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**Certification Statement:**

**Compliance with MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation**

**[For use by institutions addressing the Accreditation Standards in *Characteristics of Excellence: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation (12<sup>th</sup> ed., 2006)* Effective August 1, 2015]**

University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez

(Name of Institution)

is seeking (*Check one*):  
 Initial Accreditation  
 Reaffirmation of Accreditation through Self Study  
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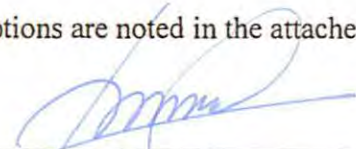
An institution seeking **initial accreditation** or **reaffirmation of accreditation** must affirm that it meets or continues to meet established MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation.

*This signed certification statement must be attached to the executive summary of the institution's self-study or periodic review report.*

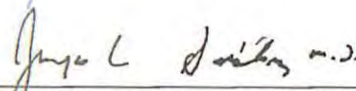
The undersigned hereby certify that the institution meets Requirements of Affiliation of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education as published in *Characteristics of Excellence: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation (12<sup>th</sup> ed., 2006)*.

If it is not possible to certify compliance with all requirements specified herein, the institution must attach specific details in a separate memorandum.

Exceptions are noted in the attached memorandum (*Check if applicable*)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. John Fernández VanCleve (Chief Executive Officer)

February 19, 2016  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Jorge Sanchez (Chair, Board of Trustees)

2/19/16  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)



# **University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM) Final Self- Study Report**

**Submitted to:**

**The Council of Higher Education**

**Middle States Commission on  
Higher Education**

**3624 Market Street**

**Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680**

02/11/2016



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### List of Abbreviation

ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology	NCATE	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (CAEP)
ACS	American Chemistry Society	NLNAC	National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission
ARV	Office of Vocational Administration	NSSE	National Survey of Student Engagement
BSBA	Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	OAACI	Office of Accreditation, Assessment and Continuous Improvement
BWC	Bilingual Writing Center	OIIP	Office of Institutional Research and Planning
CAEP	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation	OMCA	Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment
CAP	Corrective Action Plan	PEO	Program Educational Objectives
CAS	College of Agricultural Sciences	PPMES	Teacher Preparation Program for Secondary Education
CBA	College of Business Administration	PuTTY	Online Course Registration System for Students
CDT	Diagnostics and Treatment Center	RDD	Reglamento de Disposición de Documentos
CEDIBI	Center for the Development of Library Research and Information Literacy	RUMNET	Recinto Universitario de Mayaguez Network
CEEB	College Entrance Examination Board	SA	Academic Senate
CEP	Center for Professional Development	SEA	Agricultural Extension Service
CEPR	Consejo de Educación Superior de Puerto Rico	SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
CID	<i>Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo</i>	STPP	Secondary Teacher Preparation Program
CIEI	Continuous Improvement Educational Initiative	SWOT	Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis
CIVIS	Center for Resources in General Education	UNIV	Freshman Orientation Course
COE	Cuestionario de Opinión Estudiantil	UPR	University of Puerto Rico
CoE	College of Engineering	UPR-GB	Governing Board - University of Puerto Rico
CTI	Centro de Tecnología de Información	UPR-BT	University of Puerto Rico - Board of Trustees
DCPS	Department of Counseling and Psychological Services	WID	Writing in the Disciplines
DECEP	Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies		
EEA	Agricultural Experiment Station		
FCS	Family and Consumer Services		
GE	General Education		
GE3	Global Engineering Education Exchange		
GEA	General Education Assessment Plan		
GEP	General Education Philosophy		
IACS	International Association of Counseling Services		
IGEC	Institutional General Education Committee		
IGS	General Application Index		
ISEP	International Student Education Exchange Program		
JA	Administrative Board		
KPI	Key Performance Indicator		
LAI	Intercollegiate Athletic League		
MuSA	Museo de Arte y Senado Académico		
NASPE	National Association of Sports and Physical Education		

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## CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

The University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM) has been a unique institution since 1911. Part of its uniqueness rests in our different academic programs, our numerous accreditations, the quality of our students, our community projects and campus facilities, and our deep sense of loyalty and collegiality. Our most recent established programs include the BS in Computer Science and Engineering, BS in Software Engineering, MS in Material Sciences and Engineering, MS and Ph.D. in Bioengineering, Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering, Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering, and the MS in Precollege Mathematical Education. Academically, UPRM is growing and, together with our committed faculty, administration, non-teaching personnel, and students, it continues to stand strong.

In the last ten years, UPRM has maintained its accreditation status in Engineering (ABET), Nursing (NLNAC), Chemistry (ACS), and the Teacher preparation program (NCATE/CAEP). Currently, the College of Business Administration is preparing its accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Also, we are now in the process of reaccreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).

In order to continue our accreditation status at our campus, in September 2014, the Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment (OMCA) reopened its operations. OMCA emphasizes continuous improvement at all the levels of the institution. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIIP) continues to ensure that the Institutional Strategic Plan is enforced in all decision-making processes at UPRM. With the help of both offices, the UPRM continues to value the outcomes-based decisions, which are fundamental, not only to accreditation agencies, but to the entire academic community. The application of strategic plans and continuous improvement efforts encompass the community and demonstrate the importance we give to our academic environment and our stakeholders: the administration, faculty, non-teaching personnel, students, and the Mayagüez community at large. The ultimate aim is to fortify the institutionalized process and be equipped for all programs and the institutional accreditation.

UPRM is undeniably recognized for the quality of its students and graduates. The institution continues to be the top engineering graduating Hispanic school in the US, especially amongst female students. Significant businesses and industries continue to recognize and partake in the Fall Job Fair interviewing and recruiting students for internships and permanent positions in Puerto Rico (PR) and the United States. In addition, UPRM actively sponsors undergraduate and graduate students and provides them with research assistantships to enhance their investigation skills and exemplify the institution at different expositions within and outside of PR.

Community projects and student endeavors are also key at UPRM, and students participate energetically in many student organizations. Students also participate in diverse community



projects which are tied to their academic course offerings. Projects such as *Siempre Vivas* and *Centro Universitario para el Acceso* (CUA) support high school students and encourage them to study once they reach higher education. Furthermore, our students are active in competitive sports, have strong representation in the intercollegiate competitions, and are energized by our alumni's solid support for their athletic and academic excellence.

The UPRM campus has grown in the last ten years. The Celis Building was fully renovated and now houses key offices that offer valuable student services. The old business administration building is now renovated and houses offices and facilities (i.e., lounge, kitchen, and lobby) for faculty from all our colleges. The Food Technology Program has new facilities for teaching, research, and product development in its Agro-industrial Innovation and Development Center. In addition, the construction of our museum, MuSA, was successfully completed, and its inauguration presented a rich exhibition of artworks that are on display within its walls. Overall, our institution's facilities have expanded despite the ongoing financial constraints.

