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Team Report to the Commission on Higher Education

University of the Virgin Islands
Dates of Evaluation: March 19-22, 2017

The Evaluation Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Section A: Team Members, Titles, and Institutional Affiliation

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Officers of the Institution at the time of the visit:

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Section C: Team Findings

I. Institutional Overview: Context and Nature of the Visit

General information about the institution, including the following:

- Type of institution: Carnegie Classification Master's Colleges & Universities - Small Programs
- Approved credential levels: Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Post-Master's Award/Cert/Diploma, Doctor's - Professional Practice (Doctor of Medicine), Doctor's - Research/Scholarship (Doctor of Philosophy in Creative Leadership for Innovation and Change)
- Campuses: St. Thomas Campus and Albert A. Sheen (St. Croix) Campus were both visited by team members
- Comprehensive Approach to self-study as part of the Collaborative Implementation Project
- Institutional priorities: the self-study focused on Strategic Plan goal 2A: "UVI will produce graduates who are academically excellent, globally sensitive, entrepreneurially focused, emotionally and spiritually balanced, and committed to serving the world."

II.   Evaluation Overview

The Accreditation Visit to the University of the Virgin Islands is done for the purpose of reaffirmation of accreditation by the Middle States Commission of Higher Education (MSCHE). UVI is part of the first cohort of Universities that belong to the Collaborative Implementation Project (CIP). This is a pilot program to test and assess the Seven Accreditation standards approved by MSCHE, thus all the members of the accreditation team became part of the pilot test and assessment as well. The universities were given fair latitude in terms of creating and moving forward models for their own self-study. UVI presented an extraordinary report: "Greatness by Design" that encompassed an integration of the standards within the ethos of the Institution and its environment. The Team recognized and commended this creation by elaborating, subtitles to each standard in this report.   The enhancement of the integration of Mission, Goals, Policies, Procedures, and Practices, especially the assessment of each segment and component of the institution is a new leap in terms of expression of integration.

- The leadership, consistency, ethical disposition, and integrity is outstanding throughout the report and the Visiting team was able to corroborate its fidelity. The quality of students learning, campus life services and scholarship merits distinction. The Faculty and Staff are equally committed to an environment of high achievements while at the same time cultivating the values of the spiritual life as expressed in the report.

- UVI's inspiring and future reaching mission along with the Seven Management Values are the stronghold of the University in every corner of its internal and external activities. UVI's mission and goals are a live testimony of assessment in action. All constituencies and their processes are subject to and part of plans to be assessed if not being currently assessed Planning takes all this assessment into consideration with a careful and documented consideration of the idiosyncrasy of the University and its components.   There are assessment and 360 evaluations planned or conducted at every level of the organization from the Board of Trustees to the President, Cabinet, Schools and Colleges faculty, and staff. Students learning assessments are under the Schools, Colleges, and Programs domain and are currently at different levels.

- The range of academic programs offered at UVI flow from the mission of the university and work to advance the vision of UVI. Academic opportunities support producing graduates who are "academically excellent, globally sensitive, entrepreneurially focused…" (PTG, 2A).

- Using the review of the self-study, the Documentation Room or Roadmap that was an extraordinary tool, and interviews with Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students, and others, we can confirm that UVI has successfully created a culture of assessment that extends across the institution.

- The strategic planning process at UVI was collaborative as evidenced by the use of a constituency-based group "the Planning Task Force" that led to the development of the current strategic plan "Pathways to Greatness". The strategic plan goals are organized around six areas of focus, appropriate for UVI and is consistent with its mission. These

areas of focus were also explicitly linked to UVI's Seven Management Values and were presented as a framework within which UVI would deliver its programs and services.

- The University has a clearly articulated, transparent, and effective governance structure. There is a strong commitment to shared governance and principled leadership which are identified as a core value.

- The Board of Trustees is engaged and providing appropriate oversight. It is proactive in improving its expertise and performance.

- In its three-day visit, the team met with every advisory body in UVI, Board of Trustees, President, Cabinet, Students in St. Thomas, St, Croix, visited the Physical facilities in St. Croix and St. Thomas, Research Centers, Faculty, and Senate members, IEAAB, TPAC and CPAC as well as with Staff Council and the Student Government Associations. The team met with more than 125 Administrative Leaders, Faculty, and Staff as evidenced in the attached list to this report. Consistently, it also interviewed more than 60 students from the different campuses and the list is also attached to the report (See Attachment I).

- The team interviewed more than 60 students in a total enrollment of nearly 2,400 and received the same answer from all groups ", UVI is the best education they could receive, world class and they would recommend it to relatives, friends and anyone who asked about UVI". The list of students who participated in the review is attached to this report.

III.   Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Standard I: Mission and Goals
(A reflection of "A Pathway to Greatness")

The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The Pathways to Greatness – Honoring Our Past, Creating Our Future- as is mentioned in the first paragraph of the Self Study, is a fitting description of the University of the Virgin Islands. The strategic plan and UVINext initiative have been the driving force of University and have provided a clear and comprehensive structure and process for implementing that structure to enhance the future of the University.

