conducted interviews, examined records and reports, and observed demonstrations and inspected various project sites in campus.

The evaluation ratings scale ranges from NR for objectives which have not been addressed to 5.0 for activities totally completed at the time of the evaluation.

The following scale is used to indicate the level of achievement:

1. No significant progress
2. Performance less than 50% of measure
3. Performance between 50% and 90% measure
4. Performance within 100% of measure
5. Performance exceeds measure by more than 10%
Title III SAFRA Evaluation Site Visit Schedule
Associates for Institutional Development
November 7-9, 2011

Monday, November 7, 2011

- Project Interviews
  - 3:30-4:30 Project Administration/Orientation (ACC 2nd Floor Conf. Room)

Tuesday, November 8, 2011

- 9:00-9:45 Entrance Interview with Dr. Hall (President’s Office)
- Project Interviews
  - 10:00-11:00 Learning and Educational Access Program w/T. Koopmans
  - 11:15-12:15 Advance Learning Environment w/T. Koopmans
  - 12:15 – 1:15 LUNCH
  - 1:30-2:30 Center for Student Success w/ Dr. Esdaille (ACC 2nd Floor Conf. Room)
  - 3:30-4:30 Increasing the Cadre of Highly Qualified Teachers in the USVI w/ Dr. Michaels (ACC 2nd Floor Conf. Room)

Wednesday, November 9, 2011

- 12:00-1:15 Wrap up/Report Preparation
- 1:30-2:00 Exit Interview with Dr. Hall (President’s Office)
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

**Introduction**

Program Administration provides staffing for the ongoing programmatic, fiscal monitoring and evaluation of the Title III funded activities at UVI. Daily oversight and management is entrusted to the Title III Coordinator, who also serves as Assistant Director of Sponsored Programs. This individual, Mr. Dayle Barry, commits 85% of his time to administration. It is observed that the vacancy of the office of the Director of Sponsored Programs, Mr. Barry has devoted considerable time to this function. Mr. Barry does not report directly to the President. However, Mr. Barry submits monthly expenditure reports to the President and meets with him directly as needed. Mr. Barry reviews Title III activities with the President and receives his input and direction for program inclusion and implementation. Staff also includes a Grants Administration Specialist (85% time) who assists in the day-to-day monitoring activities. A Grants Accountant whose salary is supported 100% by the University provides fiscal monitoring and implementation. That person is responsible for maintaining accounting records for the Title III program and several other federal grant programs. There was no program administration budget in the SAFRA grant. $25,000 was transferred from the student success activity to support the external evaluators and transportation to the St. John site.

Staff corresponded with the Department of Education and grants officers on matters related to successful program implementation. Specifically, Program Administration had the responsibility to (1) assure the projected activities are carried out as stipulated in the Comprehensive Development Plan and the Revised Plan of Operation; (2) facilitate the maximum impact of the activities on the University’s mission and goals; (3) serve as institutional spokesperson for the Title III Program; (4) Implement monitoring and evaluation activities; and (5) Ensure fiscal integrity.

The written Policies and Procedures manual was updated in order to ensure that grant terms and conditions were followed properly in keeping with EDGAR’s regulations and policies, institutional directives and with the policies of the government of the Virgin Islands.

Six measures were established to provide the parameters for program administration and evaluation.

- 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.

**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 approved 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 reported on a monthly basis to the UVI President regarding expenditure of funds from the UVI SAFRA program. The Coordinator had the task also to recommend the reallocation of funds within the grant award in order to ensure timely expenditure. The Title III Policies and Procedures Manual provided additional information regarding specific requirements, allowability and applicability of other UVI procedures.

**Quarterly Meetings**

One methodology implemented to keep the UVI President abreast of activities in the Title III and SAFRA programs was by scheduled meetings once per quarter with the Activity Directors and Title III Coordinator. These meetings allowed the President to get an understanding of the progress that each project is making and to obtain responses to questions as needed.

**Quarterly Progress Reports**

Activity Directors were required to submit quarterly progress reports by the 15th day after the end of the quarter in the fiscal year. These reports provided 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, Internal Monitoring**

The Title III Coordinator met periodically with Activity Directors, as needed, to review progress on stated programmatic objectives. During these meetings, issues that would facilitate the timely expenditure of funds were identified.
**Communication**

The Project Administration office utilized 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, featured the projects that have been funded by the SAFRA. Additionally, through the program’s website at http://www.uvi.edu/sites/uvi/Pages/Sponsored_Programs-Title_III.aspx?s=CS, UVI students, faculty and staff (along with any other visitors to the web site) will continue to have 24x7 access to information regarding the institution’s SAFRA program.

The criteria functions for evaluation of Program Administration were as follows: (1) coordination function; (2) liaison function between the University and the U.S. Department of Education; (3) fiscal control of Title III funds; and (4) conducting internal and external evaluations.

A. **Coordination**

Program Administration was responsible for the coordination of all aspects of the Title III Program. Coordination activities include monitoring, responding to requests, insuring effective communication and general oversight. The Title III Policies and Procedures Manual facilitated the implementation of project activities and provided the parameters for the activities. Quarterly meetings were held with the President and activity directors concerning Title III activities and regulators and guidelines. Periodic meetings were also held to monitor the implementation of the activities. Minutes of the meetings were available for review. Oral and written reports are required from each of the Title III activities on program progress at the quarterly meetings. Reports were on file.

**Function Rating: 5.0**

B. **Liaison Function**

The Coordinator serves as the designated official liaison to represent UVI in matters with the U.S. Department of Education regarding the Title III Program. The evaluator examined records to verify that this function is executed in a quality manner. The information reviewed clearly indicates that all program changes were officially requested and approved for the activities involved. The files and records containing documentation with respect to Title III regulations
were examined and found to be appropriate. The Title III staff represented the University in all meetings and activities that required interpretation of the program to various publics. Title III related meetings were attended by the Coordinator on behalf of the University when such meetings were held.

**Function Rating: 5.0**

C. **Fiscal Function**

Program Administration provided overall supervision for this function and signed off on requisitions, etc. as mandated. The day-to-day fiscal monitoring is the responsibility of the Grants Specialist and the Grants Accountant. They review all documents for accuracy in budgeting and expenditures and employ a pre-encumbrance system to be sure that categories are not overspent. Staff also works with the university fiscal office on reconciliations. Staff checks and approves all personnel action forms for Title III funded staff, conducts conferences with activity directors on budget and grant procedures, reviews and processes requisitions, travel requests, etc. and helps prepare fiscal reports.

**Functional Rating: 5.0**

**Evaluation Function**

Program Administration is responsible for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of Title III activities. Documentation verifies that the monitoring activities were executed as planned. Internal evaluation was ongoing. Following a prescribed bidding process, UVI selected Associates for Institutional Development, Inc. Red Oak, Georgia to conduct the Title III Formative External Evaluation. This report reflects that activity.

