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# UVI Receives \$5.3 Million Award to Boost STEM Workforce in Virgin Islands

## NSF award boosts workforce development in marine and environmental sciences

Science / **Published On December 07, 2023 06:35 AM /**

Staff Consortium **December 07, 2023**

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**Students in the Grimes Lab at UVI sort white and black mangrove propagules in the field. Photo credit: Kristin Grimes. By. UVI**

The University of the Virgin Islands has announced its receipt of a substantial \$5.3 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The grant is earmarked for a collaborative initiative titled "Navigating Home," designed to expand the Workforce Fellows component of the ongoing NSF SEAS Islands Alliance and NSF Securing STEM Islands Pathways awards.

"Expanding STEM Opportunities," the NSF-funded project focuses on increasing workforce opportunities for recent graduates, especially those who identify as Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or other underrepresented groups in the geosciences. Targeting graduates from the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam, the program aims to strengthen local workforce capacity in marine and environmental sciences.

"Short and Long-Term Training," Navigating Home offers unique training experiences ranging from short-term (two to five months) to long-term (one to two years) job opportunities. The training is specifically tailored to equip graduates with the necessary skills for contributing effectively to the island-based marine and environmental science workforce.

Dr. Kristin Wilson Grimes, Project Lead from UVI's Center for Marine and Environmental Studies, emphasizes the program's benefits, saying, "Building Local Careers." She notes, "This program provides opportunities for Virgin Islanders to pursue careers in STEM in the U.S. Virgin Islands and builds on the strong relationships we have developed over many years with partners, like the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, who provide placements for graduates. Often these turn into full-time positions, which is the program's long-term goal."

For Virgin Islanders interested in learning more about this transformative opportunity, SEAS Islands Alliance Coordinator, Elisabeth Leerdam can be contacted at [elisabeth.leerdam@students.uvi.edu](mailto:elisabeth.leerdam@students.uvi.edu). The program is a significant step in enhancing the local talent pool in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and underlines UVI's commitment to fostering educational and career growth in the Virgin Islands.