Although financial resources have decreased, maintaining the quality of education for our students is priority at UPRM. Within our means, we have been able to recruit top quality faculty, preserve our equipment, and purchase technology for our classrooms. Also, we sponsor alumni activities to support student activities and our institution. Overall, we have dealt with few resources; yet, our students remain top priority.

The UPRM Self Study Report is the result of an institutional participatory process. The report indicates that UPRM meets all of the elements within the MSCHE's Standards of Excellence. Obviously, there are areas that need advancement; and the recommendations the report presents are being addressed to enhance our institution and encompass the institutional community in a culture of continuous improvement.

This is just a glimpse of UPRM and its resilience during the last ten years. The future holds critical financial issues; yet, the faculty, staff, and students have been and will continue to be the fortitude and vigor of our institution. Our Self Study Report serves to advance and strengthen UPRM in spite of the limitations we face. UPRM is an extraordinary university within the Caribbean and we will continue to be the exceptional *Antes, Ahora, y Siempre* – COLEGIO!



John Fernández Van Cleve, Ph.D.  
Chancellor

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this self-study is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of this institution and determine the necessary measures for upholding our academic excellence and serving our constituents optimally. UPRM's main constituents are students, parents, faculty, administrative personnel, employees, alumni, employers, and the external community. While any impending accreditation visit by an external agency will serve as a catalyst to drive institutional assessment efforts, our ultimate purpose is to internalize this process to maintain a culture of continuous improvement with our constituents.

### Specific Goals and Objectives

The specific objectives of the Self-Study are:

1. Implementing and assessing the recent comprehensive institutional strategic plan;
2. Implementing a comprehensive outcomes assessment plan including student learning outcomes;
3. Educating the UPRM community about our mission and objectives;
4. Reviewing and acting upon student learning outcomes results to benefit our students as well as the institution at large;
5. Improving campus-wide awareness of the benefits of continuous self-evaluation, and setting in motion the institutionalization of an outcomes assessment program to help in better decision-making and fulfillment of the needs of our constituents;
6. Determining where we stand as UPRM and moving forward towards becoming the institution of preference by the Puerto Rico citizens.

### Self-Study Model Selection

The UPRM accepts that all aspects of our institution need to be assessed; therefore, the Steering Committee determined that the self-evaluation process would be most meaningful utilizing the Comprehensive Model. This is listed as one of the major models for self-study in *Self Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report* (2012). The rationale for selecting this model can be traced to the Final April 2005 MSCHE Report, which was submitted to UPRM on April 5, 2005. Although the report states that all 14 standards were met, many suggestions were offered. Focus on the comprehensive model will allow UPRM to verify where we stand in terms of the suggestions, weaknesses, and strengths.

### Outcomes Assessment – Prior Experience

Many of our programs have undergone or are currently undergoing accreditation. Examples of these include the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE/CAEP), the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC), and the American Chemical Society (ACS).

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) publication, *Designs for Excellence – Handbook for Institutional Self-Study* mentions avoiding duplication and encouraging the use of recent research, reports, and evaluations. In order to replicate this experience on a campus-wide scale, we have drawn from the recent experiences of the accredited programs mentioned above.

### **Formation of the present UPRM-MSCHE Institutional Steering Team**

On October 30, 2012, after much insistence by a former Steering Committee member, the Chancellor of UPRM, Dr. Jorge Rivera Santos, called a meeting to discuss potential members for the UPRM Institutional Steering Team. The members at this meeting were the Chancellor, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, the Director of the Institutional Research and Planning Office (OIIP), and the Director of Graduate Studies. The Chancellor appointed Dr. Betsy Morales as the MSCHE Steering Committee Coordinator and requested that she recruit Coordinators for each standard. Given Dr. Morales' experience with the 2005 MSCHE reaccreditation, Dr. Morales invited key members who had previous experience in accreditation or assessment.

In preparation for the MSCHE visit during Spring 2016, the Team, with representation from all colleges, was charged with developing the Self-Study Design for the Self-Study Report. The Steering Team consist of multiple Task Force Coordinators to address the fourteen (14) standards as outlined in *The Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*. They were responsible for developing relevant Charge Questions to assist in the self-study process. This required that a mechanism for the campus-wide self-study be developed to assess all 14 standards. During the summer, proper data collection instruments (questionnaires and surveys) were developed, some of which were administered during the first semester of the 2013-2014 academic year (first year students, second/third, fourth/fifth students, directors, and faculty members). During the second semester of 2013-2014, the remaining instruments were distributed (non-teaching personnel, deans, chancellor).

### **Commitment to Change – Continuous Improvement and Assessment**

In September 2014, the current Chancellor, Dr. John Fernández Van Cleve, reactivated the Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment (OMCA) and ascribed it to the Chancellor's Office. The Chancellor appointed a director and allocated funds for its operation. Currently, the office has a secretary and an office at the Celis Building. Although the space is insufficient for the storage of the MSCHE documents and for holding meetings, the Chancellor has committed to moving OMCA into a larger space. The OIIP, which presently drives the 2012-2022 Strategic Plan, devotes a great deal of time and energy analyzing the academic environment to determine UPRM's future strategies. The Implementation Plan, which makes the Strategic Plan measurable and operational, was approved in June 2015.

### **Institutional Commitment for Continuous Assessment**

As part of the self-study process, the UPRM-MSCHE Steering Team relied on data provided in thirty-eight custom-designed questionnaires and surveys. All closed questionnaire results were summarized on pivot tables and made available to the committee members to utilize when writing their reports. The main closed-question surveys were for the faculty, non-teaching personnel, and students. Three surveys were distributed to the students to assess their academic experiences, institutional experiences, and frequency of use and level of satisfaction with university services. All surveys were tabulated and placed on Google Drive. In addition, all open-ended questionnaires were downloaded as PDF files and placed on Google Drive for the committee's use. The instruments were distributed to the UPRM community, including the administrative board, academic and administrative deans, and academic and administrative directors, among others. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was also administered to first year and senior students.

## **Strategic Plan – Development and Implementation Progress across the Institution**

The work associated with updating the Mayagüez Campus Strategic Plan began during the first semester of the 2010-2011 academic year. The 2003-2009 Strategic Plan was about to expire in December 2009 and therefore, an extension to the term of this Strategic Plan was placed into effect, and a new upgrade process was proposed by phases to engage all sectors of the university community. For this purpose, in November 2010, the Administrative Board of the Mayagüez Campus approved the extension of this Strategic Plan until December 31, 2011 (certification 10-11-034). This certification stated that updates to the Strategic Plan would be completed by November 30, 2011, and be effective January 2, 2012, which was successfully accomplished.

The OIIP facilitated the update process by supporting institutional planning with the colleges and deans. In October 2010, the proposal for updating the UPRM Strategic Plan was formally presented in a staff meeting to the Chancellor, the Chancellor's Assistants, the Deans, and the Director of Research and Development. The proposal emphasized the strategic plan's function as an indispensable monitoring tool to guarantee alignment amongst all units of the system. It also stressed this tool's significance in supporting decision-making processes and facilitating the allocation of resources. The Institutional Planning Committee was composed of personnel within the Chancellor's staff.

