UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
TITLE III COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 1
Background..................................................................................................................... 1
Institutional Overview ................................................................................................. 3
STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS......................................................................................... 4
STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW..................................................................................... 6
SWOT Analysis .............................................................................................................. 6
Vision .............................................................................................................................. 8
Core Values..................................................................................................................... 8
Mission............................................................................................................................ 9
Strategic Areas of Focus ............................................................................................... 10
  Educational Excellence ............................................................................................. 10
  Institutional Improvement ......................................................................................... 10
  Financial Sustainability .............................................................................................. 10
  Community Engagement .......................................................................................... 11
TITLE III AREAS OF FOCUS ........................................................................................ 11
  General Overview ....................................................................................................... 11
  Academic Quality Goals ............................................................................................ 12
  Student Services Goals .............................................................................................. 13
  Institutional Management Goals ................................................................................ 14
  Fiscal Stability Goals .................................................................................................. 15
MONITORING AND EVALUATION ............................................................................ 16
  Expenditure Request Reviews .................................................................................... 16
  Quarterly Meetings ...................................................................................................... 17
  Quarterly Progress Reports .......................................................................................... 17
  One-on One Consultations .......................................................................................... 18
  Formal Evaluations ...................................................................................................... 18
COMMUNICATION........................................................................................................ 18
CONCLUSION................................................................................................................. 19
INTRODUCTION

The University of the Virgin Islands has partnered with the U.S. Department of Education (USED) since 1968 through the Department’s Title III, Part B—Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) program. For almost 40 years, the University of the Virgin Islands has used funding made available through this program to develop its infrastructural capacity (physical and administrative) to better serve its students and the Virgin Islands community.

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 (78% in the fall of 2005) at UVI are of African heritage. Another 7% of the students are either Hispanic or Asian/Pacific Islander. The instructional component of the University of the Virgin Islands is comprised of five academic divisions – Business, Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Nursing, and Science and Mathematics.

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

The UVI Science and Mathematics Division offers both Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts degrees: The B.S. programs are strongly concentrated in the sciences, while the B.A. programs offer a broader liberal arts emphasis. Fields of study are: computer science, applied mathematics, chemistry, marine biology and biology.

The UVI Humanities and Social Sciences Division offers courses in anthropology, English, speech communication and theater, economics, English, geography, history, journalism, political science, psychology, social work, sociology, and theater with Bachelor of Arts degrees in communication, humanities, psychology, social sciences, and social work (in association with Savannah State University).
The institution offers three masters degree programs in business administration, public administration and education. It also offers a cohort-driven Education Specialist degree, with sixteen students having received this degree in spring 2006.

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.”

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 recently approved by the UVI Board of Trustees. This program is expected to admit its first students in fall 2007. Also within the Division of Science and Mathematics, a cohort-driven Master of Arts in Math Education has been initiated. Admitting its first students in June 2006, this cohort of 9 students is expected to complete the required program of study by spring 2008. A second cohort is planned to commence in summer 2008.

**STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS**

The University of the Virgin Islands engaged in its third strategic planning process, commencing in 2004. 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 with 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
possibility of the educational needs of Hispanic students not being met at the high-school
level, and of increasing competition from mainland universities for local students.

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 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 has to use
the accreditation process 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 will be 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 will be 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.

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 AREAS OF FOCUS**

**General Overview**

During the five-year period of this development plan, the University of the Virgin Islands Title III 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’ Title III program during the five-year period encompassed by this plan is “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. This is represented in the matrix below and further explained in the sections that follow.

**VISION 2012 AREAS OF FOCUS**

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<th>VISION 2012 AREAS OF FOCUS</th>
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<td>Educational Excellence</td>
<td>Academic Quality</td>
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<td>Institutional Improvement</td>
<td>Student Services</td>
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<td>Financial Stability</td>
<td>Institutional Management</td>
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<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Fiscal Stability</td>
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In order to implement many of the strategies necessary to accomplish the goals established in VISION 2012, significant improvements to the institution’s technological and human resources are needed. The University of the Virgin Islands applied for and received a three-year grant of approximately $1.4 million from the Foundation for the University of the Virgin Islands in order to assist with individual skills enhancement and cross-functional team development of faculty and staff, along with the expansion of the institution’s technological infrastructure.

This project, nicknamed Leap Frog, is designed to improve the capacity of all UVI personnel in performing their various duties and responsibilities, while improving service to internal and external customers. The intent is for the institution to make significant strides forward (leap frogging) within the six-year time frame established by the strategic plan.