There is ample evidence of widespread participation of all the University's constituents through the multiple bodies that comprise the shared governance structures. The institutional goals or as they are referred to The Six (6) Areas of Focus (Goals), as well as, the Seven (7) Management Values, and Core Values illuminate the Pathway to Greatness and are evident in the Self Study

Report, Framework: Greatness by Design. All of these efforts are grounded in the mission and vision of UVI. UVINext and the strategic plan are at the core of the Pathways to Greatness self-study and both are grounded in assessment for continual improvement on a unit and institutional-level. It is clear that UVI "used the opportunity of the study to set sights on something that transcends our present reality and limitations".

The governing board (i.e., Board of Trustees), administration, faculty bodies, staff and students make clear that the two main Campuses support the mission and vision that links all their endeavors. Even beyond the documentation provided, the interviews with the Chairman of Board of Trustees and other board members it is evident that the Board has an extraordinary sense of pride and real involvement within the institution. The reference by many university and board members describing UVI as the "Crown Jewel" of the Virgin Islands Community constitutes the best metaphor of the shared appreciation of UVI beyond its campuses and extended operations.

The above-mentioned reference speaks to the success UVI achieved in addressing external as well as internal constituencies has developed and evolved a plan and a timeline for institutional renewal. The renewal process, approved and adopted by UVI's governing body is the roadmap for the continued evolution of UVI in its "Quest of Greatness".

It is evident that through the UVINext initiative that periodic assessment of mission and goals will ensure that UVI will make relevant and achievable progress.

STANDARD I

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

- **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:**

    o UVI has shown great maturity and thorough academic and financial logic in accomplishing this Greatness by Design report. Its accompanying documentation room, all the involvement and participation, ownership by stakeholders is to be commended.

    o This is a model of operations and reporting useful to many institutions.

    o Shared governance is not a phrase at UVI. There is ample evidence of the participation of all constituencies in the governance (roles, privileges and responsibilities) within the campuses and between them and the additional sites as well as the Islands in which they reside.

    o The emphasis on "Assessment of Pathways to Greatness" is another commendable initiative that the Committee urges the University to continue." (Fig.1, p9).

    o UVI received Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching with "Community Engagement" classification. This represents the importance of service

5

to the community as part of UVI's mission and goals. This classification is valid until 2025. The University complies with this description as demonstrated by its intricate university-community relations and its community focused programs that will lead to a School of Medicine in its future operations. Units such as: UVICELL (Community Engagement and Lifelong Learning) for Continuing Education, Research and Technology Park (RTPark), P-16 Initiatives with schools, VI Small Business Development Center and other programs it is clear the institution is fulfilling its academic mission and serving the community.

- o UVI is a strong member of the Islands' economy. An economic impact study in 2013 indicated that the University accounted for more than $83.5 million through payroll, purchasing and construction, students and visitors spending directly or indirectly throughout the territory.

- o Virgin Islands' Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (VI-EPSCoR) is one of only 26 in the US and its territories) encompasses various (NOT all) STEM efforts while developing other important research. Furthermore, the Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station (VIERS) is another way to fulfill needs and advance scholarship from the island of St. John for all the VI territory.

The Team has two Commendations for Standard I.

- • This Team commends the creation and maintenance of UVI's Documentation Roadmap, the Pathways to Greatness, the Greatness by Design and all the associated documents presented to the Team. These are live documents that will spearhead the University's initiatives in all its future accreditation processes as well as the internal dynamic assessment.

- • The team commends UVI for the continuous communication and its effectiveness through the University and its environments. Town Halls, Community involvement eg. Afternoon on the Green, Reichhold Center for the Arts concerts and other artistic performances, athletics participation, and the direct relationship between the creation of Centers (Marine, Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation) are vigorous examples of the deeply rooted university life inside and outside campuses and locations.

REQUIREMENT OF AFFILIATION #7 and 10

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirement of Affiliation #s 7 and 10.

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity
(Reveals the thoroughness of the Roadmap)

Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

<u>Summary of Evidence and Findings</u>

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The UVI demonstrates a clear commitment to academic freedom through the policies outlined in the Human Resource Manual. UVI and fosters a climate of respect by its endorsement of the Seven Management Values, the adoption of these values by its senior leadership and the workshops provided by the Center for Spirituality and Professionalism. UVI has enacted a comprehensive set of procedures to address complaints through mediation, grievance, and appeal. These processes are described in detail in the Human Resource Manual, the Faculty Policy Manual and the Student Handbook.

UVI also maintains a thorough Conflict of Interest Disclosure Policy that promotes implementation throughout the ranks, from the Board of Trustees to executive leadership, faculty, and staff. The policies provided by human resources promote fair and impartial hiring, evaluation, and promotion of its employees. Public Relations strives for truthfulness by researching and presenting multiple sides of complex issues.

Financial Aid provides UVI's students with ample information on funding sources and options through a variety of ways including a "financial awareness month" each semester. Several surveys have been conducted to identify the community's satisfaction with institutional policies, procedures and practices and the university continues to use the results from these surveys to improve.

The excellent work by UVI in this area is a model and should be shared with other universities.

STANDARD II

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

The Team has one Commendation for Standard II:

- UVI is to be commended for its adoption of: 360 performance reviews of upper level management, transparency in communication, and well documented mediation and grievance procedures.