The UPRM Strategic Plan selected the following features, all of which are hallmarks of a good strategic plan:

- Defined objectives that provide direction and tools to meet the institution's mission so the Campus can consistently progress towards achieving its Vision;
- Simple, achievable and pragmatic objectives;
- Viable objectives, considering available resources;
- Defined measurable institutional metrics to gauge the progress of the plan and the institution;
- A useful plan as a monitoring tool in the decision-making process;
- A plan that provides direction to each of the constituents.

The process for updating the strategic plan integrated active participation from the university community. This raised their awareness of its importance in decision-making processes and reaffirmed the community's commitment to monitoring institutional metrics and guaranteeing that appropriate actions are taken to achieve the defined objectives.

Currently, all the strategic plans at the level of the academic deanships are approved. All the offices ascribed to the Dean of Administration have strategic plans and a recent assessment cycle was completed by each unit. The other departments and units are currently working on updating their strategic plans and beginning their assessment cycles.

### **UPRM-MSCHE Steering Team's Institutional Recommendations**

The UPRM complies with all of the MSCHE Standards of Excellence and, in the spirit of continuous improvement, the UPRM-MSCHE has highlighted nine recommendations presented below. It is important to emphasize that these recommendations were discussed by all committee members and agreed upon; yet, each individual report includes separate recommendations, suggestions, and commendations.

1. The Chancellor and the UPRM Administrative Board should endeavor to ensure that UPRM receives a fair share of the UPR General Fund. Budget allocation amongst campuses should factor in student enrollment, program costs, and institutional fiscal responsibility.
2. UPRM should develop a procedure that, in times of turnovers in leadership, precludes abrupt, sudden, and disruptive institutional changes. A gradual transition period that better assures the stability of the day-to-day activities and the continuity of the mission-critical projects and strategic initiatives is desirable.
3. UPRM should improve the periodical review of the effectiveness of its deans, directors, supervisors, and administrators to carry out their functions to the institution and make them accountable for their performance.
4. Assessment and more data analysis should drive both academic and administrative decision-making processes. Although this is currently being done to some extent, UPRM may strengthen its assessment culture by:
  - Further encouraging the participation of the UPRM community;
  - Communicating the results and actions taken as a consequence of assessment efforts to the UPRM constituents and stakeholders in a timely fashion;
  - Allocating funds and resources in alignment to the priorities identified as part of the assessment process;
  - Hiring institutional researchers under the direction of OMCA;
  - Ensuring that general education, integrity, and alumni performance are included as part of the institutional assessment process.
5. UPRM should diversify and increase sources of external funds and redefine policies to ensure that these funds remain for its exclusive use.
6. UPRM should increase and secure resource allocation for the faculty's professional development and growth.
7. UPRM should ensure that the admissions process takes into account the availability of institutional resources, including defining and adopting an assessment plan that more accurately reflects its capacity for enrolling students.
8. The Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs should consider developing a procedure that guarantees that departmental course offerings are properly planned based on projected demand, and that courses are available to all students throughout the registration process.
9. The institution should evaluate the causes of the high negative results on the non-teaching personnel survey regarding environment and administrative procedures, and initiate an effort to remedy or improve this situation.

### **Feedback from the UPR Community on the Self-Study and Institutional Recommendations**

The Chancellor sent a communication on October 27, 2015 to the UPRM community requesting that they read the report and submit their comments and suggestions. Several comments were received and the UPRM-MSCHE met on Friday, November 20, 2015 to attend to their feedback. A message was sent to each community member acknowledging their comments and informing them that their observations were appropriately addressed by the committee (See Appendix DD).

## UPRM INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

This section highlights important UPRM data regarding students, faculty, and institutional resources.

### UPRM Students

During the 2005-06 to 2009-10 academic years, UPRM had a relatively constant number of admissions (about 2,385 students per year). During that period, the UPR system had annual budgets with increases that closely matched the inflation rates of PR. In the 2010-11 to 2013-14 academic years, admission policies were revised to compensate for the sharp decreases in financial resources and assure that students continued to receive quality services. During these years, admissions were reduced to about 1900 students annually. In the 2010-11 academic year,

UPRM experienced a significant reduction in admission applications due, in part, to the student unrest from May- June 2010 and the increase in tuition charges. From 2013-2015, the admission policy was revised and the number of incoming freshmen gradually increased without a significant increase in financial resources. Figure 1 shows the number of first year students from 2005 to 2015.

Figure 2 shows the total number of enrolled students per year and their distribution by College. Table 1 shows the graduation rates from 1997 to 2007 and Figure 3 shows student retention rates for sophomores, juniors, and seniors entering the same year.

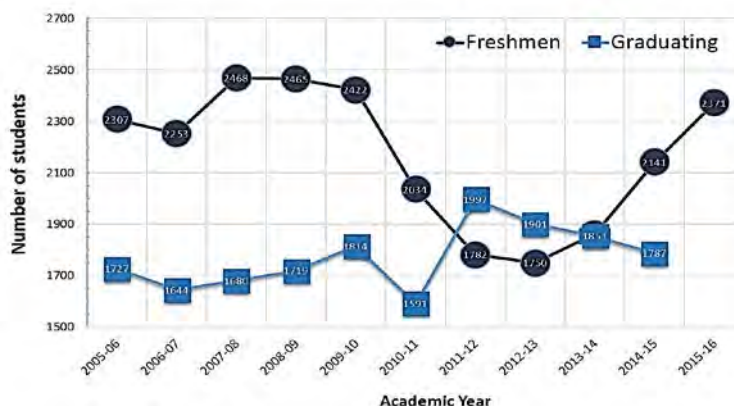


Figure 1: Number of first year students and graduating students 2005-2015

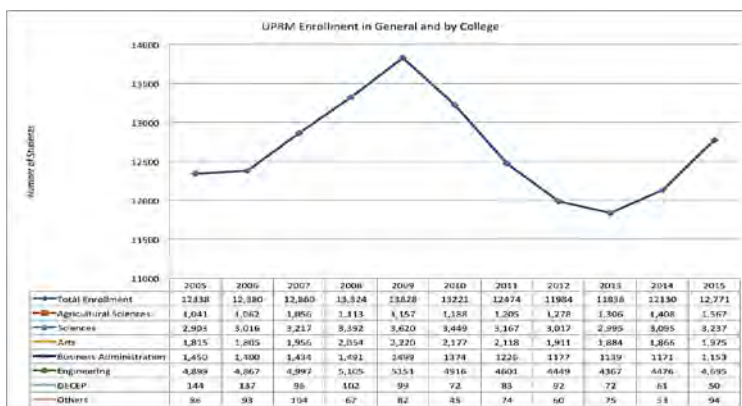


Figure 2: Enrollment per year and by College

Table 1: Graduation Rates

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Percentage	53%	54%	53%	50%	51%	51%	51%	48%	47%	48%	48%

