

BY SUSAN ELLIS — AUGUST 13, 2015

Diageo commits \$150,000 to UVI

A three-year donation from Diageo USVI to the University of the Virgin Islands will provide scholarships for mathematics and science process technology students and equipment to develop a simulator and lab, officials announced Wednesday at the Research and Technical Park on St. Croix.

Diageo vice president of operations Colman Hanna said the rum distillery's grant will comprise \$25,000 for scholarships and \$25,000 towards building a simulator for three years – a total of \$150,000.

“One of the core four focus areas for our community engagement is education and workforce development. We believe the University of the Virgin Islands process technology program is an excellent source for talented employees for the territory,” Hanna said in a press release.

UVI President David Hall thanked Diageo for the commitment and said partnering with industry helps students prepare for the future. It is “the best way to move forward,” he said. Diageo has made smaller grants in the past, Hall added, but this is the most substantial gift they've given and will help expand the program.

“Diageo is investing in the present and the future,” Hall said. “Thank you for being a good corporate partner with the University of the Virgin Islands.”

According to Eric Douglas, director of the UVI process technology program, Diageo has been involved with UVI for several years, providing internships and scholarships, and has hired at least 13 graduates.

The process technology program began in 2002 in partnership with Hovensa LLC to provide workers for the oil refinery. To date there have been 115 graduates from the UVI science and mathematics program who are employed around the world.

Douglas said since the refinery closed in 2012, enrollment has dropped to the current 25 students, but he hopes the news of the Diageo grant will spark interest in the program. He pointed out that most manufacturing companies employ process technology specialists to run, repair and manage all aspects of the machinery.

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