**Rating: 5.0**

**Problems Encountered**

The primary problem evidenced was the slow expenditure rate of two of the activities. Programmatic issues are captured in the recommendations of the activities.
Program Impact, Conclusions, Recommendations

Title III continues to have a discernible impact on UVI. Funds are used to supplement University funds in addressing several critical issues facing the University. It is clear that the Territory’s resources are not adequate to support the University’s efforts to insure a quality education for its students. The University and the Title III staff are to be commended on the excellent manner in which Title III funds have been administered. The process by which activities are selected is commendable. It insures that each activity is integral and important to the vision of excellence established by UVI.

There are no recommendations.

Persons Interviewed
Mr. Dayle Barry, Title III Coordinator and Assistant Director of Sponsored Programs
Mr. Jarelle Berkley, Grants Administration Specialist

Documents Reviewed
Plan of Operation
Budgets
Financial Statements
Policies and Procedures Manual
Time & Effort Reports
Travel Reports
Monitoring Reports
Quarterly Reports
Inventory
Annual Performance Reports
Site Visit Report
Correspondence
INCREASING THE CADRE OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS IN THE
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS THROUGH IN-SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

As the only public institution of higher education in the U.S. Virgin Islands, hereinafter referred to as the USVI or the Territory, the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) aspires, as articulated in its vision statement, to:

...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.

In addition to its aspirations, as captured in its vision statement, UVI also recognizes the integral role that the institution plays in the community and region and has pledged to honor that recognition as noted in its mission statement, to wit:

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.

Further, as stated in the University’s SAFRA Comprehensive Development Plan, the theme of UVI’s SAFRA program is Supporting Students First. As such, this project is aligned with the broad SAFRA academic quality goals that support the desire for high quality educational programs, activities and processes that are linked to the University's mission components. More specifically, this project is grounded in one of the goals articulated in the institution’s strategic plan—VISION 2012—and in the SAFRA Comprehensive Development Plan, 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.

The importance of this particular goal is underscored by the establishment of a Presidential Task Force on Improving Education Quality in the U.S. Virgin Islands established in fall 2009. In spring, 2010, the Task Force presented its findings to the President, and out of this has come the establishment of a P-16 Collaborative, which will be headed by the Dean of the School of Education. It is within this framework and context that the University of the Virgin Islands proposes to undertake the project described herein. Specifically, the University will work
with the Department of Education on a priority need that it has identified with respect to current teachers meeting the highly qualified teacher requirement of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2002* (NCLB).

The University of the Virgin Islands is committed to expanding the scope of its Teacher Education program in the School of Education to assist the Virgin Islands Department of Education in addressing the critical need to increase the number of highly qualified certified teachers in the school system. Currently, based on recent statistics from the V.I. Department of Education (VIDE), as reported in its Territorial Report Card for SY 2008-2009, of the current teaching force, although 56% of teachers in the public education system are fully certified; only 45% of Core Courses are taught by highly qualified teachers, based on the NCLB stipulations. The need to address this matter was recognized by the Virgin Islands’ Chief State School Officer, Dr. La Verne Terry, who noted in an introductory statement of the USVI 2008-2009 NCLB Report Card that the Department will “… place emphasis on providing opportunities for teachers to be highly qualified” (p. 1).

There are three criteria that teachers must meet in order to be deemed highly qualified: teachers must have: 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach. For the purposes of this project, the focus is on the second criterion (and by implication, the third criterion as well), specifically, full state certification or licensure). This criterion is of pivotal importance to the K-12 public education system of the Territory in its ability to demonstrate that a majority of its teachers are highly qualified, specifically at the secondary level.

The Virgin Islands Board of Education (VIBE), the certifying entity in the Territory, currently certifies a larger proportion of elementary school teachers as compared to secondary teachers. Further, a larger proportion of current teachers in the St. Croix District are currently certified, when compared to teachers in the St. Thomas-St. John District. Also noteworthy is the fact that the highest proportion of current teachers not certified by the VIBE is at the secondary level in the St. Thomas-St. John District. Information on the teachers who meet all of the criteria to be designated as highly qualified shows that territory-wide; over half of the current teachers are not highly qualified. Further, a larger proportion of teachers at the elementary level meet the criteria to be classified as highly qualified than do teachers at the secondary level. Additionally, a larger proportion of teachers in the St. Croix District are highly qualified, compared to teachers in the St. Thomas-St. John District. Finally, the smallest proportion of teachers that meets the
NCLB criteria to be classified as highly qualified teachers at the secondary level in the St. Thomas-St. John District.

Specific Objectives, Implementation Strategies, and Accomplishments

Eight objectives were established to implement this activity for the 2010-2011 grant year:

Objective 1.0: Decrease the percentage of current secondary teachers in the V.I. public school system that is not certified by 50% (from 50% to 25%) by September 30, 2015.

Objective 2.0: Increase the percentage of current teachers who are classified as highly qualified, based on change of certification status, by 50% (from 43% to 64.5%) by September 30, 2015.

Objective 3.0: Decrease the percentage of current secondary teachers in the V.I. public school system that needs the professional education course, Education Technology, by 15% from 320 to 272 by September 30, 2012.

Objective 4.0: Decrease the percentage of current secondary teachers in the V.I. public school system that needs the professional education course, Special Education, by 15% from 288 to 245 by September 30, 2012.

Objective 5.0: Decrease the percentage of current secondary teachers in the V.I. public school system that needs the professional education course, Educational Psychology, by 20% from 184 to 148 by September 30, 2012.

Objective 6.0: Decrease the percentage of current secondary teachers in the V.I. public school system that needs the professional education course, Curriculum and Methods, by 15% from 240 to 204 by September 30, 2012.

Objective 7.0: Decrease the percentage of current secondary teachers in the V.I. public school system that needs the professional education course, Foundations of Education, by 20% from 168 to 135 by September 30, 2012.

Objective 8.0: Decrease the percentage of current secondary teachers in the V.I. public school system that needs the professional education course, Student Teaching, by 15% from 247 to 210 by September 30, 2012.

Status: Not addressed.

As written these are not facilitative objectives but programmatic outcomes. In addition, they do not address the fundamental purpose of the activity.
The primary goal of this activity is to increase the number of certified K-12 teachers in the Territory. There were delays to the implementation of the activity due to a change in leadership in the School of Education. The external evaluation interview afforded an opportunity to discuss several strategies that would promote program accomplishment now that the University has identified an Interim Dean who will assist in program implementation. The evaluator shared with the activity director that expending Title III funds to increase the number of certified teachers currently teaching in the school system may not be an allowable activity given that the purpose of Title III funding is to strengthen the University’s academic programs, administrative infrastructure, and student retention/graduation. This activity as written deflects a substantial amount of the University’s federal funding to an external entity instead of using the funds to strengthen the University’s capacity to graduate prospective teachers with the skills and knowledge to attain certification after graduating.