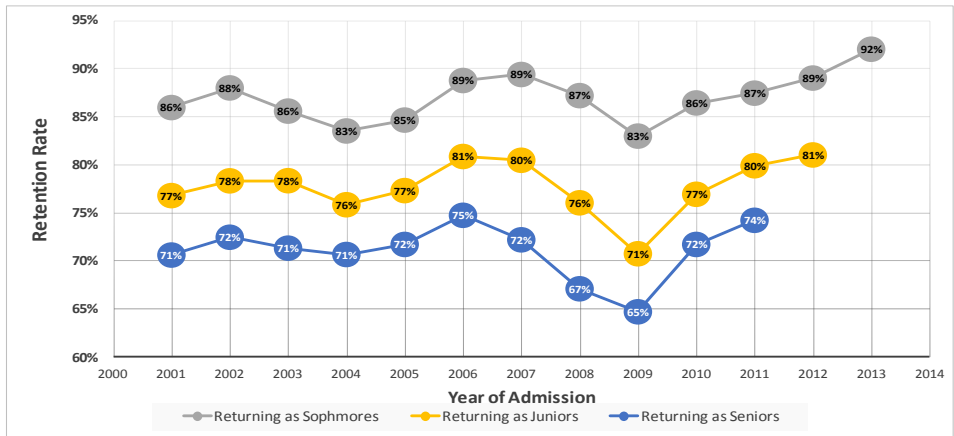


Figure 3: Retention Rates

**UPRM Faculty**

Figure 4 shows the number of UPRM faculty members from 2006 to 2014. The figure clearly shows that faculty members holding PhDs has increased. This is due to Article 42.1.2 of the [UPR Bylaws](#), which states that faculty members employed by UPR must possess a doctorate or terminal degree.



Figure 4: Amount of professors by degree and year (2006-2014)

**UPRM Budget**

The UPRM budget presented in Figure 5 shows a significant decrease in funds beginning in the 2010-11 academic year. During that year, the UPRM faced an 18% (\$20.6 million) reduction from the 2008-2009 budget.



Figure 5 UPRM Budget (2005-2014)

## Introduction

The University of Puerto Rico was created by an act of the Legislative Assembly on March 12, 1903. Following the extension of the benefits of the second Morill-Nelson Act to Puerto Rico in 1908, what is now the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus (UPRM) began with the establishment in Mayagüez of a College of Agricultural Sciences in 1911 and a College of Engineering in 1913, conjointly known as the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts (CAAM). In 1942 the campus was reorganized and given partial autonomy under the direction of a vice chancellor. A division of science, which eventually became the College of Arts and Sciences, was created in 1943, and the College of Business Administration was added in 1970. In 1966, the Legislative Assembly reorganized the University of Puerto Rico into a system of autonomous campuses; each under the direction of a chancellor, and CAAM became UPRM. Today, UPRM continues its development in the best tradition of a Land Grant institution as a coeducational, bilingual, and nonsectarian institution.

The institution's vision is to assure that UPRM continues as a leading institution of higher education and research, transforming society through the pursuit of knowledge in an environment of ethics, justice, and peace. Its mission, encompassing its seven objectives, is:

To provide excellent service to Puerto Rico and to the world by:

- Forming educated, cultured, capable, critical thinking citizens professionally prepared in the fields of agricultural sciences, engineering, arts, sciences, and business administration so they may contribute to the educational, cultural, social, technological and economic development.
- Performing creative work, research and service to meet society's needs and to make available the results of these activities.

We provide our students with the skills and sensibility needed to effectively address and solve current challenges and to exemplify the values and attitudes that should prevail in a democratic society that treasures and respects diversity.

The UPRM *2012-2022 Strategic Plan*, which evolved as a result of extensive collaboration with the UPRM community, has seven objectives:

1. To institutionalize a culture of strategic planning and assessment;
2. To lead higher education throughout Puerto Rico while guaranteeing the best education for our students;
3. To increase and diversify the Institution's sources of revenue;
4. To implement efficient and expedient administrative procedures;
5. To strengthen research and competitive creative endeavors;
6. To impact our Puerto Rican society;
7. To strengthen school spirit, pride, and identity.

The UPRM *2012-2022 Strategic Plan* serves as the guide for effective resource implementation at UPRM by identifying specific strategic areas requiring priority in fulfilling our Mission with excellence as we consistently direct our efforts to reach our institutional Vision. The set metrics accompanying the document and analysis by our constituents will gauge the advancement of our established objectives and guide priorities set during the same time period. The *Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes*, which has the primary focus of improving academic



programs and meeting accreditation requirements, is also used at the institution. This plan requires that UPRM students, by the time of their graduation, should be able to:

1. Communicate effectively.
2. Identify and solve problems, think critically, and synthesize knowledge appropriate to their discipline.
3. Apply mathematical reasoning skills, scientific inquiry methods, and tools of information technology.
4. Apply ethical standards.
5. Recognize the Puerto Rican heritage and interpret contemporary issues.
6. Appraise the essential values of a democratic society.
7. Operate in a global context, relate to a societal context, and demonstrate respect for other cultures.
8. Develop an appreciation for the arts and humanities.
9. Recognize the need to engage in life-long learning.

In 2010, ten of the UPR campuses were placed on probation by MSCHE. UPRM was on probation for about a year mainly because of issues related to governance, planning, and resource allocation. Most of the MSCHE concerns were the result of leadership and policy changes and increases in tuition charges that led to a period of student unrest that interrupted classes for about a month. MSCHE is well aware that most of these issues were beyond the control of UPRM administrators and faculty, and its concerns were fully addressed in a series of monitoring reports that dealt with budgetary actions, governance, and the interruption of classes at UPRM. This Institution recognizes that MSCHE played a positive role during this challenging period and that UPRM accreditations have served as external quality-assurance mechanisms for education, research, service, and administration. UPRM's larger goal is to continue moving toward the internalization and institutionalization of its continuous improvement processes. The Office for Continuous Improvement and Assessment (OMCA) was created in 2005 to institutionalize a culture of continuous improvement at UPRM through the development of an assessment process of all university activities, including academic, administrative, and institutional services. OMCA was deactivated in 2009 and its responsibilities were assigned to the OIIP and Academic Affairs; but in 2014, it was reestablished with the same purpose of institutionalizing assessment. The OIIP is key to the Strategic Planning efforts at the UPRM. Also working with continuous improvement and assessment is the College of Engineering, which established a permanent System for the Evaluation of Education (OACCI) to support its accreditation process with the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). Although some colleges have assessment gaps, the community recognizes the importance of assessment by including it as the first objective in the *UPRM 2012-2022 Strategic Plan*.

