

Dean's Inaugural Newsletter

Academic Year 2025–2026 | Volume 1, Issue 1

Welcome to the New Academic Year

Greetings Students, Staff, and Faculty!

It is with great pride and excitement that I welcome you to the 2025–2026 academic year at the University of the Virgin Islands School of Nursing. The start of the semester and this first week of classes provide the perfect opportunity to launch our inaugural monthly newsletter. Each month, I will share updates, celebrate our accomplishments, and highlight opportunities that move us closer to our shared vision to become the number one School of Nursing in the Caribbean.

Although we are a small school, we make a big impact in the USVI, regionally, and globally. A new semester reminds us that each day offers the opportunity for a fresh start. Indeed, it is a chance to learn, grow, and move forward with renewed focus and energy. Whether you are beginning your journey with us or continuing toward your degree, remember that every day is an opportunity to take the next step toward your goals.

As we begin this academic year, let us remember that our greatest strength lies in our community, in the way we support, uplift, and challenge each other to excel. Together we will build a culture of excellence, innovation, and compassion that benefits our students, the profession of nursing, and the people we serve across the Virgin Islands and beyond.

Summer Highlights – Celebrating Our Achievements

Study Abroad in Costa Rica

Ten senior BSN students traveled with Dean Lewis to Costa Rica as part of the Global Learning Programs. They explored healthcare systems, engaged with local communities, and provided care to San Jose's homeless while they reflected on how social determinants of health shape the lives of individuals and families.





Study Abroad in Boston – Whittier Rehabilitation Hospital



Another group of ten senior BSN students traveled to Boston, MA with Professors Burks and Martin to engage in a meaningful study abroad experience at the Whittier Rehabilitation Hospital. Students engaged in immersive clinical rotations that emphasized high-acuity patient care. This student experience was made possible by the generous support of Philip Arcidi, President and CEO of Greenleaf VIII, Inc.



CREW Internship at the University of Miami

For the very first time UVI BSN students participated in the competitive University of Miami's Cardiovascular Research Empowerment Workforce (CREW) Internship.

Ms. Uchenna Ferris and **Ms. Keziah Wattley** are the first BSN students from UVI to participate in this prestigious program and they made history by excelling in their respective categories and earned prestigious awards!



Ms. Uchenna Ferris received the award for Best Research from Dr. Sonjia Kenya of the University of Miami-Miller School of Medicine, Lt. Governor Tregenza Roach and USVI CREW Program Manager Lashonette Schjang.

Ms. Keziah Wattley, Class of '26 received the Leadership Award from Dr. Sonjia Kenya of the University of Miami-Miller School of Medicine, Lt. Governor Tregenza Roach and USVI CREW Program Manager Lashonette Schjang.



🌟 Nurse Externship – Cleveland Clinic



Congratulations to ***Ms. Jasmine Roberts*** who completed a nurse externship with the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. She is the first UVI BSN student to participate in this competitive externship outside of the USVI, setting an inspiring precedent for future UVI BSN student opportunities.

Expanding Opportunities for Students and Faculty

🤝 New Partnership with NYU – “Bridging Borders for Health Equity”

We are proud to announce our Memorandum of Understanding with the New York University Rory Meyers College of Nursing. This partnership, Bridging Borders for Health Equity, will create new avenues for student and faculty exchanges, curriculum innovation, and collaborative research. Please see media coverage here: [UVI SON New Partnership](#)

Proud New Member of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)

As one of hundreds of member institutions across the nation, we are proud to be part of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) which is the leading voice for academic nursing. Our membership connects us to a national network of nursing schools committed to shaping the future of healthcare through innovation, research, and leadership.

Through this affiliation, our faculty and students benefit from enhanced academic resources, national advocacy initiatives, and a wide array of professional development opportunities that support excellence in nursing education and practice.

New Scholarship Opportunities

We are excited to announce that the School of Nursing has received new scholarship funding from ***AeroMD and the Virgin Islands Board of Nursing***. These scholarships are dedicated to supporting BSN students and will be available during the 2025–2026 academic year. Details on eligibility and application processes will be shared soon. This new funding reflects our continued commitment to securing financial support that helps our BSN students achieve their goals.

Warm New Faculty Welcome

We are delighted to welcome ***Dr. Khalilah M. McCants***, DNP, MSN, BA, BSN, RN-BC, as an Associate Professor in the School of Nursing. Dr. McCants joins us from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland where she served as an Assistant Professor in the Adult-Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist Program.



Her multifaceted career spans clinical leadership, policy, education, and research. Dr. McCants has held progressively responsible nurse leadership positions. Dr. McCants' experiences include, but are not limited to, leading bedside nursing with a foundation in Medical-Surgical nursing, policy and utilization review, and founding a nonprofit organization, Pine Cone, Inc. (PCI). Most recently, her organization, PCI, provided consultation to establish a school for Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs). She was also awarded a grant to implement her proposal, "Preventive Cancer Information (PCI)," from the Komen Foundation. Further, Dr. McCants was selected to participate in the Frontline Leadership program, where she successfully transitioned a quality

improvement project that enhanced the efficiency of utilization reviews. Additionally, Dr. McCants led a risk stratification project utilizing the Lean Six Sigma methodology, which enhanced the quality and timeliness of nurse practitioner assessments.

Dr. McCants earned her DNP and MSN from the University of Virginia, her BSN from the University of Alabama-Huntsville and her BA in Political Science from Texas Southern University.

Dr. McCants is a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated (AKA, Inc.), Jack and Jill of America, and the American Nurses Association (ANA).

Teaching to Transform School of Nursing Initiative

This year we are launching a new initiative called *Teaching to Transform*, which is designed to strengthen how we teach and how our students learn. Through this effort, faculty are working together to incorporate more interactive, inclusive, and application-based learning strategies across our courses. Our aim is to ensure that every learning experience is engaging, relevant, and helps our students develop the skills they need to excel in nursing practice and leadership. This is about building on our strengths and being intentional in how we deliver the highest quality nursing education possible.

Looking Ahead

The year ahead promises even more growth and recognition for the UVI School of Nursing. Together we will:

- Continue to foster excellence in education and practice
- Expand global learning opportunities
- Strengthen our network of academic and clinical partnerships
- Champion health equity across the Caribbean and beyond

Thank you for being part of this exciting journey. I look forward to seeing our community thrive this academic year and sharing our stories of success each month.

Warmest regards,

Dean Lisa M. Lewis

One SON. One Vision. Boundless Possibilities.