It should be noted that Title III funds are awarded based on Pell Grant recipients, number of students graduated, and number of students going to professional and graduate schools. The client population is fundamentally undergraduates in underrepresented academic fields. The primary population identified by this activity is on students who have already graduated and employed in designated fields. Therefore, the primary recommendation is to reconsider the primary thrust of this activity by using Title III funds to strengthen the University’s School of Education’s capacity to graduate students who have the skills and knowledge to pass the certification examination.

If the University decides to continue to implement the activity as currently written in the plan of operation, it is important to ensure that a true partnership between the University of the Virgin Islands and the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) is maintained throughout the implementation of this activity. In fact, the collaborative relationship that currently exists must be strengthened to ensure that VIDE is also making an investment to meet its needs. Although the plan of operation focuses on teachers in the Territory, the importance of providing funding for the School of Education can’t be overemphasized. Therefore, it is recommended that the majority of the funds be used to strengthen the University of the Virgin Islands’ School of Education to prepare education majors in their junior and senior years to attain certification after graduating by offering students tutoring and other academic support as well as professional development for the faculty to increase their ability to adequately prepare education majors to pass the certification examination.
The plan of operation for the activity required that the activity staff identify teachers in the Territory who are not certified and provide them with five (5) methods courses and a student teaching experience while they are employed in their teaching positions in their respective schools. The primary implementation strategy that was used to identify the target group of teachers who would participate in the program was an administration/distribution of a survey that would garner critical information about the re-tooling priorities for the teachers that are not certified. Unfortunately, there was a low return of responses further delaying completion of outcomes for the activity. Given the low responses to the survey that was administered to identify the teachers who are not certified and who wanted to participate in the program, it is recommended that principals be contacted and asked to complete a survey identifying (ranking in priority order) the teachers in their schools who are not certified or who need re-tooling that would be appropriate candidates for this program. Also, it is recommended that criteria for participation in this activity be clearly delineated, e.g., teachers who participate will be relatively new to the teaching field - i.e. 1-7 years experience, etc.

In reviewing the eight objectives delineated for this activity, the evaluator determined that they are performance indicators stating the incremental outcomes that will be attained as an indicator of programmatic success. As stated previously, the overarching desired outcome of this activity is to increase the number of certified k-12 teachers in the Territory. If the plan of operation for this activity remains as written, it is recommended that the objective be rewritten to state, “To increase the number of certified teachers in the Territory by XX% by September 30, 2015 through professional development activities that include participation in five (5) methods courses and a student teaching experience.

Challenges to Programmatic Accomplishments

The primary challenge was the change in leadership of the School and Education. This situation was exacerbated by the low response to the survey that was distributed to identify program participants in the first year of the grant.

Program Impact

Although there was a late start during the 2010-2011 grant period, during fall 2011, the program is offering four methods courses, two (2) in Student Teaching and two (2) in Educational Psychology. The University of the Virgin Islands is committed to improving the quality of education in the U.S. Virgin Islands and recognizes the critical role that its teacher education plays in meeting this goal. Further, this project provides an ideal opportunity for the teacher
education program within the School of Education to be responsive to a clear need in the area of increasing the percentage of teachers at the secondary public schools in the Territory who are certified by the Virgin Islands Board of Education. The project also has a related goal of increasing the percentage of secondary school teachers in the public school system in the Territory who meets NCLB requirements to be considered highly qualified. In responding to these needs, the University will have played a pivotal role in improving the quality of the teaching cadre in the Territory. The focus of the activity should be on improving the percentage of certified University of Virgin Islands graduates in the teaching arena. The classes and activities can be open to current school teachers but these participants cannot be Title III funded.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are being offered to enhance the implementation of the activity. It is recommended that:

**Recommendation 1:**

Since the activity as written is not designed to strengthen the University but focuses on providing financial support for an external entity, the University reconsiders the primary thrust of this activity and use the majority of the Title III funds to strengthen the School of Education’s capacity to graduate students who have the skills and knowledge to pass the certification examination.

**Recommendation 2:**

The majority of the grant funds be used to strengthen the University of the Virgin Islands’ School of Education to prepare education majors in their junior and senior years to attain certification after graduating by offering tutoring and other academic support as well as professional development for the faculty to increase their ability to adequately prepare education majors to pass the certification examination.

**Recommendation 3:**

An objective be developed to state, “To increase the number of certified teachers in the Territory by ____% by September 30, 2015 through professional development activities that include participation in five (5) methods courses and a student teaching experience.”
**Recommendation 4:**
Principals be contacted and asked to complete a survey identifying (ranking in priority order) the teachers in their schools who are not certified or who need re-tooling that would be appropriate candidates for this program.

**Recommendation 5:**
That the participation by current teachers is funded through sources other than Title III.

**Documents Reviewed**
- Plan of Operation
- Quarterly Report

**Person Interviewed**
- Dr. Noreen Michael, Activity Director
- Dr. Linda Thomas, Interim Dean, School of Education
Introduction

The mission-driven objective of the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) is to ensure the success of its students with particular emphasis on those enrolled in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, nursing and allied health, computer science, and information technology majors. Institutional documentation shows that the retention and graduation rates of students in these areas lag significantly behind other disciplines leading to corresponding shortfalls of personnel to fill positions in these professions. The data to support these assertions were provided in the original proposal but are reproduced here for completeness. The proposal stated:

“While the retention rate for first-time, full-time, degree seeking students in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is 75.3%, the six-year graduation rate for STEM students is 21.8%. The overall six-year graduation rate for the University is 32%. Based on 2002 data, the six-year graduation rate for Nursing, STEM, and CIS students is 27.3%, 21.8%, and 7.1% respectively.”

The UVI community reached a consensus that more resources should be channeled to these disciplines to reverse both the retention and graduation trends by September 2015. To lead this effort, UVI has established a Center for Student Success (CSS) that embraces Campus Advising and Tutoring Services (CATS) and the Freshman Development Seminar (FDS) to provide “targeted and specialized assistance to students in these fields of study to meet standards for success (or graduation requirements) in these careers”.

The CSS staff will identify all UVI students enrolled in the STEM, nursing and other science and technology related majors and in collaboration with the Deans and faculty of the College of Science and Mathematics and the School of Nursing focus on their advising, tutorial, career guidance and counseling needs. All in-coming freshmen will take the College Student Inventory (CSI), a Noel-Levitz diagnostic instrument that provides a profile of each student and identifies his/her at-risk quotient and receptivity to receive assistance for identified challenges. Using the results from this instrument, the CSS and the relevant School or College will assign each student to a team consisting of a faculty advisor and a Program Specialist whose responsibilities will be to ensure that each student has a reasonable graduation and if appropriate a remediation plan; that he or she follows the plan(s) and where any diversion from the plan(s)
occurs for any reason that the student is counseled on the options available to restore original focus.

