

PRESS RELEASE

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Ponce Health Sciences University To Inaugurate Medical Cohort In July

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Ponce Health Sciences University (PHSU) will officially inaugurate its new school of medicine with fifty (50) students in July.

The university's campus will be based at the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC) in Paraquita Bay and in Road Town at the B&F Medical Building through a partnership with HLSCC and B&F Medical.

Premier and Minister of Finance Dr. The Honourable Natalio Wheatley said many areas in the economy will benefit from the opening of the university in the Territory.

The Premier said, "This medical school also puts the VI on the path to diversifying into Edu-tourism. The convenience and lower costs that I mentioned also extends to students and potential students from the United States and nearby countries."

Premier Wheatley added that among the 50 students in the first cohort are persons from other countries who have grabbed the opportunity to study in one of the most beautiful vacation destinations in the world.

The Premier said the trend is expected to continue year after year. He added, "By living and studying among us, these students also get the benefit of experiencing and learning about our culture, our society and our history. This is a trending branch of tourism referred to as Edu-tourism, and the VI has the resources and the offerings to do well in this segment of the industry, even as we continue to hold our stake and our share in the traditional segments."

To date, the first cohort has thirty-eight students enrolled, twenty-three (22) from the United States of America, Thirteen (13) from Puerto Rico, one (1) student from the VI, and two (2) from other international destinations.

Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports Honourable Sharie de Castro in remarks spoke of the importance of the university to the Territory and the Caribbean region in the future.

Honourable de Castro said just as a healthy body requires strong circulation, a thriving Territory needs a robust, well-trained medical workforce.

The Minister for Education said, “We recognise the urgent global demand for medical professionals, and we believe the VI is uniquely positioned to play a crucial role in filling that need. By establishing this program here, we are ensuring that the flow of medical expertise is not only sustained but strengthened, benefiting the entire region.”

Honourable de Castro said the initiative is more than just about education and is about impact. She said the presence of international students coming to the VI for medical training is a prescription for economic growth as they will live here, engage with local businesses, contribute to the Territory, and enrich the local economy.

The minister added, “This is a long-term investment that extends far beyond the classroom—it bolsters our healthcare services, creates jobs, and cements the VI’s status as a hub for academic and professional excellence. And for our own people, we are ensuring that financial barriers do not stand in the way of potential.”

Honourable de Castro thank the university officials for partnering with the Ministry of Education to make two scholarships available to two VI students each year, for the first four years, with full tuition coverage, ensuring that the Territory’s home-grown talent has the opportunity to rise and serve. “This is not just a scholarship,” she said adding that it is a commitment to the future of healthcare in the Virgin Islands.

The Ponce Health Sciences University offers a four (4) year Doctor of Medicine Degree and is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, Provisional accreditation from the Accreditation Commission on Colleges of Medicine (ACCM), and a Provisional license from the Higher Education Licensing Board under the Ministry of Education in the Virgin Islands.

The first two (2) years will consist of the science and pre-clinical courses during the first two years at the VI location, followed by two (2) years of clinical rotations in major hospital systems Puerto Rico or the United States.

The School of Medicine’s student enrollment objective for the first year is fifty (50) students, then seventy-five (75) for the following year from a pool of over nine

hundred (900) applicants.

The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports continues to provide high quality educational services, as well as, to facilitate access to and participation in sports and recreation, in order to enrich the lives of all residents of these Virgin Islands.

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