The Team has one Suggestion for Standard II:

- The university is encouraged to continue to explore ways for comprehensive assessment of the impact of their work in ethics and integrity.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience
(Another iteration of the Pathways to Greatness through students learning)

An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence of all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional

modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The range of academic programs offered at UVI flow from the mission of the university and work to advance the vision of UVI. Academic opportunities support producing graduates who are "academically excellent, globally sensitive, entrepreneurially focused…" (PTG, 2A) This is accomplished, in part, through high impact practices including internships; practical, hands-on learning; research opportunities; employment within the university; and joint programs with other universities (e.g., Boston University, University of Florida, University of South Florida, University of South Carolina, Columbia University).

Thus, UVI education is not limited by the geographical boundaries of the Islands; rather, students expressed appreciation for being able to experience a global education that gives them experiences and connections beyond the Caribbean.

Program descriptions and curricula are clearly and consistently stated on the university web page and in the Undergraduate Catalog and Graduate Bulletin. Each program has stated learning outcomes that are assessed regularly. In addition, all courses are evaluated by students. Faculty use the results to modify courses and to reflect on teaching methods.

UVI's General Education requirements meet MSCHE expectations. They provide breadth and depth while relating to the specifics of UVI's programs. Indirect assessment results indicate improvement in students' general education skills from the first year to the senior year. The administration of the Collegiate Learning Assessment, a direct measure, demonstrates that the "value added" growth of UVI students in the skills of critical thinking, problem solving, analytic reasoning and written communication has been higher than 97-99% of other universities and colleges sampled from 2007-2014.

In interviews during the visit, faculty stated that the next goal for improvement is to systematize a method of assessing General Education *as a program.* The team endorses this goal.

Student learning experiences are designed, delivered, and assessed by faculty and other professionals who are appropriately credentialed and experienced. As the Faculty Policy Manual states, the curricula is the purview of the faculty. Curricular change tends to work from the ground up. That is, individual faculty or programs or departments initiate changes which then go to the Curriculum Committee or the Graduate Council (for graduate curricula). Substantive curricular changes (not course additions) are brought to the full faculty for approval. UVI's process makes it clear that faculty have authority over the curricula.

All constituents of the university remarked upon the value of a small community in which everyone looks out for all of the students. The small class size facilitates individualized attention and peer bonding. It is clear that the faculty is dedicated to students' success. Students report that the faculty

are accessible and respond immediately. Importantly, students appreciate the mentoring they receive from faculty whom they see as resources in themselves as well as people who can direct them to other resources.

Full time, tenure-track faculty are evaluated annually. Tenured faculty are evaluated every three years. Faculty are evaluated in three areas: scholarship of teaching, scholarship of discovery, and scholarship of service. The balance of discovery and service is established individually by each faculty member in consultation with the chair. Appropriately, non-tenure track faculty are evaluated primarily on teaching.

Faculty prepare a Faculty Development Plan for a three-year period that outlines their plans and goals. This along with the annual Record of Activities forms the basis of the evaluation. The Chair reviews the candidate's materials and makes a recommendation which is sent to the unit's Retention, Promotion, and Tenure Committee. In turn, the Committee makes a recommendation to the Dean who then makes one to the Provost. These procedures are clearly outlined in the Faculty Policy Manual.

The academic deans are having a conversation regarding establishing a uniform teaching observation template that would unify practices across academic units. They are also working on establishing clear definitions for "part-time" and "adjunct" faculty. In our interview, they mentioned some of the difficulties in following the performance review outlined above, particularly in smaller units. The deans would like to open a conversation about the procedures in the FPM and avenues for all units to be able to follow similar procedures. The team supports this direction of conversation.

UVI established a Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (2009). The Center provides essential support for online teaching and learning. It conducted a faculty training needs analysis (with an excellent return of 74 responses) which made clear what the faculty needed.   The Center provides Blackboard training, online teaching training, course syllabi template, one-on-one assistance with course design, among other activities.

As a result of UVINext, the university is moving to bring the various research Centers and Institutes under the appropriate academic unit umbrella. This serves to strengthen synergies among research projects and projects within disciplines. The students receive great educational benefits from these Centers. Under the auspices of the research Centers they have opportunities to collect primary data, to use data generated by the Centers in their senior projects. Because of the access to research through the Centers, students have been able to create and participate in national research poster sessions.

Students expressed appreciation for faculty and staff support in creating new initiatives, such as establishing a GLBT student group. They felt empowered by being able to enact change such as their successful petitioning for a physician for St. Croix campus.

STANDARD III

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

The Team has two Commendations for Standard III

- The institution is commended for opening up extraordinary academic research, service, and global opportunities for the students.

- UVI continues to add programs to meet changing student needs and to meet those of the territory of the Virgin Islands. In particular, the new and first Ph.D. program in Creative Leadership for Innovation and Change, leverages the strengths of UVI, contributes to accomplishing institutional aspirations, builds bridges with other universities, and serves a community need.

The Team has one Suggestion for Standard III:

- The team supports the graduate student's suggestion for an orientation that would acclimate students to the expectations and rigor of graduate study early on in students' careers.