## Methodology

### The Self-Study Process

All listed action items were undertaken by the UPRM-MSCHE Institutional Steering Team:

1. Creation of the task forces, including the naming of its coordinators and members, such that each task force was staffed with persons with appropriate backgrounds, so that the collective experience would be more in tune with the standards;
2. Development of a timeline to follow during the process;
3. Development of charge questions for all standards and of the Self-Study Design for submission to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) in preparation for the accreditation visit in 2015-16;
4. Design and development of questionnaires and surveys to address the charge questions and to help in the development of individual task force reports as well as the overall Self-Study Report for the accreditation visit.

### Up-to-date Recordkeeping

Early in the process, the UPRM-MSCHE Steering Team agreed on the need for maintaining up-to-date records that were easily accessible to the team and to the public. A dedicated Website was created to serve as a repository for all records, such as the minutes of meetings, workshops offered, assessment plans, supporting documents, training and orientation sessions, results of conducted surveys, the institutional student learning outcomes, and useful links (see <http://www.uprm.edu/msche2015>). The creation of this site has contributed positively in the record-keeping process and has facilitated access to the community for specific information regarding the MSCHE process.

### Orientation Sessions across Campus

Orientations are key for keeping the institution informed about the MSCHE process. During the 2013 and 2014 academic years, the UPRM MSCHE Steering Committee provided various presentations to the UPRM community to help facilitate responses to the questionnaires.

Some of the presentations about MSCHE, its importance, and the accreditation process were held on the following dates at each of the UPRM Colleges during their faculty meetings:

- October 15, 2013- Faculty of Business Administration- Dr. Betsy Morales
- November 5, 2013- Faculty of Engineering- Dr. Omell Pagán
- November 14, 2013- Faculty of Agricultural Sciences- Dr. Omell Pagán
- November 26, 2013- Faculty of Arts and Sciences- Dr. Sonia Bartolomei

On October 4, 2013, similar presentations were offered to all deans of UPRM to explain, clarify, and define the focus, objectives, and timeline of the committee and to detail the importance of MSCHE's accreditation process, the institutional context, the need for accreditation, and measuring educational effectiveness. Since four deans did not attend the presentation, Dr. Morales gave individual presentations to the following deans on October 9, 2013:

- Dean of Engineering - 3:30-4:00 pm
- Dean of Arts and Sciences- 3:00-3:30 pm
- Dean of Administration- 4:00-4:30 pm
- Dean of Students- 1:30-2:00 pm

Table 2 shows other presentations offered by the UPRM MSCHE Steering Team.

Table 2: Orientation Presentations

Date	Activity/Group
October 22, 2013	Committee members met with Arts and Sciences Assessment committee to converse about Standards 7 and 14.
November 8, 2013	Committee met with Administrative and Academic Directors to discuss MSCHE timeline, institutional context, focus, objectives and the importance of assessment.
November 22, 2013	Committee met with all academic and administrative directors to address any ongoing questions or concerns regarding the survey.
December 2, 2013	Drs. Vásquez and Morales met with the Associate Deans of Academic Affairs to discuss Federal Regulations for online and hybrid courses.
February 10-11, 2013	Non-teaching personnel orientations took place.
March 11, 2014	Dr. Bartolomei presented to the Medical Services personnel about the reaccreditation process.
March 14, 2014	Committee members conducted a presentation about assessment to the Directors of the Dean of Administration
March 17, 2014	Committee members met with employees of the Finance Office to answer doubts about the questionnaire.
April 11, 2014	Dr. Pomales presented about Middle States as part of Library week.
May 10, 2014	Committee members presented information about assessment and strategic planning to all employees of the Dean of Students.

### Data Gathering Instruments

As previously mentioned, the primary method utilized for gathering data for the self-study was a set of thirty-eight custom-designed questionnaires, which were administered to the various institutional units. The units that responded to the questionnaire were the following:

Human Resources, Purchasing Office, Admissions Office, Band and Orchestra, Financial Aid, Exchange Program, Counseling and Psychological Services, Institutional Research and Planning Office, Students Ombudsperson, Registrar's Office, Division of Continuing Education, Graduate Studies Office, Alumni Office, Buildings and Grounds, Professional Enhancement Center, Finance Office, Computer Center Director, R&D Center, Budget Office, General Library, Social and Cultural Activities, Athletic Activities, Equal Opportunities, Child Care Network, Health Services, Quality of Life, Student Placement, Traffic and Surveillance, Auxiliary Services, Legal Advisors, Environmental Management, Press and Publications, Governing Board, University Enterprises, and Personnel Liaison.

Only the following five units did not respond: Agricultural Extension Services, Agricultural Experiment Station, Natatorium, EHS Administrative Board, and University Board.

Twenty-eight academic directors received the questionnaires and 71% of these responded. Directors of Chemistry, Agricultural Sciences, and Agricultural Education did not respond to parts of the questionnaire. The seven deans of UPRM were sent the questionnaires. All but two Deans (Dean of Students and Dean of Arts and Sciences) did not reply to the questionnaire. Although they did not respond, the UPRM-MSCHE committees investigated and examined vital information regarding these units to answer their individual charge questions and complete their reports. Also, three custom-designed surveys were administered to the three largest groups of campus constituents; the faculty, non-teaching personnel, and students. Thirty-three percent of the faculty responded to the survey. Forty-two percent of the non-teaching personnel responded to the survey.

Three types of student surveys were administered: (1) Academic Experience; (2) Institutional Experience; and (3) Student Services. Questionnaires for first year students were distributed only within English courses since all first year students (a total of 70 sections) take English 3101 (Basic), 3103 (Intermediate), or 3211 (Advanced). These students responded to one of three paper questionnaires.

Taking into account the objectives of the student surveys, the UPRM-MSCHE Steering Committee prepared a list of courses where second, third, fourth, and fifth year students were most likely located. This list was sent to the department directors for their revision and approval. The department directors provided the final list of their recommended courses, and students from these courses were selected to complete the questionnaires. The results of the questionnaires and surveys are in Appendix G.

### **Data Analyses and Report Format**

Each task force gathered responses to relevant questions from the various questionnaires. Some of the questionnaires did not include questions relevant to specific task forces. Responses were analyzed and incorporated into twelve comprehensive task force reports prepared in a common format, as outlined on pages 94-95 of the Self-Study Design. These twelve detailed reports elaborate on the condensed summaries found in the final institutional Self-Study Report which, as directed by the MSCHE guidelines, should not exceed 100 pages. Each comprehensive task force report includes a list of appendices. The number for each appendix in the individual standard reports begins with the standard number followed by a number as it appears in the document.

The list of appendices mentioned at the end of this report are documents pertaining to the institution and, to avoid repetition, each appendix is referred to by letter.

### **Self-Study Dissemination across the UPRM Community (See Appendix DD)**

The Self-Study Report was placed on the website ([www.uprm.edu/msche2015](http://www.uprm.edu/msche2015)) for UPRM community perusal on October 27, 2015, the same day the Chancellor sent the community an email announcing its availability for feedback. Additionally, on November 3, 2015, the UPRM-MSCHE and the Chancellor met with all deans and directors informing them of the report and its accessibility on the website for review and feedback.

