GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Government Advances HLSCC Expansion Through Land Transfer

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The Government of The Virgin Islands is advancing the long-term expansion of H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC).

This follows Cabinet's approval of a significant land transfer to the institution, as student enrollment reaches its highest level in more than a decade.

Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Honourable Sharie B. de Castro highlighted the development during the October 28 edition of Virgin Islands Voice, where she discussed Government's continued investment in tertiary education and its commitment to strengthening the college's capacity to serve a growing student population.

The minister confirmed that the necessary administrative processes are now underway and the transfer is expected to strengthen the college's asset base and support its long-term institutional development.

According to the Government's 2027 Budget Address, HLSCC recorded 854 students in 2026, representing a 32 percent increase over five years and its highest enrolment in more than a decade.

HLSCC President, Dr. Richard Georges reinforced the significance of this achievement during the programme stating, “we have easily the biggest enrolment in the past 13 years.”

Dr. Georges explained that changes in enrolment reporting over the years have affected historical comparisons but confirmed that the current academic enrolment represents the college's largest in at least 13 years. He also indicated that projections for the 2027 academic year suggest further growth, emphasising the importance of continued investment in facilities, technology and institutional capacity.

Government's financial support has increased alongside this growth. Since 2022, HLSCC's annual subvention has risen by 38 percent, representing an additional $3.1 million, with a proposed allocation of $11,275,800 outlined in the 2027 Budget Address.

Speaking to the relationship between student enrolment and Government investment, Minister de Castro stated, “Government is matching the increase in students with the increase in funding.” The minister emphasised that the investment reflects Government's commitment to making higher education more accessible while developing the human capital required to support the Territory's long-term growth.

The college's expansion is also being supported through plans to improve its physical infrastructure, including the development of student accommodation at its Paraquita Bay campus.

In April 2026, the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, HLSCC and The Virgin Islands Recovery and Development Agency (RDA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Deed of Contribution to advance the design of proposed student dormitories.

The agreements formally initiated the design phase of the project, with the RDA responsible for overseeing procurement and project management in collaboration with the ministry and HLSCC.

The proposed dormitories are intended to improve access to tertiary education for students from the Sister Islands and, in the longer term, create opportunities for students from across the Caribbean to pursue studies in The Virgin Islands.

Speaking during Virgin Islands Voice, Minister de Castro emphasised the importance of student accommodation in expanding access to tertiary education. She said, “I believe in dormitories because I believe it will create access not only for our students from the sister islands, but the region is waiting for access to HLSCC. And housing is a huge part right now in terms of the challenge to access.”

In addition to its physical expansion, the college has strengthened its digital infrastructure and secured approval from its accrediting body to deliver education through online and other flexible modes. These developments are intended to support growing enrolment while providing students with additional ways to access tertiary education.

The Government's 2027 Budget Address identifies the land transfer, student accommodation, improved facilities and expanded academic offerings as key components of HLSCC's long-term transformation towards becoming the Territory's first public university.

Through continued investment in institutional development, academic programmes and student access, the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports remains committed to supporting HLSCC's growth as a leading institution for tertiary education and workforce development in the Virgin Islands.

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