REQUIREMENT OF AFFILIATION ## 9 & 13

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirement of Affiliation #s 9 and 13.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience
(We are all inspired by the Greatness by Design spirit)

Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributed to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

UVI clearly stated ethical policies and process to admit, retain and facilitate the success of students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals provide a reasonable expectation for success and are compatible with institutional mission by the following:

The UVI Admissions, Student Financial Aid, UVI Catalog websites provide a clear understanding regarding the costs associated with attending. Financial Aid Office facilitates access to scholarship funding and need-based funding for students and does a great job of listing possible scholarship opportunities on its Financial Aid website. The website provides clear expectations of the costs associated with attending UVI and providing various options to pay those costs. The on-campus interviews with the enrollment team emphasized that staff provide students and parents with ample opportunities to understand the cost of attendance and assistance with completing the FAFSA

process. Visits to area high schools, workshops, as well as Admissions recruiters reiterating for prospective students to apply early and get their financial aid application completed.

UVI clearly demonstrates a process for students who are admitted that are not adequately prepared for study, UVI provides a number of resources and services that assist these students in attaining their educational goals. The Center for Student Success is a critical component in facilitating the success of students placed in remedial courses. The CSS organizes and coordinates advisement and overall academic tracking services for students' academic, personal, and professional development. Chapter four of the self-study outlines the process. During on campus interviews, UVI team members expressed the various resources and staff available to assist students. The team conveyed that it should be noted that students utilizing CSS, the retention was greater than the overall retention rate at UVI, which was also illustrated on Table 19 of the self-study. The discussion during the interview confirmed that Summer Bridge and other college Prep programs can be credited for the downward trend of students needing to take remedial courses prior to the start of their college career. In addition, PTG:2E, was a PTG priority to integrate CSS throughout the entire institution. Team members demonstrated many collaborative efforts given towards this goal, including implementing the CSS Advisory Committee which is comprised of various campus partners.

UVI has demonstrated its commitment to enhancing retention through numerous resources. As noted in Pathways to Greatness, PTG:2B, to improve student retention and graduation rates. As stated previously, CSS interview revealed that students who utilize their services show an increase in retention coupled with the early alert system that will flag students who are in academic distress allowing time to get them back on the right path to academic success. Many other strategies were noted by the Student Affairs personnel who work with students to increase engagement and provide developmental opportunities for UVI students. Implementing an improved New Student Orientation program and the Access and Enrollment Services Plan, document emphasizing how to rethink retention and making the responsibility of the entire university community, are some steps toward enhancing retention and graduation rates.

UVI catalog and information on the Admissions website outlines process in which students have a clear understanding on the roadmap to obtaining a certificate, degree completion which leads to placement in their field of study. The university offers certificate and degree programs which are outlined in the UVI Catalog. Certificate programs are for non-matriculating students that may use these certificate programs as an entry to their education careers, as well as for degree seeking students who can use these programs as an enhancement to their field of study. In order to provide opportunities after undergraduate completion, UVI offers graduate programs which are listed in the UVI Graduate Bulletin.

UVI has established policies and procedures regarding evaluation and acceptance of transfer credits, how credit is awarded through experiential learning, prior non-academic learning, competency-based assessment and other alternative approaches to learning, this is included in the Transfer Credit Policy and the Transfer of Credits Equivalencies for Exam and Prior College Credit, which can be found on the Admissions website. During the on campus interviews, the Enrollment Management team provided the process of students transferring from other institution.

Interviews with students, one in particular expressed how seamless the process he had when he transferred from another institution to UVI. The enrollment team also elaborated on the process of students who transfer out of the institution, which is simply requesting transcripts. They noted that if students are transferring out of UVI, the major reason is that UVI is not offering their major of choice and they attend to take General Education courses.

UVI provides for policies and procedures for the safety, maintenance and appropriate release of student information and records. Information is cited on the Financial Aid website. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The information presented on the website outlines the rights of student regarding privacy. The staff in the Registrar stated that they explain the FERPA law and UVI's process during New Student Orientation and their colleagues in Student Financial Aid also assists students and parents with understanding the process and how parents can gain access to information with the student's permission. UVI has also implemented the Identification Protection Protocol in which they ask students to provide additional information and identification in order to discuss their university matters as a precaution to ensure safety of their information.

UVI athletics is transitioning from the Liga Atletica Interuniveristaria (LAI) and became a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) in 2016. The Director of Athletics has been in the position for a short period of time, but has created a five-year strategic plan that will increase the number of sports and student-athletes which overall will aid in recruitment and retention of students.

Student involvement is core to the total collegiate experience. PTG:2G established a goal of 20% increase in students participating in student organizations and 10% increase in students participating in SGA. During the interview with SGA on St. Croix, it should be noted that students living in the residence halls are more actively engaged and participating in activities and student organizations than in previous years. Students on the St. Thomas campus expressed that students are engaged in many student activities and student organizations in which they provide opportunities for their peers to participate in co-curricular activities and become "active Buccaneers." Student Affairs personnel provided examples of the initiatives they are putting in place to enhance co-curricular involvement. The Deans of Student Affairs are in the process of creating a Student Engagement Strategic Plan. Overall student discussion emphasized that UVI, specifically, Student Affairs staff works diligently to ensure they have a holistic experience.

Throughout the team visit, discussions regarding periodic assessment of its programs that support the student experience are occurring. Assessment is woven throughout the entire University and UVI has demonstrated its commitment. The UVINext initiative demonstrates a commitment in this area.

