GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Let’s Build VI Launched To Put Virgin Islanders At The Centre Of National Development

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The H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC), in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, today officially launched the Let's Build VI National Scholarship Programme, a landmark national initiative designed to equip Virgin Islanders with the skills, qualifications, and confidence needed to build, serve, and sustain the future of the Territory.

The programme was unveiled during a ceremony held at HLSCC's Paraquita Bay Main Campus and marks a significant expansion of the Territory's investment in skills-based education. Let's Build VI offers 81 fully funded scholarships in its first phase, creating structured pathways into three core sectors that drive the Virgin Islands economy: marine, construction trades, and hospitality.

Funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports and delivered throug h HLSCC, the programme targets unskilled and underemployed Virgin Islanders and provides access to

industry-recognised certification, hands-on training, and employment-focused learning. Scholarships are distributed equitably across the Territory, with nine opportunities per district, comprising three scholarships in each pathway.

Providing an overview of the initiative, HLSCC President Dr Richard Georges describ ed Let's Build VI as both a milestone for the College and a continuation of a broader national vision. "Let's Build VI is a very special initiative," Dr Georges said. "It is meant to equip Virgin Islanders to take up their rightful position in the sectors that drive our local economy; specifically the marine sector, the construction industry, and the hospitality sector. It is a momentous occasion to see 81 fully funded scholarships being made available to our people."

Dr Georges noted that the programme builds on the success of Let's Teach VI, laun ched two years ago to expand Virgin Islander participation in the education system. "That initiative has been successful in bringing more Virgin Islanders into teaching, and today we are extending that same

philosophy to marine, construction, and hospitality," he said. "As an alumnus of this institution, I am incredibly proud to see HLSCC fulfilling its mission in such a meaningful way." He also expressed appreciation to the

Minister for Education for providing the vision and funding that made the programme possible.

In her remarks, Honourable Sharie B. de Castro, Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, framed the launch as a defining moment for the Territory.
“Today is not just a launch,” the Minister said. “Today is a declaration that the future of the Virgin Islands will not be built by chance. It will be built by people, and more importantly, by our people.”

The Minister explained that while Let’s Teach VI addressed the need for Virgin Islanders in classrooms, Let’s Build VI represents a broader strategy to transform the workforce. “If we truly want to transform this Territory, we must not only teach. We must build,” she said. “Let’s Build VI is not just a scholarship programme. It is not just training. It is a national strategy—a deliberate, focused effort to close workforce gaps, strengthen our capacity, and position Virgin Islanders at the centre of our development.”

Honourable de Castro highlighted the sectors targeted by the programme, noting that too often opportunities in marine, construction, and hospitality have been filled from outside the Territory. “That must change. And today begins that change,” she said. “This programme is about dignity, ownership, and leadership. It ensures that when development happens in the Virgin Islands, our people are not watching it… we are leading it.”

Through Let’s Build VI, participants in the Marine Pathway enrol in HLSCC’s established Marine Professional Training (MPT) Level 1 Programme, gaining essential safety, seamanship, navigation, and service skills required for entry-level roles in the marine and yachting industries.

The Construction Trades Pathway begins with the NCCER Core Curriculum, providing foundational training before advancing participants into trade specialisations aligned with workforce demand, such as electrical, carpentry, and plumbing. The Hospitality Pathway offers internationally recognised training through the Les

Roches Maître D Certificate Programme, delivered online and designed to strengthen service excellence across restaurants, hotels, resorts, and the wider tourism sector.

Eligibility for the Let's Build VI National Scholarship Programme is open to BVIslanders or Belongers aged 17 and older who possess a high school diploma, GED certificate, or demonstrable literacy and numeracy skills. Both unemployed and underemployed individuals are encouraged to apply, with written parental or guardian consent required for applicants under 18 years of age. All shortlisted applicants will be required to undergo a personal interview, with final selections determined by a Special Select Committee.

Applications for the Let's Build VI National Scholarship Programme are now open, with the deadline for Fall 2026 set for Friday, 29 April 2026 at 5:00 p.m. Interested individuals may submit their applications online, via email, or in person. Applications can be completed online at letsbuildvi.hlscc.edu.vg, submitted by email to letsbuildvi@hlscc.edu.vg, or delivered in person to the Department of Admissions and Enrolment Management, Academic Services Building, Paraquita Bay Main Campus. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to participate in interviews, whi ch are scheduled to commence in June 2026, as part of the final selection process.

The launch ceremony also featured engagement from one of the adjunct lecturers, Mr. Koufi Modeste, who shared insights into the impact of skills-based education and the opportunities it creates for Virgin Islanders.

As the ceremony concluded, the Minister offered a call to action to prospective applicants.
"Come serious. Come committed. Come ready to work," she urged. "What you do with this opportunity will determine not only your future, but the future of the Virgin Islands."

Further details and application materials are available at letsbuildvi.hlscc.edu.vg.

PHOTO CAPTION:

1. President of HLSCC, Dr. Richard Georges delivering the programme overview during the Let’s

   Build VI National Scholarship Programme Launch Ceremony. **(Photo credit: Bria Smith/HLSCC)**

2. Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Hon. Sharie B. de Castro delivering remarks during the Let’s Build VI National Scholarship Programme Launch Ceremony. **(Photo credit: Bria Smith/HLSCC)**
3. Prospective applicants collect and submit Let’s Build VI National Scholarship Programme application forms immediately following the official launch ceremony, arriving prepared with
   their required documentation to register in person for the fully funded skills-training initiative. **(Photo credit: Bria Smith/HLSCC)**
4. HLSCC Adjunct Lecturer Koufi Modeste shares insights on the impact of skills-based education
   and the career opportunities created through practical training during the Let’ s Build VI National Scholarship Programme launch ceremony. **(Photo credit: Bria Smith/HLSCC)**
5. Prospective applicants collect and submit Let’s Build VI National Scholarship Programme application forms immediately following the official launch ceremony, arriving prepared with
   their required documentation to register in person for the fully funded skills-training initiative. **(Photo credit: Bria Smith/HLSCC)**

Gallery







Additional Documents or Media

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