**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.
- Accredit 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.

A secondary goal of VISION 2012 toward this Title III Focus Area 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.” The Title III projects that will pursue these goals are expected to address several weaknesses and threats that were identified in the SWOT Analysis, including the existence of a limited number of academic programs; an inadequate technological infrastructure; and the raised student expectations of technology-infused instruction.

**Student Services Goals**

The student services goals of the University of the Virgin Islands are embodied in those established for two areas of focus in VISION 2012: Community Engagement and Educational Excellence. The stated goals are 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 to “become a leader and partner with the community”; and to “address social, economic,
environmental, political, educational and cultural issues impacting the US Virgin Islands through a range of higher education initiatives.”

In its efforts to achieve these goals, UVI plans to:

- Enhance student success while increasing retention and graduation rates.
- Create an engaging, student-centered environment that promotes school spirit and institutional pride.
- Enhance the quality and relevancy of programs by increasing collaboration with education, business, health, human services, art, labor and other community sectors.

In pursuing these goals, the University of the Virgin Islands will build upon the strengths of a dedicated faculty and staff and an administration committed to institutional change. Those activities pursued in achieving these goals will address several weaknesses and threats, including:

- the absence of student-centered practices;
- continuing demographic changes in the Territory; and
- decreased traditional enrollment.

**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.

Project Leap Frog, with its human resource development and infrastructural capacity improvement components, will play a pivotal role in the implementation of the goals under this focus area. The institution’s aim is to ensure that “the strategic goals and
objectives are met by enhancing the University's capacity to achieve results.” In so doing, UVI will:

- 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.
- Strengthen relationships with alumni and alumni association chapters through outreach, support and education.

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 a silo orientation to managing student and administrative processes and systems; an inadequate technological infrastructure; increased compliance requirements; greater demand for institutional accountability and outcomes; and a need for more transparency.

**Fiscal Stability Goals**

As stated earlier, the fiscal stability of the institution is one of the most strident challenges that UVI administrators face. According to VISION 2012, acquiring new revenue sources and reducing operational costs will be crucial to effectively managing institutional change and renewal. The University of the Virgin Islands will utilize funds made available through the Title III program to assist in achieving the fiscal stability goal of enhancing and diversifying the University's financial base through the development of new revenue streams and realization of cost savings. Toward that end, during the five-year grant cycle, UVI will:

- Assess markets for UVI products and services that might have the potential to provide significant new revenues.
- Meet internal and external demands, institutional goals and cost reductions by improving operating financial management systems.
- Increase annual giving targets and ensure capital campaign objectives are appropriately linked to institutional, student and academic needs.
- Establish a Title III Challenge Endowment that will augment existing annual giving and capital campaign targets.
- Increase mission-centered grant acquisitions that support and promote research and community development.

The activities developed to meet these goals will address the challenges that arise from the economic trends that have been identified in order to secure a sound financial base for the institution. These include:

- declining Territorial median income and rising unemployment;
- a declining market for fundraising;
- a decrease in support from the VI Government (a major source of funding for the University of the Virgin Islands as a public institution)

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

A variety of measures will be utilized to ensure that the programmatic and financial components of the UVI Title III 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.

**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 Title III 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 Title III 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 program 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 UVI President, Title III Coordinator, and Activity Directors. 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 Title III program.

An external evaluation will review the same processes, but will be performed later in the grant cycle and will be formally submitted to the US Department of Education. It is planned that the internal evaluation will be performed approximately midway through the five-year cycle, while the external evaluation will be completed in the final year of the cycle.

Independent contractors will be hired to perform both assessments.

COMMUNICATION

The Project Administration office will utilize a two-pronged approach toward informing the institution of the impact that the Title III program is having at the University of the Virgin Islands. Through its web site at http://www.uvi.edu/TitleIII/t3index.html, UVI students, faculty and staff (along with any
other visitors to the web site) have 24 x 7 access to information regarding the institution’s Title III program. Additionally, the Coordinator will biannually prepare information to be delivered to faculty and staff during the President’s convocation presentation. These ceremonies are held at the commencement of the fall and spring semesters each year. This information will also be included in the President’s Report to the Board of Trustees (which is also shared with the University community).

CONCLUSION

During the five-year grant cycle (October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2012), the University of the Virgin Islands will utilize the funds made available through the Title III Part B 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 Title III 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 remains committed to using this partnership with the US Department of Education to improve the academic environment for students, while strengthening the institution’s capacity to manage its administrative functions.