STANDARD IV

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

The Team has two Commendations for Standard IV.

- Creating the Center for Student Success and integrating it throughout the entire university PG:2E

- Engaging the Education Advisory Board (EAB) to tailor student support programs to meet needs of students and improve their success

The Team has one Suggestion for Standard IV.

- The Team supports the recommendation of UVINext to revisit the overall reporting structure of Student Affairs.

REQUIREMENT OF AFFILIATION # 8 and #10

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirement of Affiliation #s 8 and 10.

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment
(The epitome of the Pathway to Greatness)

Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

Using the review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, we can confirm that UVI has successfully created a culture of assessment that extends across the institution. For example, UVI has clearly stated educational goals at the institutional level, covering over 50 undergraduate and graduate degree/programs that are interrelated with relevant educational experiences consistent with the institution's mission. This conclusion is buttressed by the following in the Self-Study: "The University's institutional-level learning outcomes, published in the UVI Catalog, are the General Education learning goals (DR-130). Most of the UVI Associate, Baccalaureate, and Master degree programs have documented and clearly stated learning outcomes that support the University's mission (DR-173). Colleges and some schools and colleges have curricular mappings (DR-131) of course-level learning goals/outcomes/objectives linked to degree program learning outcomes." (UVI Self-Study p.90)

The degree/program goals are articulated on the UVI website, e.g., Associate of Nursing.

Student Outcomes Learning Assessment

Student Learning Outcomes are defined as the competencies of the graduates of the Associate of

Science in Nursing Program. Graduates assume the roles of provider of care, manager of care, and member within the discipline of nursing and should demonstrate:

- Critical thinking and problem-solving ability
- Effective oral and written communication
- Provision of therapeutic nursing interventions
- Effective utilization of the nursing process
- Patient/client advocacy
- Professional accountability
- Collaboration with client/family/multidisciplinary team
- Utilization of information systems
- Caring

Moreover, the Self-Study (pp. 90-94) outlines what appear to be well organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, evaluating student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals. For example, "the MBA Comprehensive Examination for systemically assessing the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program learning outcomes [proved to be an effective assessment tool]. Graduating MBA students must successfully pass the MBA Comprehensive Examination, where each Comprehensive Examination question tests the student's ability to apply the learning outcome knowledge and skill that a given MBA course subject area is designed to teach." (Self-Study p. 94)

To assess student learning outcomes, UVI has implemented a long-term assessment plan using the professional assessment standards of the accrediting organization for the professional schools; the other two schools employ "…Nichols' assessment approach, as described in DR-128. This approach is well-established in the assessment community [for its inclusion of] best practices and accepted by accrediting bodies and funding agencies. The Nichols' approach assures that degree program learning outcomes are aligned to UVI's mission and utilize meaningful measures indicative of relevant learning experiences." (Self-Study p. 90)

Even though UVI has made impressive efforts to adequately measure student learning outcomes, it nevertheless needs to fully implement its plans for the College of Liberal Arts and Social Science (CLASS), specifically the plan outlined in the Self-Study (p.91)

- Department Chairs need intensive training and expertise to lead their departments in the development of assessment tools, systematic implementation of assessment, aggregation of the data, and utilization of the data to improve student learning, retention, and graduation rates.
- The current Dean has led one external program review of the Social Work degree program. The external reviewers delivered an extensive report that provides information on ways to develop and strengthen the program.
- Two external reviews are planned for spring 2017: 1) Department of English, Humanities, and Modern Languages and 2) Department of Communication, Theater, and Visual Art. These external reviews are most important in assisting departmental leadership and faculty in the continuous assessment within each department of CLASS.

The UVI's *Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Advisory Board (IEAAB)* is the documented vehicle through which implementation of institutional assessment is being monitored. Established in 2012, when the Provost and Faculty Chair were named Co-Chairs of the IEAAB, it serves as a

means of further aligning and integrating academic and institutional assessment. The IEAAB membership (DR-154) is comprised the Cabinet, department heads, student representatives, staff representatives, and faculty representatives selected from among their respective constituency groups/schools and colleges (Self-Study p.18). The IEAAB ensures support for and the sustainability of student achievement and communicates results to university stakeholders. Additionally, with the creation of the position of Vice President of Information Services and Institutional Assessment, this individual and office are responsible for leading assessment efforts, strategic planning, and institutional research (Self-Study p.22). This area is responsible for the interconnection of assessment efforts and their alignment with institutional mission, goals, and the UVI's strategic plan. This synergistic relationship not only allows for collection and use of assessment data, but also the use of those data for planning and budgeting for academic programs and services.