## **Standard 1: Mission and Goals**

### **Background**

The Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education (MSCHE, 2006) states that when referring to mission and goals, the institution demonstrates that:

The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates who the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are used to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness (p. ix).

The 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report stated that UPRM met this standard and commented:

The mission of the institution has undergone subtle changes since the last decennial visit by Middle States. While the historic land grant status continues to serve as its essential element, the revised *Characteristics of Excellence* and, specifically, the new standards have influenced language referring to such concepts as assessment and outcome measures. It is, by and large, a well-written mission statement that reflects on the strengths of tradition, while at the same time positioning the institution for new initiatives in the future. In concert with the *President's Agenda for Planning in the University*, Mayagüez should be well positioned to address the challenges of the near term. (p.4)

### **Commendations**

- The institution is commended for its efforts to produce a viable/responsive mission statement, one that broadly meets the needs of Puerto Rican society and that marshals the strengths found throughout the campus.

### **Suggestions**

- UPRM should further explore the relationship between the goals of access and excellence, i.e., how does one manage vibrant program of access for underprepared students while also pursuing an agenda of excellence for highly qualified students.
- The institution should pursue by all means possible a communications strategy that ensures that mission, goals and objectives are understood by all. (pp. 4-5).

Recently, the mission of the institution underwent revisions and the institution responded positively to the suggestion of pursuing communication strategies to ensure that the mission is understood by all. The process used to update the institutional mission involved the entire university community. Each unit was invited to comment on the mission, which has been widely publicized on the OIIP Webpage. At the different strategic planning and assessment workshops, the mission was highlighted and publicized to the institutional community at large.

It is also worthy to highlight that the current mission continues to focus on the needs of the Puerto Rican society. Culture is highly valued and it is stressed in the mission of the UPR- Mayagüez.

As for the first suggestion, to further explore the relationship between the goals of access and excellence, the UPRM has done this in many ways. Just to mention a few which will be expanded

upon in the other Standard reports, an intensive Mathematics course (MATE 0066- Standard 13) was designed to help underprepared students acquire the skills they need before moving to the next course. The Department of English also has a placement entry system for first-year students. Previously, English had an intensive English course (INGL 0066) but this has been officially eliminated after results from an evaluation process by the Department of English reported that the course had no significant effect in the last years. When students take the English placement exam, they are placed, depending on their score, into one of three sequences: Basic English, Intermediate, and Advanced English. After approving six credit hours in these classes, students complete their English requirements with six additional credit hours (See Standard 13 for further discussion).

UPRM also has a project, which serves both underprepared as well as highly qualified students. The project, the Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS), offers tutoring for all students to assist in their writing and oral skills in both English and Spanish (Standard 12- General Education will offer more information on this project). Underprepared students visit the Center and receive tutoring in English and Spanish communication skills from highly qualified students who offer tutoring services at the Center (See Appendix 1.4- Presentation to Administrative Board about CIVIS).

Overall, UPR-Mayagüez has taken action on the suggestions offered in 2005. All the suggestions have been addressed and are also a part of the current revised UPRM mission statement (2012-2012).

### **Findings**

The following is a summary of the results discussed in the Task Force 1 Report. The MSCHE elements were used as a guide to provide the results. Each element is in bold followed by the responses. For in-depth information, please access the TF1 Report in the appendices.

In order to understand the findings, it is imperative to report the number of deans and academic directors who responded to the surveys: three deans and 27 academic directors. Also, the UPRM's mission was revised in 2011. Therefore, there are two mission terms presented in the findings: the mission and critical areas which are from 2003-2011, and the mission and objectives which are from 2012-2022.

### **Clearly defined mission and goals that guide the UPRM community**

- The mission and goals are clearly defined and guide the UPRM community. The data of the internal document *Baselines* or *Líneas de Base* (2007-2013) was prepared in August 2015. The document presents the results of different determinations made, resource allocations, curricular developments, and program outcomes of the institution since 2007.
- As for resource allocation, the OIIP also received the responsibility to develop a tool to assess the effectiveness of institutional resources using the strategic plan as the foundation. In 2015, the OSI Director at Central Administration assumed the responsibility of developing this project, which will be implemented within the UPR system.
- The majority of the academic directors (93%) and academic deans (100%) agree that program development (courses and classroom learning) are linked to the UPRM mission.
- 83% of the students agreed there were sufficient resources to comply with the mission and objectives and 81% agreed there were enough resources to support academic programs.

### **Clearly defined mission and goals that include scholarly and creative activity**

- The Strategic Plans (2003-2011 Critical Area #4; 2012-2022 Objective 5) clearly mention research and creative endeavors as a priority to develop within the institution.
- 81% of the academic directors confirmed that the objectives of the UPRM support scholarly and creative activities. They mentioned that professors were awarded release time for research, publications, and creative work.
- 76% of the faculty agreed that scholarly and creative activities support the institutional mission and objectives

### **Clearly defined mission and goals are developed through collaborative participation**

- The 2003-2011 Strategic Plan was approved by not only the Administrative Board (certification 04-05-090) but also by the Academic Senate (certification 04-39). The UPRM 2012-2022 Strategic Plan was approved by the Administrative Board (certification 11-12-137).
- Both Strategic Plans, which include the mission and objectives, included the participation of the UPRM community. The 2003-2011 Strategic document stated that there was participation between the Deanships, UPRM units, and the UPRM community. The UPRM 2012-2022 Strategic Plan involved integrative and active participation from the university community and raised awareness of the importance of decision-making processes. As stated in the document, “The community shared its recommendations and issued its opinion on the relevance of the previously identified objectives, with a practically unanimous validation of previously identified priorities” (p.4).
- 46% of the faculty agreed they participated in the strategic planning process at all levels.
- 45% of the non-teaching personnel agreed that they were aware of the initiatives used to meet the mission and objectives of the institution.

### **Clearly defined mission and goals that are periodically evaluated and formally approved**

- The 2003 mission and critical goals were formally approved by the Administrative Board (certification 04-05-090) and the Academic Senate (certification 04-39).
- From 2005 to 2009, OMCA was in charge of documenting and ensuring that the critical areas were evaluated. There are administrative and academic processes that document this and can be accessed at [http://middlestates.uprm.edu/web/?page\\_id=749](http://middlestates.uprm.edu/web/?page_id=749) .
- The UPRM 2012-2022 Strategic Plan was approved by the Administrative Board (Certification 11-12-137).The Implementation Plan was revised and approved in August 2015. The Implementation Plan includes objectives and strategies, the level in which each strategy will be attended, subsequent plans and, once each strategy plan commences, the collaborators and status of these plans as of May 2015.