Within six months of taking the CSI, students will again be asked to take a mid-year student assessment (MYSA) that provides feedback on whether original metrics on the CSI have changed and which direction. Information from both of these instruments will provide a better opportunity to manage retention on an individual basis. Second year students will be treated in a similar manner except that they will take the second year student assessment (SYSA) which provides information about the students’ at risk of dropping out or stop attending classes. Although students should have by this time been advised in their Schools or Colleges, CSS will work with the faculty advisors in these units to provide follow-up support and interventions to assist students to persist and progress. In particular, CSS will assist any students who are on probation or suspension to build remediation plans and direct students to tutorial and other support.

The team of faculty and program specialist will be the personal mentors, cheerleaders and advocates for the student, maintaining frequent contact with him or her, arranging meetings as often as necessary to monitor that the student is making satisfactory progress. The team will be proactive, exercising care to identify those students who are at risk of failing or deranging from the timely progress toward graduation. They will utilize the Early Alert System (EAS) to identify whether the students identified by the CSI and the SYSA to be at-risk-students are manifesting behaviors that will ensure their lack of persistence and progression. This information will provide a basis for interventions that will stimulate these students to remain on track.

The Early Alert System is a critical strategy that depends on faculty participation and buy-in for they need to provide program specialists within the first three weeks, information about attendance, submission of homework, and performance on tests etc. for their students. On receiving the information about a first-year student, the program specialist will promptly contact the student for a meeting to develop a remediation contract that will be shared with the student’s faculty advisor. The remediation contract might include counseling on good learning and study skills, tutoring sessions and scheduled follow up meetings to ensure that the student is fulfilling the contract and returning to good standing. If the information were received about a second year student, the program specialist will first contact the faculty advisor to discuss an appropriate plan of action.

While these approaches might appear “juvenile”, the reality is that many students (particularly freshmen) enter the institution without a clue of the habits they need to be successful and would respond favorably to strong but flexible structure. Anecdotal information suggests that
mentorship of this type leads to improved retention and student satisfaction. The CSS will provide more hours and different models of tutoring to broaden access to students needing this service. This might entail more evening and weekend availability as well as online tutoring for those whose employment or family obligations prevent them from utilizing the face-to-face tutoring currently offered. In addition, CSS will ensure that tutors are trained and certified by a national certification body as this will enhance the quality of tutoring and provide more confidence that students receive a high quality of service.

The Freshman Development Seminar (FDS) is a significant component of the retention strategy. Studies show that when freshmen take a course of this nature and particularly when the professor is engaging, the probability of their remaining at the institution is high. Accordingly, the CSS will review, revise, assign teachers to and evaluate the FDS course. Work has already begun on this and will continue throughout fiscal year 2011-2012.

Another important aspect of improving retention and graduation rates is faculty role. As the front line personnel in fulfilling the UVI mission, faculty must metacognitively process the significance of their role in the teaching-learning transaction. They must acquire the strategies to effectively convey knowledge and promote learning through innovative and engaging pedagogy. To contribute to this introspection and sensitivity, CSS will collaborate with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) and the relevant Schools and Colleges to sponsor faculty development workshops that address pedagogy particularly for teachers of freshmen in the STEM and cognate disciplines.

Specific Objectives, Implementation Strategies, and Accomplishments

This activity was guided by the following objectives for the 2010-2011 grant year:

**Objective 1.0:** Over the period October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2015, UVI will increase the retention rate of students pursuing careers in the physical and natural sciences, nursing and allied health professions, mathematics, computer science, information technology and sciences and engineering by 2.5% annually over the current retention baseline of 75.3% for an overall 10% increase to 82.8%. The retention rate is defined as the percentage of first time, full time, degree-seeking students who return the second year.

**Objective 2.0:** Over the period October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2015, UVI will increase the average pass rate of nursing students by 1.125% annually over the current baseline of 83.5% for an overall 5.4% increase to 88%.
Objective 3.0: Over the period October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2015, UVI will increase the six-year graduation rate of students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics by 6.5% annually over the current baseline of 24.7% for an overall 25% increase.

Status: Delayed.

For reasons beyond the University of the Virgin Island’s control, the original start date for the CSS operation moved from fall 2010 to summer 2011. The Center for Student Success officially began with the appointment of an Executive Director on June 15th with two weeks remaining in the third quarter. Immediately, the search for additional personnel and a location for its operations began. Within the first week of the fourth quarter, all of the additional personnel consisting of three program specialists and one administrative assistant were identified for employment. However, while contracts were being prepared for them, the territorial government imposed a hiring freeze on all governmental and quasi governmental agencies that received funding from the general fund. Only the administrative assistant’s contract was executed before the hiring freeze was to take effect. Accordingly, UVI had to devise a strategy to ensure that it was capable of hiring key personnel without breaking the law. The matter was not resolved before September 2011. The three program specialists began work on September 6th, 13th and 20th. A few days of their first week was devoted to training which left only a few days for them to begin work on the Center’s major objectives during the 2010-2011 grant period.

This activity receives 32% of its funding from SAFRA and 68% from the Foundation for the University of the Virgin Islands. The concept behind the development of the Center was to better coordinate the services offered students who need intrusive academic intervention in order to succeed in their chosen academic major. The Campus Advising and Tutorial Center (CATS) and the Freshman Development Seminar (FDS) are now incorporated into the Center for Student Success providing the University with the ability to address in a comprehensive manner the retention rate of UVI students in general, and through SAFRA funds, support for STEM majors in particular.

The University’s mission is to retain academically successful students through graduation over a period of five (5) years. This project addresses Vision 2012 objectives, as well as implements strategies designed to enhance both the vision, mission, and core values of the institution. One of UVI’s strengths is its commitment to institutionalizing the concept of “students first” while maintaining a strong foundation of excellence, teamwork, and collegiality. Through the Center for Student Success, the academic support services are housed under one administrative unit. The University, faculty, and students will benefit from a focused and
institutionalized approach to advising, faculty interaction, and academic support. Overall, this activity has the potential to significantly impact the University’s retention and graduation rates.

