

Written Testimony by Trinity Austria
Nominee to the Board of Trustees, University of the Virgin Islands
Committee on Rules and Judiciary
Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Date: March 27, 2025

Good morning, Senator Carla Joseph, Chair of the Committee on Rules and Judiciary, members of the Committee, and fellow Virgin Islanders:

I am honored to appear before you today as a nominee to the Board of Trustees of the University of the Virgin Islands. I extend my sincere thanks to the Honorable Governor Albert Bryan Jr. for nominating me to serve in this vital capacity, and to this Committee for your consideration.

As a UVI Buc and a lifelong Virgin Islander, I carry with me a deep appreciation for the role UVI plays in shaping the future of our people and our territory. The opportunity to contribute to its governance is both humbling and inspiring.

Allow me to share a brief overview of my background and qualifications. I graduated from St. Croix Country Day School in 2005. Like many high school seniors in the territory, I couldn't wait to leave St. Croix and move to the States. I applied to six colleges and was accepted to all of them. I had already begun envisioning my day-to-day life away when my mom hit me with what I perceived as a harsh reality at the time: they couldn't afford it, and they weren't going to co-sign any loans. I was devastated. I had worked hard to earn and maintain the merit scholarship that allowed me to attend Country Day. I took the hardest classes I could and did everything right. Life felt incredibly unfair. But little did I know, that decision—made for me—would turn out to be one of my greatest blessings.

I went on to attend the University of the Virgin Islands, initially intending to participate in the university's partnership program with Boston University's medical school. But when I realized that memorizing chemical bond structures wasn't my strength, I pivoted to engineering. I enrolled in UVI's 3/2 Engineering Program, which allowed me to study Applied Math and Applied Physics for three years at UVI, and then transfer to one of its partner institutions to complete my engineering degree over the next two years.

My three years at UVI were incredibly impactful—and frankly, some of the best years of my life. I was selected as a Thurgood Marshall Scholar two years in a row and elected Student Government Association Vice President. I participated in a Department of Energy fellowship, conducting research with UVI chemistry professor Stanley Latesky at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Washington State. I also interned at the HOVENSA Refinery as part of the Department of Labor's LIFT Program for university students and graduates.

In 2008, I transferred to the University of Florida as part of UF's inaugural UVI partner class. There, I worked as a Department Engineering Research Technician, focusing on water quality, while earning my Bachelor of Science in Environmental Engineering. As you can see, UVI quite literally laid the foundation for my future.

After graduating, I spent eight years working with Diageo USVI at its Captain Morgan Distillery on St. Croix. I pioneered and sustained the Environmental Management Program in support of the new distillery's successful launch and operations. I began as the Site Environmental Specialist, later served as the Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) Team Lead, and was eventually promoted to manage the entire EHS and Security Department. During my time at Diageo, I led strategies and managed projects that significantly improved water-use efficiency, reduced water consumption, and enhanced energy efficiency at the distillery. As a result, the site achieved the region's best environmental performance numbers two years in a row.

Because of all the opportunities UVI afforded me, giving back to the university became a priority. I did so by serving as an Adjunct Professor in the Process Engineering Program on the St. Croix campus. From 2012 to 2018, I taught several undergraduate courses, including Environmental Health and Safety and Process Equipment.

The devastating impact of the Virgin Islands' 2017 hurricanes compelled me to take a leap of faith. I left the security of my position at Diageo to co-found Tysam Tech, LLC, a USVI-based environmental engineering firm. We founded Tysam Tech with the goal of delivering engineering and environmental management services tailored to the unique needs of Caribbean-based industries, governments, and institutions. Today, Tysam Tech is the largest Virgin Islands-based environmental engineering firm, employing 25 full-time, locally based professionals—including engineers, scientists, technicians, business strategists, and subject matter experts engaged in STEM projects across the territory.

Tysam Tech actively serves more than 50 public and private sector clients in the Virgin Islands. We focus on customer-centered performance, uphold engineering ethics, and prioritize hiring and partnering with local USVI STEM talent. Through this work, I've been able to help counteract brain drain by creating opportunities for Virgin Islands professionals in technical fields—and I intend to continue doing so, both professionally and through community involvement.

I believe my professional background, educational experience, and unwavering commitment to advancing STEM in the Virgin Islands uniquely qualify me to serve on the UVI Board. I hope to enhance UVI's STEM programs by strengthening alignment with industry and academic partners and by expanding alumni engagement in ways that directly benefit students and our territory.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Respectfully,
Trinity Austria**