## **Clearly defined mission and goals that are publicized and known by the UPRM Community**

- Both strategic plans which include the mission and goals have been publicized on the UPRM website. The 2003 Plan can be found at the following address: [http://www.uprm.edu/msa/Reports/strategic\\_plan\\_final\\_dic\\_2004.pdf](http://www.uprm.edu/msa/Reports/strategic_plan_final_dic_2004.pdf) . The most recent plan can be found at [http://oiip.uprm.edu/docs/Plan%20Estrat%e9gico/Plan\\_Estrategico\\_2012-2022-](http://oiip.uprm.edu/docs/Plan%20Estrat%e9gico/Plan_Estrategico_2012-2022-).
- Also, the plans were published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogues.
- The 2005 Task Force 1 Report stated that “[the overwhelming majority of the faculty and administrators of all academic colleges have discussed the [2004] strategic plan” (p.18). The plan included its mission and eight objectives. A survey conducted in 2004 also indicated that 88% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, “I am familiar with the institution’s stated mission and goals” (p. 19). The UPRM 2012-2022 Strategic Plan was publicized and included the UPRM community (as stated above).
- 94% of the faculty stated they were knowledgeable about the institution’s mission and objectives.
- 92% of the students responded that their professors knew the institutional mission and objectives
- 85% of the students responded that information on institutional mission and objectives are available.
- The administrators (Deans and Directors) responded to an open question about the mission and objectives being communicated. Most of them answered that the mission and objectives have been communicated (see TF1 Report for in-depth answers).
- 66% of the non-teaching personnel agreed that they knew the mission and objectives established by the institution.

## **Mission and goals relate to external and internal contexts**

- a) The 2005 report states that “Task Force 1 found that not all academic colleges keep an adequate documentation on how their mission, goals and objectives relate to constituencies and internal and external stake holders”(p. 35). Engineering and Business Administration had evidence to show they responded to internal and external contexts and constituencies while Arts and Sciences and Agricultural Sciences did not fully show evidence other than state that they had Strategic Planning Committees.
- b) Currently, the external constituents, accreditation agencies at the institution (i.e., ABET, NCATE/CAEP, NLNAC, and ACS) have revised and discussed the mission and objectives of UPRM. The UPRM maintains its programs accredited by these agencies; therefore, they are aware of the mission and objectives of the institution. The Puerto Rican government agency which licenses higher educational institutions, is the CEPR (Puerto Rico Council of Education-Consejo de Educación de Puerto Rico). Their directory (<http://www.ce.pr.gov/>) certifies that our institution offers bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees and that we comply with the requisites to offer these degrees.
- c) 70% of the program directors responded that the mission and objectives are discussed in their meetings and that their agendas and minutes are evidence.
- d) In order to motivate the UPRM units to apply the objectives and set forth the mission and objectives included in the strategic plan, the current Chancellor requested proposals of projects that aligned with the strategic plan. If approved, these projects would be awarded funds (\$1



million was allotted to these proposals). Thirty-seven proposals were submitted and thirty-three were approved. At present, all approved projects have been funded and will submitted progress reports in July 2015.

### **Institutional goals are consistent with mission**

- The critical areas and objectives were designed taking into account the mission of UPRM. The UPRM 2012-2022 Strategic Plan contains the following affirmation, “this document states the priorities of our academic community substantiated by our University’s mission, and in its function, serves as an essential element for the development of Puerto Rican society” (p. 5). See TF1 Report for more information on the creation of the objectives’ process.

### **Goals focus on student learning, other outcomes, and institutional improvement**

- In order to fulfill this element, it is imperative to study the institutional Strategic Plans. Although specific objectives are highlighted, all objectives, directly or indirectly, center on student learning, the fulfillment of outcomes, and institutional improvement. Overall, the student is the heart of the mission and objectives.

### **Recommendations**

- The Chancellor needs to continue supporting the OIIP to sustain its valuable work with the mission and objectives. The OIIP is making the objectives, metrics, and mission accessible to the community and this is an important task which needs the appropriate support.
- The OSI Director at Central Administration should involve the relevant personnel on the campuses in the development of the resource allocation project. Once completed, the Director should train the UPRM users in the program to familiarize them with its key performance indicators.
- Funding for scholarly and creative activities should be maintained since they support the mission and objectives of UPRM.
- Awareness workshops to the UPRM community, especially the non-teaching personnel, should inform them about the implementation process of the Strategic Plan objectives and how the institution has carried these out. The workshops should allow for their involvement and collaboration in providing feedback.
- Although the mission and objectives are communicated, there is definitely room for growth in their effective dissemination. One way to do this it to have the mission and objectives highly visible on the UPRM website and displayed in each of the institutional units.

### **Commendations**

- The OIIP must be commended for its fortitude, effort, and dedication to creating, publicizing, and implementing the mission and objectives within the UPRM community.

## **Standard 2 and Standard 3: Planning, Resources Allocation and Institutional Renewal; Institutional Resources Background**

The 2006 MSCHE *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* clearly links Standard 2 (Institutional Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal) and Standard 3 (Institutional Resources); the strong relationship between these two standards is evidenced in the similitude of the fundamental elements of both standards. Consequently, the institutional committee decided to assign both standards to the same task force and to discuss them together. MSCHE requires that UPRM “conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develop objectives to achieve them and utilize the results of assessment activities for institutional renewal” (p. 4). The purpose of a planning process is to make sound decisions on institutional resource allocations based on institutional priorities, and to assess the effective and efficient use of the institution’s resources to achieve institution’s mission and goals.

Regarding Standard 2, the 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report stressed the need to use the strategic goals and objectives, along with an institutional assessment process, to drive important and hard decisions on resource allocations. UPRM met Standard 2 requirements, but minimally. Although the strategic plan was properly developed and accepted by the community, it needed more specific courses of action; UPRM needed to move from the planning mode to implementation and to clarify how its administrators arrived at decisions that are in the best interest of the UPRM. In addition, it suggested:

1. Identify, in consultation with the Central Administration, a list of peer institutions for purposes of ongoing self-study and continuous improvement,
2. Ensure tangible progress in the eight strategic areas by clearly specifying annual performance objectives, action plans, and responsibility for each,
3. Consider extending the role of the Dean of Academic Affairs to serve as chief academic officer responsible for collecting and analyzing information and then making an informed recommendation to the Chancellor regarding the reallocation of resources across the colleges, and
4. Establish a set of strategic priorities based on a rigorous evaluation of regional needs and institutional strengths. (p. 6)

The 2005 MSCHE Report identified the following UPRM needs:

1. A disciplined and consultative decision-making process by which strategic priorities are established and difficult decisions are made regarding the reallocation of internal resources based on available resources and appropriate assessment data.
2. A coordinated requests process for resource allocation from Central Administration with internal processes.
3. Plans to add new programs, especially graduate programs; these plans must be made carefully in light of existing resources. (p. 6)

Most of these suggestions and recommendations have been addressed since 2005 and taken into consideration during the new strategic planning cycle. Regarding institutional assessment, in 2005 the UPRM Administrative Board formalized the creation of the Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment (OMCA- [cert. 05-06-158 JA](#)). The office was created with the mission of institutionalizing a culture of continuous improvement at UPRM by developing of an assessment process for every academic, administrative and service unit.