Additionally, UVI has created the UVINext Task Force, which embarked on a five-year cycle for assessment, thus providing the opportunity for departments to be reviewed at least once every five years formally by the UVINext Task Force. UVINext agreed that academic departments would present their findings to the Task Force the year after each respective academic program review. "This review would also measure progress towards the achievement of specific University goals, such as PTG:6H, to increase the revenues from auxiliaries, which previously lacked consistent reporting requirements." (Self-Study p.87)

The program review procedure involves a comprehensive process, where the UVINext Task Force makes recommendations to each program pertaining to "…fit and sustainability within the framework of the strategic direction and resource capabilities of the University, and the recommendations ensuing from the Academic Program Review process. Academic quality will be assessed by the Academy's own criteria, approved by UVINext and then submitted to the Board of Trustees in a process that the Board will define through its work to become an AGB High Performing Board." (Self-Study p. 89)

Furthermore, UVI has accomplished institutional review and approval of assessment efforts by achieving accreditation from three external professional accreditation bodies and is preparing for candidacy from a fourth body. The University, accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) Baccalaureate/Graduate Degree Board of Commissioners, was awarded the School of Business (SOB) initial accreditation of its business programs. The Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) and Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs, offered within the School of Nursing, are accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). The School of Education "was awarded accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, DR-069)." This establishes that the School of Education and its programs meet rigorous standards set forth by the professional education community, according to a prepared statement from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation in May 2016. Both the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognize NCATE as a professional accrediting body for teacher preparation. The SOE's undergraduate program was granted accreditation prior to the accreditation of its Graduate Program (Self-Study p.28). The School of Medicine is preparing for candidacy for accreditation by Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), the group that accredits medical schools in the United States (including Puerto Rico) and Canada. If successful, UVI Medical School will establish the only English-Speaking medical school in the Caribbean to be accredited by LCME.

UVI has endeavored to review its assessment processes; though an indirect measure, it provided important data about faculty perceptions. "With respect to the frequency of making changes to their courses, most faculty responded that student feedback informed their decisions (83%) as well as student performances on assignments, exams, or formal assessments (90%)." (Self-Study p. 95) The results show that faculty are indeed making pedagogical and curricular changes based on student learning data.

In the area of measuring student success and achievement, the institution has engaged in two measures, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory in 2005 and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in 2003. It looks as if that UVI has used data from those efforts to strengthen learning inside and outside the classroom.

Finally, it is clear that UVI's *Pathways to Greatness* is firmly rooted in providing evidence of institutional effectiveness and assessment of all areas as a mechanism for measuring and determining how to "…further improve the learning, business, and service/operational environments." (Self-Study p. 87) These multiple approaches to evaluating the various aspects of the institution will assist the organization in continually improving as it strives to achieve its mission.

STANDARD V

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

The Team has one commendation for standard V:

- UVI should be commended for its significant process in developing assessment processes that include alignment of student learning, institutional assessment, and mechanisms to evaluate its overall assessment efforts which provide curricular and institutional improvement.

The Team has one recommendation:

- UVI, specifically College of Liberal Arts and Social Science (CLASS), develop assessment tools, systematically implement assessment, aggregate data, and utilize the data to improve student learning, retention, and graduation rates.

REQUIREMENT OF AFFILIATION # 8,9,10

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirement of Affiliation # 8,9,10.

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement
(Moving the Needle and embracing the challenges)

The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The strategic planning process at UVI was collaborative as evidenced by the use of a constituency-based group "the Planning Task Force" that led to the development of the current strategic plan "*Pathways to Greatness*". The strategic plan goals are organized around six areas of focus, appropriate for UVI and is consistent with its mission. These areas of focus were also explicitly linked to UVI's *Seven Management Values* and were presented as a framework within which UVI would deliver its programs and services.

Since the Board of Trustees approval of *Pathways to Greatness,* in 2012, UVI has engaged in a process of continuous improvement and assessment. UVI provides evidence that they have accomplished several important initiatives related to the goals of its strategic plan, some of which were:

- Adopted the initiative *UVINext,* which is a comprehensive and collaborative assessment of all academic and administrative programs and service units. The implementation of *UVINext* has resulted in a more deliberate effort to link the budgeting and the assessment processes.
- The University Budget Committee (comprised of broad constituent's representation) was charged with reviewing a proposal that integrates full budget reviews, staffing analysis, and space utilization into the budget process. According to the self-study report and confirmed during interviews with faculty and staff, this is the next step in increasing transparency and the role of shared governance in UVI's overall assessment process.
- UVI has implemented periodic communication to the Board and campus community on the progress of its strategic plan, including the results of key performance indicators.
- To address an area of focus in its strategic plan, UVI conducted a comprehensive planning for a new facilities master plan due to the addition of a number of new buildings plus a plan for the construction for a School of Medicine Simulation Center and School of Medicine Classroom Building that were beyond the scope of the current master plan.

UVI's ability to fulfill its mission and strategic goals is heavily influenced by its financial health which is driven primarily by student charges (in the form of tuition, housing, board, and fees) and government appropriations. An area of focus of its current strategic plan is financial sustainability and growth, which calls for significant investments (approximately $39.6 million) in the University to achieve the goals of the plan.

Prior to FY2011, the University enjoyed receipt of as much as 62% of its budget through the annual appropriations from the Government of the Virgin Islands. These appropriations include special

program funding, debt service, and scholarship/tuition assistance for various student programs. However, since FY2011, UVI has experienced significant fiscal challenges due to the reduction in operating appropriations ($5 million or 14%). The appropriations reduction coupled with enrollment decline have impacted the University's ability to generate adequate resources to support the key components of its mission and strategic plan.