Data support the need to provide targeted assistance to STEM and Nursing majors. In the past two years, this student group has comprised over 30% of the University’s enrollment. Since this initiative began in September 2011, it is important to lay the groundwork to ensure full participation from faculty, staff, and students. Another startling statistic is the fact that the attrition rate of STEM majors seeking the B.S. degree is 25% at the end of the first year and 43% at the end of the sophomore year. Therefore, it is recommended that if this activity has been authorized to serve as a primary vehicle through which the University’s retention goals are to be met, detailed guidelines identifying the role that each stakeholder has in meeting this goal be developed as a university-wide initiative. Furthermore, it is recommended that since faculty are the driving force behind any successful retention initiative, deans, chairs, and faculty, in collaboration with the Center for Student Success, develop a school/college/department Retention Strategic Plan with measurable retention objectives and implementation strategies that will be conducted by faculty and staff, along with realistic timelines for each year of the plan. Also, it is recommended that given the negative impact that high attrition rates have on University operations, including its ability to continually employ faculty who meet the academic needs of its students, full participation of all faculty (full-time and adjunct) in the University’s retention initiatives be required.

In fall 2011, staff administered the College Student Inventory (CSI). This survey provides a profile of students’ attitudes and readiness for the college experience. The following factors are analyzed:

- Study Habits
- Intellectual Interests
- Verbal and Writing Confidence
- Desire to Finish College
- Attitude Toward Educators
- General Coping
- Sociability
- Family Emotional Support
- Opinion Tolerance
- Career Closure
- Sense of Financial Security
- Receptivity to Support Services
- Academic Assistance
- Personal Counseling
- Social Enrichment
Career Counseling

Out of 435 first year students, 163 students sat for the CSI survey. Therefore, if the institution intends to adopt this survey as a way of establishing baseline attitudes and challenges, the administration of the survey should be embedded in a required course or event in order to attain a strong profile of the UVI first-year student and that the results of the CSI be integrated into the appropriate advising/intervention/support plan for each student.

Since many first-time freshman and sophomore students need academic guidance, the concept of frontloading support services proves to be of great benefit to students’ academic performance and college survival. Putting the strongest, most student-centered personnel (staff and faculty), activities, and direct service support in place during students’ freshman and sophomore years help to establish the academic discipline needed for long-term success. An Early Warning System has been initiated to identify those students needing additional academic support at the mid-term point, each semester. It is recommended that since mid-term is often too late to adequately address the academic challenges that at-risk-students are experiencing, a two-way communication process be developed and implemented to ensure that faculty report to the Center student progress as early as the third week of class so that appropriate intervention strategies can be developed to strengthen student performance prior to midterm.

With the strategies that are being implemented through CATS and the new strategies that are in the developmental stage through the comprehensive CSS, student progress outcomes will document that freshman and sophomore students who take full advantage of the support services including academic advisement will have an excellent chance of meeting the many academic challenges posed in higher education. Therefore, it is recommended that in order to document results that reflect the inputs provided by staff through this activity, the a single objective be developed that states, “To ensure that the University’s STEM, Nursing, and Computer Science students who avail themselves of a minimum of 90% of the Center’s services prescribed in their Individual Success/Remediation Plan and who attend a minimum of 85% of the class sessions for each course for which academic support is being offered meets satisfactory academic progress by the end of the academic year”.

Students’ improved academic performance will demonstrate that consistent support services provided through the Center for Student Success, with strong support of the faculty, can bridge possible learning gaps and help to establish positive behavioral changes. The outcomes expected are a stronger academic foundation for STEM, Nursing, and Computer Science freshman and sophomore students; diminished academic deficiencies in mathematics and science; improved communication and interpersonal skills; and, stronger college survival strategies for
academic and college life success. Moreover, one of the goals of the Center is to support students’ successful completion of general education requirements within their first two years at the University. Freshman and sophomore students will be provided academic support services, that will include pre-set class schedules, required tutorials and/or supplemental instruction, and consistent academic advisement through the program’s centralized academic advisement system.

Rating: N/A

Challenges to Programmatic Accomplishments

Objectives 1.0 – 3.0 were not achieved during the 2010-2011 grant year because the personnel, space, and processes required for implementation were not all in place. Although UVI conducted a national search for a Director, none of the finalists accepted the position and an Interim from the faculty was not chosen until the last week of April for a start date of mid June, the last month of the third quarter. The administrative assistant and two program specialists, one for each campus, were hired with a start date in July 2011. Space on St. Thomas has been assigned to the activity and is expected to be ready for occupancy by December 2011. In the meantime, the activity occupies temporary space.

Program Impact

Since program implementation was delayed, program impact will be discussed in the 2011-2012 external evaluation. There were no changes in objectives or major changes in strategy. While CSS was waiting for a resolution to the hiring freeze, the Executive Director negotiated an arrangement with the Director of Human Resources to have one of its employees work part time with the Center to begin implementation of some of the tasks. This arrangement began on August 23rd with the individual working two and a half days per week. He was mainly employed in laying the groundwork for some of the processes needed to launch the operations of the Center.

CSS purchased two laptops at an average price of $1,300 each for two program specialists and both the College Student Inventory and Mid Year Student Assessment as well as the Second Year Student Assessment were purchased for $13, 500. The purpose was to use the software to identify risk factors that place students at risk of dropping or stopping out. With the information generated from these software applications, advisors can propose interventions that prevent the outcome of a drop or stop out for the majority of students.

Travel and accommodation costs in the period amounted to $39,525 that covered the Executive Director’s travel to St. Croix on two occasions for administrative purposes; and to
Denver and Chicago for workshops: for one program assistant’s travel to St. Thomas for training; and for six faculty and five staff member’s travel to Denver for the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) conference. The conference consisted of several workshops and presentations on advising and was intended to provide information about advisement for both faculty and staff advisors. With that information both faculty and staff would improve advising practices at UVI. The training provided to the program assistants was on the procedures the Center would adopt in pursuit of its objectives and also on the use of the Banner System to facilitate access to student information and job performance.

CSS utilized a consultant from Noel-Levitz organization to train select faculty from the schools and colleges in use and interpretation of data from the College Student Inventory (CSI) and the Second Year Student Assessment (SYSA) that will be administered during the 2011-2012 grant year. The training took place on September 9th and was originally planned for two days. However the impending passage of a weather system that was to pass directly over St. Thomas forced the collapsing of the two-day event into one day.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are being offered to enhance the implementation of the activity. It is recommended that:

**Recommendation 1:**
If this activity has been authorized to serve as a primary vehicle through which the University’s retention goals are to be met, detailed guidelines identifying the role that each stakeholder has in meeting this goal be developed as a university-wide initiative.

**Recommendation 2:**
Since faculty are the driving force behind any successful retention initiative, deans, chairs, and faculty, in collaboration with the Center for Student Success, develop a school/college/department Retention Strategic Plan with measurable retention objectives and implementation strategies that will be conducted by faculty and staff, along with realistic timelines for each year of the plan.

