

**UVI Research and Technology Park  
Fiscal Year 2008-09 Budget Presentation**

**Introductory Statement**

**Presented by**

**LaVerne E. Ragster, Ph.D.**

**President, University of the Virgin Islands**

**To the**

**27<sup>th</sup> Legislature Committee on Finance**

**St. Croix, US Virgin Islands**

**July 30, 2008**

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Good day, Honorable Senator Terrence Nelson, Chairman of the Finance Committee, members of the Committee (Senator Liston Davis, Vice Chair, Senator Carlton Dowe, Senator Juan Figueroa-Serville, Senator Neville James, Senator Ronald Russell, Senator James Weber), Senate President Usie Richards and other members of the 27<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

Mr. Chairman, I am LaVerne E. Ragster, President of the University of the Virgin Islands, and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Research and Technology Park (RTPark) appearing with RTPark Executive Director Mr. David Zumwalt in support of RTPark's request for an operating appropriation of \$1.4 million for FY2009.

Six years ago, the University of the Virgin Islands proposed to the Legislature the creation of a Research and Technology Park corporation to build and foster a technology sector in the Territory. The Research and Technology Park was to be structured around key technology assets in the territory, to facilitate e-commerce, the creation, management and distribution of digital content, and the development of a technology-based support system that would enable technology companies to establish globally-competitive operations in the Territory, whether those companies were attracted to come to the Virgin Islands, or were launched by local entrepreneurs. The University knew then that this undertaking would be a challenge, and that perseverance and resolve would be required. We are here today to say that that resolve has paid off, and on behalf of the University, I wish to congratulate and thank the members of the Senate for its past and continuing support.

We have succeeded in putting in place the foundation for globally-competitive e-commerce services linking technology companies to the digital marketplace. RTPark has secured connectivity, data center collocation space, and two announced strategic partner/tenants who have committed their business savvy, financial resources and \$10 million in new capital infrastructure investment to this undertaking. We are open for business.

As was the case with College of the Virgin Islands some 46 years ago, the Research and Technology Park has taken its share of knocks and criticism from those who believe that the promised results have taken too long to materialize. Most of the time, this skepticism has grown out of a lack of understanding of what it takes to develop and mobilize a Research and Technology Park. The RTPark has delivered the technology support infrastructure, structured strategic business deals, resolved issues pertaining to the application of federal tax

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law, provided material assistance to UVI's technology initiatives, and worked with other technology companies to drive and launch a technology-based economic development initiative in an island environment where constraints and limitations can be significant. The challenge is huge, but I am pleased to share how important the development of the RTPark is to the University of the Virgin Islands and to highlight some of the advances we have made over the last year.

Internet2 is a non-profit consortium which develops and deploys advanced network applications and technologies for education and high-speed data transfer purposes. It provides the US research and education community with a network that satisfies their bandwidth-intensive requirements, and furnishes a 100-gigabit network backbone to more than 210 US educational institutions, and affiliated entities. Internet2's objectives include fully exploiting the capabilities of broadband connections through the use of new-generation applications, such as collaborative applications, distributed research experiments, grid-based data analysis, social networking, telemedicine, digital libraries and virtual laboratories that are not possible with the technology underlying today's Internet.

In FY2007, UVI and RTPark executed a Memorandum of Understanding relative to Internet2. The MOU's objective is to collaborate on the implementation of Internet2 to accelerate the implementation schedule, leverage resources, facilitate economies of scale, and demonstrate the value of such collaboration for future mutual interests. To date, RTPark has provided engineering consulting for the Internet2 connection; router equipment to terminate the Internet2 circuit in RTPark's Global Crossing collocation data center on St. Croix; assistance with the bandwidth necessary to connect the data center to the UVI St. Croix campus; and equipment to complete the connection to the UVI campus network. Internet2 is important not only to UVI, but to educational institutions throughout the Virgin Islands. As we look to fully implement our Internet2 initiative in the coming year, we will also look for ways to extend its reach in the Territory's public and private educational community. None of this would be possible without the RTPark.

RTPark and UVI continue to collaborate beyond the scope of Internet2. RTPark continues to advise UVI on a variety of the University's strategic planning and technology goals. For example, we are exploring the use of space within RTPark's collocation data center at Global Crossing, for redundancy and disaster recovery. In addition, RTPark's carrier-grade routing equipment supports "peering" – a term widely used in the Internet industry – which allows our web presence and network applications, including e-mail and ERP systems, to be reachable across a variety of service providers, improving reliability. As RTPark extends and improves its own enterprise network, by virtue of our campus proximity, UVI's backbone and intercampus links will improve. This produces economies of scale, facilitates upgrades sooner, improves the IT infrastructure on which the University relies, and lowers costs. While much of this takes place behind the scenes, what our collaboration really does is enable UVI to offer better products and services to our students, our faculty and staff, and our community. Finally, as we continue to work together on the design development phase of the RTPark building project on the St. Croix campus, we envision and anticipate benefits which will arise out of the unique collaboration and transfer of intellectual capital that will be possible as RTPark begins to onboard tenants and strategic partners.

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RTPark is asking for an operating appropriation of \$1.4 million to continue the work it has begun as it moves towards financial self-sufficiency in FY2011. On behalf of the University of the Virgin Islands, I am pleased to stand before you today in support of this request. Given what has been accomplished and the importance of this economic initiative, I believe congratulations are in order for the Executive Director, his team, and all who provided the support necessary for reaching this crucial juncture. As you consider the difficult task of finalizing the 2008-09 budget and seek to secure the future of St. Croix and the Territory, I ask that you include the appropriation requested by the Research and Technology Park. Thank you.