To address these fiscal challenges, the University's Board of Trustees approved a set of prudent budget reduction guiding principles, some of which included, revenue enhancements, operational efficiencies, preserving the quality of the academic programs and the institution's commitment to its faculty and staff. According to the self-study and interviews with faculty and staff, budget reductions were decided through collaborative deliberations between the Cabinet and the University Budget Committee and that the principles of preserving the existing workforce and maintaining course offerings were strictly embraced and implemented. Majority of the budget reductions resulted from vacant positions' savings, entertainment and travel, and reductions to the transfer to plant fund.

Despite the reduction in appropriations since 2012, UVI has added a number of critical faculty positions in the areas such as, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality, Business, Green Technology, Psychology and Physics. Based on discussions with staff, as of fiscal year 2017, University's appropriations from the government of the Virgin Islands is moving close to the fiscal year 2009 level of approximately $34 million.

UVI has demonstrated that it has the technical infrastructure adequate to support its operations through its information technology plan. External assessments of the network and information technology systems were conducted prior to the development of the current technology plan. In-addition, there are budgeted allocations for software services, maintenance, equipment replacement and upgrades.

A review of the independent audited financial statements and interview with staff, confirms UVI's financial viability along with evidence of follow-up on any internal controls concerns cited in the audit's management letter.

The UVI's strategic plan has identified a number of financial measures used to assess the adequacy and efficient utilization of its resources. The review of various documents and interviews conducted have identified a number of significant accomplishments:

- Entered into a Power Purchase Agreement which will permits UVI to purchase significant portion of its energy needs from solar energy, at significant savings to the University.
- Secured a $30 million gift for the development of the medical school (the largest gift in UVI's history), that was used to collateralize the establishment of the endowment for the School of Medicine.
- Revenue enhancement through grant awards (especially in the sciences) have proved very successful for UVI despite the economic downturn. UVI's strategic plan goal of a 25% increase in federal grant awards was almost realized by the end of fiscal year 2016, with an increase of $2.1 million or 19% in federal grants & contracts since fiscal year 2013.
- Since 2010, UVI averaged $2.5M in charitable gifts annually, in-addition to securing substantial land donations in 2011 and 2014 which increased the holdings of the institution.

UVI has launched the silent phase of its $25 million capital campaign to provide support for scholarships, endowed professorships and capital fund raising.

- The total fundraising to date is $18 million or 72% of goal, and with the public phase of the campaign ready to launch in March 2017, the UVI is confident it will achieve the fundraising goal by the end of FY2019.

STANDARD VI

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

The Team has three Commendations for Standard VI:

- The creation of the University Budget Committee to ensure greater transparency and improved communication in the budget process throughout the UVI community.

- UVI's leadership and Board of Trustees should be commended for the prudent budget reduction principles instituted to address their financial challenges and for pursuing strategies to protect the academic core, faculty and staff.

- Broad-based consultation and representation of the campus community in the development of the institution's strategic plan.

The Team has one Suggestion for Standard VI:

- The team concurs with the UVI's recommendation that the University should continue to implement measures to verify that expenditures are linked to goals, and resources are utilized in the most effective, efficient, and transparent manner.

REQUIREMENT OF AFFILIATION # 8,10,11

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirement of Affiliation #s 8,10,11.

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration
(The leader and the teams in action – UVINext)

The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituents it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

<u>Summary of Evidence and Findings</u>

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

The University has a clearly articulated, transparent, and effective governance structure. There is a strong commitment to shared governance and principled leadership which are identified as a core value.

The Board of Trustees is engaged and providing appropriate oversight. It is proactive in improving its expertise and performance. Through its membership in the Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges (AGB) it received a grant in 2016 to provide training to the trustees with a goal of becoming a "High Performing Board." Through its participation in AGB, the Board and campus administration developed a risk assessment plan that served as a model for other HBCUs.

In line with the core value of principled leadership, ethical behavior appears to be an area of emphasis. The Bylaws contain a conflict of interest policy. Trustees are required to complete and submit a notarized Conflict of Interest & Disclosure Policy statement (DR-030) annually. All employees and are required to sign a conflict of interest form annually.

The University complies with document retention laws through the Document Retention, Archival and Disposal Policy (DR-034). Important documents are systematically retained in a way that protects the organization against allegations of selective document destruction; and to provide for routine disposal of outdated documents.

Corporate officers of the University (President, Provost, Vice-Presidents and Internal Auditor) are specified in the Bylaws. The President is the Chief Executive Officer, and the Vice-President for Administration and Finance is the corporate Secretary/Treasurer of the University. The Bylaws define the scope of the President's duties and the authority of the Board of Trustees to appoint, review, and remove the President.

The President provides strong, hands on leadership. The Seven Management Values are not mere slogans but rather organizing principles that permeate the organization and drive policy. Interviews with faculty, staff, and students indicated almost universal respect for the President's leadership and character. He has assembled a strong cabinet who share his values. The President and the cabinet all have appropriate credentials and are well-qualified for their positions.

The President conducts annual evaluations of the Cabinet members and approves contract renewals. Since 2011, 360-degree evaluations have been utilized to assess the effectiveness of cabinet and their compliance with the Seven Management Values. The results of these evaluations show significant improvement since their implementation in 2011. The campus community seems to view the 360 evaluations as valuable and many expressed a desire that they be extended deeper into the management structure.

Since the 2012 PRR, Student Affairs was reorganized and elevated to cabinet status, although not with a dedicated vice-president, likewise facilities and finance from both campuses were reorganized under an existing vice president with cabinet status.