**Recommendation 3:**
Given the negative impact that high attrition rates have on University operations, including its ability to continually employ faculty who meet the academic needs of its students, full
participation of all faculty (full-time and adjunct) in the University’s retention initiatives be required.

**Recommendation 4:**
If the institution intends to adopt the CSI survey as a way of establishing baseline attitudes and challenges, the administration of the survey should be embedded in a required course or event in order to attain a strong profile of the UVI first-year student and that the results of the CSI be integrated into the appropriate advising/ intervention/support plan for each student.

**Recommendation 5:**
Since mid-term is often too late to adequately address the academic challenges that at-risk-students are experiencing, a two-way communication process be developed and implemented to ensure that faculty report to the Center student progress as early as the third week of class so that appropriate intervention strategies can be developed to strengthen student performance prior to midterm.

**Recommendation 6:**
In order to document results that reflect the inputs provided by staff through this activity, the a single objective be developed that states, “To ensure that the University’s STEM, Nursing, and CSI students who avail themselves of a minimum of 90% of the Center’s services prescribed in their Individual Success/Remediation Plan and who attend a minimum of 85% of the class sessions for each course for which academic support is being offered meets satisfactory academic progress by the end of the academic year”.

**Documents Reviewed**
Plan of Operation
Quarterly Report

**Person Interviewed**
Dr. Eustace Esdaille, Activity Director
LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL ACCESS PROGRAM

Introduction

With the primary objective of providing on-site access to university courses on the island of St. John, the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) embarked upon a phased process to create a “Learning Center”/electronic classroom environment for the residents of St. John. This funded program expands the University’s efforts to improve student access to resources, technology and educational programs, and to increase the success of current students while attracting potential students. The overall goal of the activity and project is to expand the institution’s outreach and thus its impact on the Territory.

Although the University provides campus sites on both St. Thomas and St. Croix, the only institutional presence on St. John prior to this programmatic effort was the Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station on the southeastern end of the island and a small office space from which the Cooperative Extension Service provided its services to the community. The residents and students from the island of St. John did not have the same access to higher education opportunities as the students from St. Thomas and St. Croix. Students from St. Kitts and St. Martin (an independent nation and a Dutch Overseas Protectorate, respectively), who can participate in UVI courses via videoconference, enjoyed advantages over students from St. John, which is a part of the US Virgin Islands. Committed to the University’s mission and responsibilities to prepare an educated workforce for the region, the University leadership encouraged and supported the establishment of the St. John Academic Center, and collocated it with the V.I. Small Business Development Center (a partnership program with the US Small Business Administration and the University of the Virgin Islands) and the University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Services (CES). Co-locating the Centers afforded the University opportunity to provide varied services to the Island of St. John, and to consider ways of supporting and sustaining the Center beyond Title III/SAFRA funding. Additionally, the Centers being in the same location enable information, advertising, and recruitment efforts to be conducted simultaneously, and to share costs of maintaining the location, creating and providing information and brochures and in supporting the interests and needs of the Island of St. John.

Prior to the Center’s establishment the UVI students (29, 2009; 37, 2010; 47, 2011) from St. John had few options to attend university courses. They had to either move to St Thomas or ride the ferry to get to the St. Thomas campus to receive University services and attend classes. The travel was/is not only time consuming, but also expensive and the night travel presents safety
concerns. St. John’s students travel from their homes on St. John to the ferry dock; ride the ferry; secure ground transportation to travel the nine miles from the ferry dock to the St. Thomas campus; attend their classes; and then reverse the trip back to their homes – often in the late evening. These concerns for student safety, costs of university attendance as well as concerns for customer/client satisfaction, and planning for future university student growth opportunities were all considerations that informed the decision to establish the Center.

With a focus upon increased student enrollment growth, retention, and degree attainment, the establishment of the Center is an initial effort in providing a process and tools to achieve these outcomes. The first year of the grant was spent establishing the physical presence of the Academic Center on the Island of St. John. On March 24, 2011 the University of the Virgin Islands celebrated the grand opening of the St. John Academic Center. Opening the Center was an initial step in achieving the objectives of the five-year (5) plan to improve and increase outreach services, support enrollment growth, and improve the retention of St John’s students who attend the University of the Virgin Islands, and thus demonstrates the University’s commitment to student success, and customer satisfaction.

Specific Objectives, Implementation Strategies, and Accomplishments

The objectives as written span the five years of the proposed funding. In 2010-11, however, the task of establishing the St. Johns Academic Center was the priority, and should have been written as a performance indicator. As written the activity was guided by the following objectives for the 2010-2011 grant year:

**Objective 1.0:** By September 30, 2015, UVI students residing on St. John will be able to earn at least 52 credits towards a degree by attending classes at the St. John Academic Center. During year two (the 2011-12 grant year), it will be possible for students from St. John to earn 20 credits towards a degree by attending classes at the St. John Academic Center.

**Objective 2.0:** Increase the number of St. John residents that enroll in at least one credit class by 40% by 2015. There are currently 29 enrolled students in 2010. This number will increase to 41 by 2015. During year two, the number will increase to 32.

**Objective 3.0:** Increase the retention rate of students that reside on St. John by 15% by 2015. (from 57% to 72% by 2015). The retention rate for students from the island of St. John in fall 2009 was 57%. The retention rate is defined as the percentage of first-time, full-
time, degree seeking students who return the second year. There are 13 incoming freshmen in academic year 2011.

**Status:** In Process

The objectives are written to be achieved by 2015, and do not indicate what is to be achieved each succeeding year. Therefore as relates to the objectives there is no measurement for 2010-11. It should be noted however, that by 2011 47 St. Johns’ students were enrolled. A list of tasks related to establishing the physical Center are listed in each quarterly report, and provide a measurement for activity that lists the tasks required, dates of expected completion, and the percent of accomplishment for each.

Although the objectives are written for long term attainment, the primary activity for the first year of the project was to open and operate a Learning Center on the Island of St. John that would provide classroom and learning environment spaces and access to University staff for St. John Island resident students by May 15, 2011. The tasks involved in establishing the facility and the status of each is listed in the following manner:

**Task 1:** By November 15, 2010, identify, negotiate and execute a Memorandum of Understanding and/or lease agreement to provide the physical space for a learning center on St. John. This task is 100% complete.

**Task 2:** Perform necessary build out of selected facility. This task is 100% complete.

**Task 3:** Create and implement a plan for providing secure, 24/7 access to the facility, including hiring a security firm by February 2011. This task is 100% complete. Security is being provided by the Marketplace. 24/7 service is not being implemented at this time.

**Task 4:** By January, 2011, establish a minimal level of network connectivity between the St. Thomas campus and the St. John Learning Center. This capacity should be expanded to provide sufficient capacity and security to accommodate Center needs by May 2011. This task is 100% complete.

