

Plan for Implementing an academic program in Agriculture at UVI

The following outlines the proposed plan for the implementation of an academic agriculture program at the University of the Virgin Islands. The proposal is based on a report and recommendations from consultant, Dr. Ian Maw.

Dr. Ian Maw was engaged as consultant in Spring, 2019. (from www.aplu.org and escop.info) Dr. Maw served as APLU (Association of Public Land Grant Universities) Vice President for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources for 15 years. Previous to that, he served for 34 years at Rutgers University's Cook College in many roles, including dean of instruction, dean of academic and student affairs, executive dean, and director of New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service. While at APLU, he had oversight for the activities of the Commission on Food, Environment, and Renewable Resources. He was instrumental in overseeing the creation of an Institute for Antimicrobial Resistance Research and Education, as actively involve in international life science and agricultural higher education organizations.

Dr. Maw had a series of preliminary telephone or Zoom meetings with Provost McKayle. He was provided with preliminary information regarding budget, previous programs, and pending MOUs with various other institutions, in preparation for an in-person visit which occurred during the week of April 8th. While in the Territory, Dr. Maw met or spoke by phone with the following:

Camille McKayle, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Kim Waddell, EPSCor Director

Bob Godfrey, AES Director

Michelle Peterson, College of Science and Mathematics

Sandra Romano, Dean College of Science and Mathematics

Louis Peterson, UVI CES

Aubrey Washington, Interim Dean, School of Business

Nick Drayton, UVI Outreach VI EPSCoR

Stafford Crossman, Assistant Dir. UVI CES

Olasee Davis, UVI CES

Francisco Depusoir, School of Business

Migdalia Roach, UVI Outreach VI EPSCoR

Sommer Sibily, St. Croix Good Food Coalition

Davis Hall, President UVI

He also participated in a community conversation with St. Croix farmers.

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Introduction

There is a clear need for the Virgin Islands to enhance food production in order to better ensure food security, as well as diversify the economic base for the Virgin Islands. To achieve this, there is a need for both research and education in the area of Agriculture, and Agribusiness. The University of the Virgin Islands is poised to take on this challenge by building on its existing strengths in research and outreach in agriculture to formalize the training and education for greater success in creating future leaders in all areas of the agriculture sector. To that end, what is outlined below lays out a plan for the development of an agriculture education program that will support existing farmers and the agribusiness community, and recruit and prepare the agriculture workforce of the future. Action Item I through Action Item III below can be implemented with current staffing. However, Action Items IV through VI will require additional staffing. The University, through legislative funding, has identified funding to support the development of the agriculture program as outlined below.

Action Item I.A and I.B [Summer, 2019]:

A. Hire new Dean/Director for the new Agriculture Unit formed from the merger of UVI's AES and CES units.

B. Place the Agriculture Academic Program Development under the newly formed Agriculture Unit resulting from the merger of the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Services.

Rationale:

Previously, UVI's Cooperative Extension Services (CES) and Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) reported to separate directors, each reporting to the Vice Provost for Research and Public Service. This structure is not uncommon among a minority of land-grant institutions. However, it is much more common to have CES, AES and academic programs reporting to a single administrative head (likely Dean or Director) who reports to the Provost, as do other Deans. This is also in keeping with recent practices at the University of the Virgin Islands, which has placed research centers within academic units (e.g. Center for Marine and Environmental Studies reporting to the Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics; the Small Business Development Center reporting to the Dean of the School of Business; the Caribbean Exploratory Research Center reporting to the Dean of the School of Nursing, etc.). The merger of the AES/CES units has initiated a search for a Dean/Director with oversight for the new unit. The search will focus on those persons who are able to lead the research and outreach units of AES and CES, as well as the implementation of an academic program. Should a person with this expertise not be identified, the search will be re-opened.

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Action Item II [Fall, 2019]:

Enhance current offerings through Cooperative Extension Services, to include continuing education short courses or series of courses leading to certificates for various audiences, possibly in collaboration with CELL

Rationale:

Many institutions offer short courses developed specifically for an identified cohort of constituents. These courses and certificates should impart new knowledge in agriculture, either based on research of UVI's AES, or other research appropriate to enhancing agriculture in the Virgin Islands. These short programs should also include courses in agribusiness, and new models for agribusiness.

Action Item III [Fall, 2019]:

Identify currently offered courses related to Agribusiness and advertise and open up for non-matriculated or matriculated students interested in Agriculture.

Rationale:

Some existing farmers or others with interest in Agriculture or Aquaculture may require specific knowledge, e.g. in Business, Business Law, Small Business Management, Concepts in Marketing, Concepts in Financial Accounting, Entrepreneurial Marketing, etc. This knowledge can be gained by taking these existing courses.

Action Item IV [Fall, 2019]:

Develop certificate programs specific to agricultural areas

Rationale:

UVI has in place a number of certificates that reside in various colleges/schools. Certificates for agriculture would likely be cross disciplinary with few new courses specific to agriculture. Certificates would be developed in a "stackable" format, meaning that you could add courses or other certificates together to lead to an Associate Degree program in Agriculture, once developed.

Action Item V [Spring 2020]:

Reinstitute an associate degree program specific to Agriculture

Rationale:

UVI once had an Associate Degree program in Agriculture. Through better engagement with the community, and the department of education, UVI would develop an appropriate 2-year degree program (possibly an associate of applied science, or an associate of science).

Action Item VI [Academic Year 2020-2021]:

Design and implement a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture to meet known and potential employment demands in the food, agriculture and natural resource systems of the Virgin Islands.

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Rationale:

There are many options for a bachelor's level program in Agriculture. Options for such a program could include:

1. A comprehensive four-year program wholly offered by UVI utilizing faculty from the College of Science and Mathematics, the School of Business, and new faculty with expertise in the agricultural disciplines to be offered;
2. a dual degree program (similar to UVI's engineering programs) with students completing the first two years at UVI and the final years at a cooperative university agriculture program at a land-grant 1890 or 1862 institution on the mainland or at another territorial institution (e.g. UPR, Guam, Tennessee State, etc.). Initial discussions have already begun with Tennessee State University, and (at a much more initial state) Iowa State University.