The University has made a concerted effort to improve communication with the campus community. The President and the Cabinet hold periodic town hall forums to inform constituents about major issues affecting the institution. The new website has achieved its goal of generating a higher number of visits. Portal usage is up dramatically and the University has deployed a new

mobile app. The creation of TPAC, CPAC, and the University Senate in addition to the other components of the shared governance structure have significantly improved communication throughout the University. As one staff member said the expectation now is that everyone knows what is going on.

The organizational structure demonstrates the commitment to shared governance, indeed the University should be commended as an exemplar of successful shared governance. While there seem to be several governance bodies with overlapping missions and membership, the structure serves to ensure that issues do not fall through the cracks. CPAC and TPAC are unusual innovations that provide faculty and staff at both campuses with direct access to the President and have provided rapid solutions to practical problems. The structure depends on the energy and openness of the President but it seems to work for UVI. The University should also be commended for a shared approach to budget decisions through the University Budget Committee. Its recommendations seem to be honored consistently by the administration and Board.

There is some tension with the faculty over how they perceive the administration's proactive, approach in some curricular areas, such as online education and doctoral programs. This may be the byproduct of the need for more revenue generation conflicting with concerns about faculty oversight of the curriculum. Several faculty members expressed concern that the approach potentially undermines grassroots support for important initiatives.

UVINext Task Force and Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Advisory Board (IEAAB) also seem to have overlapping memberships and assessment functions. One of the goals identified during the self-study recognizes this problem:

> "Implement a streamlined process that maximizes the impacts of budgeting, planning and assessment, and fully utilizes the shared-governance framework. While much progress has been made by the University in assessment and shared governance processes, there are opportunities to enhance assessment and improve processes that strengthen the institution's operations, and improve accountability and decision-making responsibilities …"

The student body, through SGA, is appropriately represented in the various governance bodies. The staff is represented in the governance structure but there is a self-identified problem with staff participation in elections for leadership positions. "Although the causes for lack of widespread staff participation are unknown, it limits the development of discussion items and Council business because contributions over the long term are coming from the same persons." The team agrees with the Self-study's conclusion that this problem needs to be better diagnosed and addressed.

Overall, staff satisfaction is generally high except in the area of compensation. The legislatively mandated 8% salary reduction in 2011 clearly had a major financial and psychological impact but the University seems to have rebounded well. The University should be commended for attempting to address the compensation problem through flexibility, a salary study, and implementation of a new pay plan.

Assessment of personnel, procedures, and customer service has been a major point of emphasis. There has been follow through on problems identified in the assessment process. For example, in response to student dissatisfaction with customer service, the University implemented service charters for each office and the WOW! Initiative which provides staff training and recognition.

The performance evaluation process is documented in the Human Resources Manual. As mentioned above, trustees and officers undergo 360-degree evaluations. This applies to academic deans and middle managers beginning in 2016. Completion of staff evaluations was cited as a problem in the Self Study but appears to have been addressed.

STANDARD VII

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

The Team has made three Commendations for Standard VII:

- The University should be commended for its strong commitment to shared governance and ethical leadership.

- The Board of Trustees has become a model of a "high performing board".

- The University has addressed communication challenges by implementing a new website and portal while providing face to face town halls.

The Team has made three Suggestions for Standard VII:

- The Team suggests that UVI Continue to encourage staff participation in elections and leadership positions.

- The team endorses UVI's desire to "demonstrate that it values people and relationships that impact the University" by making investments to support its constituents.

- Expansion of the 360 evaluation process to all level of management to enhance overall institutional effectiveness.

REQUIREMENT OF AFFILIATION # 12 and 13

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirement of Affiliation #s 12 and 13.

Section D: Verification of Compliance

I. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

Based on a review of the self-study and accompanying materials, interviews, and the Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations, the team *affirms* that the institution continues to meet all of the *Requirements of Affiliation.*

II. Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations

The team *affirms* that the institution meets all accreditation-relevant federal regulations, which is based upon the review of the self-study report, accompanying materials, and the Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations and the evaluation visit.

Section E: Verification of Data and Student Achievement

I. Verification of Data and Self-Study Information

The team interviewed numerous UVI representatives and reviewed dozens of documents (See Attachment I).

II. Student Achievement

After interviewing institutional stakeholders, the team confirms that the institution's approach to its student achievement goals is effective, consonant with higher education expectations, and consistent with the institution's mission.

Section F: Third-Party Comments (if applicable)

Not applicable

Section G: Conclusion

The team again thanks the institution, and we hope that the institution will be open to the ideas contained in this report, all of which are being offered in the spirit of collegiality and peer review.

As a reminder, the next steps in the evaluation process are as follows:

1. The institution replies to the team report in a formal written Institutional Response addressed to the Commission.

2. The team Chair submits a Confidential Brief to the Commission, summarizing the team report and conveying the team's proposal for accreditation action.

3. The Commission's Committee on Evaluation Reports carefully reviews the institutional self-study document, the evaluation team report, the institution's formal response, and the Chair's Confidential Brief to formulate a proposed action to the Commission.

4. The full Commission, after considering information gained in the preceding steps, takes formal accreditation action and notifies the institution.