**Task 5:** By September 2011, design and order equipment for two (2) videoconference classrooms and the Center; and an additional videoconference room on the St. Thomas campus. This task is 99% complete.
Ultimately, the purpose of the St. John Academic Center is to provide the capabilities for students to attend University classes without traveling, to improve student retention, and expand student enrollment. During the first year of the project, work began on the development strategies for operating the Center. The plan is designed to guide the Center’s growth and self-sustainability. The plan, while still in progress, was scheduled to be completed by September of 2011. The plan is to be presented to the University’s Cabinet, and relies heavily on input from the Provosts, Deans, Executive Director of the Center for Student Success and Vice-Provost for Access and Enrollment. Once approved, the plan will be implemented to impact the goals of this project. Some of the strategies covered will include:

- Educating the St. John residents on the availability of the Center
- Developing strategies to bring St. John residents into the Center
- Developing a program income model to make the Center self-sustaining
- Strategies to offer campus-based services at the Center
- Strategies to improve teaching and learning via videoconference
- Strategies to offer face-to-face offerings at the Center.

The idea of locating the Center in a “marketplace” that has “foot traffic” for both business offices as well as shopping provides visibility for the Center and encourages both shoppers and business people to inquire about the Center. Further, it provides a safe haven for late evening classes, and is visible and located near transportation. Thus the groundwork for creating an environment and facility to support recruitment, enrollment and retention of St. John Island residents has been provided through the Center.

During our site visit to the Center we met business students who were utilizing the Center for study. They shared their enthusiasm about the Center’s potential and expressed their satisfaction that the Center had been located on St. John. The evening staff we met there were enthusiastic; excited about the opportunities the Center provides, and committed to making the Center a success. The LEAP program center (now referred to as the St. John Academic Center) originally envisioned being in partnership with UVI and other St. John based government agencies appears to be better matched with its partners in the Center with other UVI entities serving St. John. The Small Business Development Center and the Cooperative Extension Center share not only the facility, but also the operation of the Center, and thus afford the University the
ability to provide a variety of services in the same facility, thus maximizing and sharing resources.

**Rating: 4.5**

**Challenges to Programmatic Accomplishments**

A great challenge to programmatic accomplishments is recognizing the establishment of the Center and the installation of technology as tasks and not the outcomes or objectives themselves. Therefore plans to establish baseline data and information about St. John’s students who attended UVI before the Center’s establishment need be kept and reported in quarterly reports so that the difference the Center makes can be determined.

Another equally important challenge is that of sustaining the Center after Title III/SAFRA funding has ended. Although the Center has begun to address operating expense by sharing Center costs with its two partners, information regarding utilization of the additional service will need to be kept along with documents indicating customer/client interests and satisfaction with Center services.

**Program Impact**

The President’s Task Force on Improving Education Quality in the USVI made several recommendations on providing training and outreach to the VI Department of Education (VIDE) faculty to improve education throughout the Territory. As the St. John Academic Center grows, it will be designated to serve as one of the sites to provide in-service training from the School of Education and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning to those who serve as teachers on St. John. Such in-service training can be provided both in person and via videoconference and parallel the proposed offerings to the VIDE faculty on St. Croix and St. Thomas. The delivery of these services through the Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning will commence during year two, and satisfies one of the concerns regarding challenges of sustaining the Center. Any program income derived from this effort will be used toward the operation of the Center to facilitate its long-term sustainability, and can be modeled for other similar activities.

State of the Art technology has been installed at the St. John Center, which may afford another opportunity for the Center. Business people on vacation on the Island of St John may be another group to be approached for utilizing the videoconferencing capabilities at the Center since three videoconference rooms were added to the St. John Academic Center during the first year of the grant.
During the summer pilot, classes that were already being video-conferenced were connected to St. John. To expand offerings, a new videoconference classroom will be added to the St. Thomas Campus. This will allow St. John students to register for classes that are not already video-conferenced, relocating those classes into a videoconference room so they can be connected to the Center. This gives the University the ability to offer ANY class from the St. John Center. Monies have been budgeted to compensate instructors for an additional credit hour to add St. John to their pre-existing videoconference classes or to move a face to face class to a videoconference class so that it can be connected to St. John. The additional compensation is required by the faculty policy manual. Although originally scheduled to be built during year-one, identification of an appropriate space for this classroom remains a challenge because classroom space for regular classes is limited.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are being offered to enhance the implementation of the activity. It is recommended that:

**Recommendation 1:**
Beginning with baseline data, annualized milestones would provide more detailed information to assess progress toward the long term objectives, and provide a sense if the long term objectives are too aggressive or not aggressive enough.

**Recommendation 2:**
Former retention of students compared to retention of UVI students who utilize the Center’s should be documented, and retention of Center students should be tracked and compared to the same information that existed prior to the Center’s establishment.

**Recommendation 3:**
Brief “satisfaction” cards and/or comment boxes be utilized at the Center with potential and current clients of the Center to determine customer satisfaction, and to document interests for potential and future course offerings and expanded services.

**Recommendation 4:**
Center usage, customer satisfaction, and inquiries about services can be used to guide future Center services.
Recommendation 5:
Course and faculty evaluations are conducted for each course offered to determine student opinion of the course, technology delivery, and instructor facilitation. This will help ensure that the technology investment is meeting student interests, needs, and satisfaction.

Recommendation 6:
Baseline data and information about St. John’s students who attended UVI before the Center’s establishment be documented and reported in quarterly reports so that the impact of the Center’s services can be determined.

Documents Reviewed
Plan of Operation
Quarterly Reports
Time and Effort forms
Budgets/fund authority

Person Interviewed
Ms. Tina Koopmans, Activity Director
ADVANCING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Introduction

Recent higher education literature indicates that learning spaces that encourage collaboration, enable the use of technology by both faculty and students, and create learner centered environments are critical elements in student success. Wireless technologies and the more recent use of social media coupled with requirements to improve retention and increase enrollment and graduation rates all dictate a change in teaching and learning pedagogy that should be reflected in the actual learning environment as well. There is an apparent need for a 21st century classroom environment reflective of needs of the students and the faculty that teach them.

The University has embarked upon a highly successful training program for faculty to provide skills to use a variety of technology in blended and distance courses along with inventorying the current classrooms at the University of the Virgin Islands. Currently, more than 80% of the faculty have attended at least one training course which provided them with information on technology use and incorporation. The University currently schedules 94 classrooms across three islands to meet its academic needs. Of these 94 classrooms, 18 (19%) have videoconference capabilities, three on St. John, eight on St. Croix and seven on St. Thomas. In addition, 31 (33%) of these rooms on both St. Thomas and St. Croix have smart classroom capabilities. The smart classrooms are equipped with some combination of projectors or monitors and computers; some may have document cameras, DVD players or other media equipment, and there are also four computer labs and four other labs. Additionally, computer labs are available but they are not scheduled for classes. Wireless networking capabilities are becoming more and more important for content delivery and student interaction. Classrooms at the University have access to low-end wireless capabilities to connect to the campus network; however as the number of wireless devices has increased the current systems have become stressed and are unable to support the additional burden. While the University has made significant strides to accommodate the learning styles of 21st century student, there are still areas that need to be improved upon to create learning environments that meet the needs of students and the faculty that teach them.

The University has embarked on several projects focused on specific facilities to reveal what types of learning environments best meet student needs by providing adequate resources and spaces for faculty to embrace their pedagogy. Recent renovations in both campus libraries and
the design and implementation of a new academic center on the island of St. John have focused learning spaces on technology, collaboration and flexibility. With the successful launch of these spaces, the gap between the renovated spaces and the non-renovated spaces is striking. The University would like to reduce this gap by outfitting and renovating the remaining classrooms to accommodate 21st century learning. The Advancing Learning Environments initiative addresses concerns about not having the technology available in all classroom spaces, especially on the main campus.

**Specific Objectives, Implementation Strategies, and Accomplishments**

The purpose of the Advancing Learning Environments Activity is to provide more inviting and collaborative learning spaces that will enhance student learning and give faculty access to equipment and spaces that will allow them to implement 21st century pedagogy. Although the project is expected to be completed over a four year period, the improved spaces may have an immediate impact on student and faculty morale and likely serve as an attraction for potential students to attend the University and take advantage of the technology and programs. This latter impact may be difficult to measure quantitatively, but can be measured in satisfaction surveys. This activity was activated during the 2011-2012 grant year and guided by the following objectives:

**Objective 1.0:** Increase the number of technology based classrooms at the University from 49 or 52% of the overall classrooms to 85 or 90% of the overall classrooms by the end of the grant period.

**Objective 2.0:** Renovate and provide necessary furnishing to provide flexible learning spaces in at least 50% or 46 of the University classroom spaces by the end of the grant period. Currently none of the University’s 94 provides seating beyond stationary lecture or tablet desk styles.

**Status:**

Although the program is in the first quarter of funding, a number of tasks have been undertaken to move the project forward. An initial inventory of rooms has been conducted to establish the baseline for the work to be done. A task force comprised of faculty, students and staff has been created to assess rooms, and to help determine the technologies needed. The task force has accepted the charge to do the following:

1. Prioritize rooms to receive Technology
2. Determine new standard for Tech rooms
3. Identify additional funding sources (as total project may cost approx. $1.2 million)
Once the information has been gathered, technologies selected, and recommendations prepared the results will be vetted through Shared Governance Committee to ensure complete “buy-in” for the improvements. As the academic and discipline-specific technologies are being determined, some experimentation with various forms of technologies such as wireless projectors, along with other room improvements which includes whiteboard paint is being piloted to help the task force decide on the technologies and room configurations best suited for the University of the Virgin Islands.

According to the schedule listed below the program is on schedule to complete its tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Oct-11</th>
<th>Nov-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design Plan</td>
<td>Assess classroom space and prioritize activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Plan</td>
<td>Determine vendors, timelines and budgets to complete design plan</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
<td>Jan-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Renovate/update at least three spaces</td>
<td>Dec-11</td>
<td>Jan-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Renovate/update six spaces, budget permitting</td>
<td>Apr-12</td>
<td>Aug-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although well written, the stated objectives are actually tasks, and thus it is recommended that they be re-written either as administrative objectives to improve a system, customer/client services, or processes, or as academic objectives that improves student learning. The improved learning centers, as indicated in the Introduction are to reflect 21st century teaching and learning to improve students’ academic success. Thus the objectives can be written as follows:

1.0 To provide technology that supports 21st century learning styles and new teaching pedagogy by increasing the number of technology based classrooms at the University from 49 or 52% of the overall classrooms to 85 or 90% of the overall classrooms by the end of the grant period.

1.1 Would include the annual expected number of classroom renovations to be completed.

Or

1.0 To provide 21st century classroom technology that supports efforts to improve student academic performance by equipping X number of classrooms annually, and measuring student academic performance prior to the technology
intervention and after the technology intervention to determine the difference.
Baseline data will be established using outcomes of the initial year pilot.

1.1 Data indicating the number of A-Cs earned will be compared before intervention to the number of A-Cs earned for the same classes after technology intervention.
1.2 Student surveys will be administered before and after technology intervention to determine course engagement and satisfaction changes.

Measurements as suggested may provide a way to help support the investment in the effort, and help demonstrate the link between technology and improved student learning/academic performance.

**Rating:** In Process

**Challenges to Programmatic Accomplishments**

A challenge to programmatic accomplishments could be keeping the task force on track to complete the inventory and to make recommendations that will be accepted by the Shared governance committee. Additionally, the Shared Governance Committee may not agree with the Task force recommendations that could delay the completion of the classroom improvements. Finally, a challenge is to demonstrate quantitatively the relationship between the classroom environment and improved student learning. A pre and post student and staff/faculty satisfaction survey will need to be conducted to help document the extent to which the those utilizing the spaces not only like them, but also utilize them, and feel they contribute to a more conducive learning environment.

Additionally, based on recent renovations to build learning environments to satisfy the needs of 21st century learners, it is anticipated that the following costs will be faced in the implementation of the total project.
The funds required to complete the overall project are estimated at $1,913,000 where only $170,000 has been initially committed through the SAFRA grant. Additional internal and external funding will need to be secured to complete the entire four-year project. The SAFRA funding has been committed for the initial year of the project.

**Program Impact**

The program is in the first quarter of the activity and as indicated in the status section of the report is on schedule to complete the tasks associated with the initial phase of the program. The impact of the proposed learning environment will be reflected in the improve image of the University, and perhaps in increased enrollment and retention of students, as the technology selected should be designed to assist the academic progress and achievement of students who attend the university. Documentation to the affect will need to be determined and utilized to demonstrate achievement of the outcomes/purpose of the improvements.
Recommendations

The following recommendations are being offered to enhance the implementation of the activity. It is recommended that:

Recommendation 1:
The objectives be re-written either as administrative objectives to improve a system, customer/client services, or processes, or as academic objectives that improve student learning.

Recommendation 2:
Additional funding be identified to complete the project.

Recommendation 3:
The Task Force prioritizes improvements in case all requested funding is not forthcoming.

Recommendation 4:
The activity director seeks senior administrative support to keep both the Task Force and the Shared Governance Committee on task to meet proposed timelines.

Documents Reviewed
Plan of Operation

Person Interviewed
Ms. Tina Koopmans, Activity Director