By 2007, the success of the OMCA initiative was evident; every academic, administrative and service unit at UPRM had their respective strategic and assessments plans approved and aligned to the UPRM strategic plan, and a list of proposed indicators to measure institutional effectiveness was produced. In March 2007, UPRM submitted a Monitoring Report describing the progress made regarding the strategic planning and the development of SAP3, in-house developed software to support the efforts to link the budgeting process and the planning process. Several commendations and compliments were received recognizing the improvements demonstrated. Even though the UPRM devoted significant amount of effort and commitment between 2005 and 2007 to complete the strategic planning process and achieved substantial success at deployment and community awareness, the institution was not as successful at the implementation, institutional assessment and continuity of effort. After 2007, personnel changes in OMCA and the adoption of a new financial system disrupted the strategic planning, assessment and budget-linking processes.

After the submission of the 2010 PRR, MSCHE found a lack of evidence that the institution complied with Standard 2, and required UPRM to submit a Monitoring Report including a plan for the implementation of a comprehensive institutional strategic plan that linked long-range planning to decision-making and budgeting processes. UPRM submitted the Monitoring Report in 2011 providing details about the new strategic planning cycle process-design and the alternative to address the linkage between strategic planning and budgeting.

In 2011 the OIIP dedicated its efforts and resources to the design, coordination, and implementation of the revision process of the strategic plan. It was designed as an inclusive process in three phases starting at the top management level, providing for input and validation from the community during and after each phase, and finishing with the identification of key performance indicators (KPI's). The process started with the revision of the vision and mission statements, followed by an internal and external environmental scan, using the SWOT analysis at the institutional level. This SWOT analysis considered the institutional strengths and weaknesses, regional needs, and peer comparison as pieces of information during the process. The first draft of the strategic plan was completed in May 2011 and it was shared with the community as a working document. In general, the community validated the objectives and strategies developed in phase 1, with very few recommendations. With [certification 11-12-137](#) the UPRM JA approved the final version of the document which included the KPI's defined to assess improvement for each strategic objective. The new strategic plan [UPRM 2012-2022](#) included seven strategic objectives.

Regarding the adoption of new academic programs, the Board of Trustees in 2006 approved [certification 80 2005-2006](#). This certification states that every new program's proposal should include a sound justification and demonstrate the relationship of the proposed program with the institutional mission and plan. The proposals should also be specific about the kind and amount of resources needed to offer a program of the expected level and quality. These proposals should be carefully evaluated at the UPRM JA, "*paying special attention to the fiscal impact.*" ([Article 7.A.4](#))

In regards to Standard 3, the 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report included general comments mostly related to the need for the implementation of a procedure that allowed UPRM to plan appropriately for the medium and long-term, the need to strengthen UPRM's ability to reach for alternate sources of funding, and the need to develop internal structures for cost reduction and cost recovery. The report included two commendations and several suggestions and recommendations:

**Commendations:**

- The institution has established robust procedures and the ability to develop a detailed budget and has adequate audit processes in place that assure fiscal responsibility.
- The UPRM has navigated successfully the initial course in its change in emphasis on scholarly work. The Office of Research and Development continues to increase the amount of research funding obtained through research grants.

**Suggestions:**

- A Director of Development should be hired to assist the Chancellor in fundraising activities.
- The institution should review its organizational structure with respect to instructional information technology. The decentralization of this enterprise has had an adverse effect on planning and has been detrimental to the needs of students.
- The institution should contemplate a cost recovery system for areas such as telecommunications and vehicle operation.
- The institution should consider allocating funds centrally for classroom and facilities maintenance as part of a reconstitution of the budgeting process.
- Given the detailed, intensive and comprehensive efforts in developing a strategic plan, it would behoove the institution to revisit the campus master plan that was established in 1995.
- The Central Administration, with the campuses, should explore the possibility of jointly negotiating contracts for services and cooperating in purchases to achieve more favorable conditions.
- The UPRM needs to provide consistent support for all library materials, including books and audio-visuals, and consult with faculty in the appropriate departments before cutting periodical subscriptions.

**Recommendations:**

- The budget should be developed according to actual available resources, and a procedure for allocation should be created that is tied to actual data rather than historical reference.
- The institution should develop a three-year budget aligned with its mission and goals and based on realistic expectations of system funding. It should also develop and apply measures of efficiency to evaluate its success in both budgetary planning and in implementing the budget.

In contrast to the suggestions on Standard 2, those expressed on Standard 3 have not been fully addressed. Some suggestions support process centralization while others go in the opposite direction. The institutional procedures to deal with telecommunications, vehicle services and facilities maintenance have not suffered significant changes over the last ten years. Funds for transportation, telecommunication and utilities are all allocated to the Office of the Dean of Administration. In the wake of the economic and fiscal challenges, this Office has implemented additional cost control policies in these areas. In regards to facilities maintenance, the specific suggestion was in the direction of centralization, but UPRM has a mixed model that promotes the commitment of the user with the sensible and responsible use of the facilities. This office provides consultation, materials cost estimation and labor during regular operating hours and with the available personnel. Each solicitant unit is expected to identify the funds for materials and, in case they want to speed-up their project, they should also provide the funds for contracts or overtime. In regards to instructional technology, the current model is mostly centralized, except for direct service for users. While most infrastructure decisions are centralized, departments and units opted for having their own technical support for daily issues, which resulted in a faster, customized and more convenient service.

As to the remaining suggestions: systemic purchases have been stimulated from UPR central administration. In specific, [certification 30 2008-2009](#) from the Board of Trustees states that: *“the university will stimulate and encourage the implementation of joint purchasing activities...”* (Article 5.B). Currently, miscellaneous articles such as paper and commodities are acquired through a systemic purchase. Master auction processes are opened for other goods such as computers and office supplies.

Regarding the recommendations, the budget procedures remain to be a detailed exercise, allowing for the identification and control of expenses, but given the current weak economy, budgetary restrictions, and the lack of access for budget negotiations at the Central Administration, history remains as the main source of information in budget preparation. In 2009 the university started to face the challenges of the weak economy of Puerto Rico and what it represents to the university in terms of budgetary constraints. The UPR general fund decreased from \$1,065 million in academic year 2008-2009 to \$1,037 million for academic year 2009-2010, equivalent to a 2.64% reduction. Because of the availability of ARRA funds, UPRM did not had to face budgetary reduction during 2009-2010, the impact of the fiscal reality was delayed until 2010-2011, when the budget for UPRM was adjusted from \$162.05 million to \$146.01 million representing a 9.9% of reduction compared to the UPRM 2009-2010 budget, and representing 86% of the total UPR reduction for that specific year. Considering all subsequent reductions applied from 2010-2011 to 2013-2014, UPRM faced a total reduction of 10.25% (\$20.6 million) compared to 2008-2009 budget. For UPR, the total largest drop occurred in 2013-2014, with a total reduction 9.35% reduction compared to 2008-2009. Looking at 2014-2015 numbers, UPR budget is 8.33% smaller than 2008-2009, while UPRM has a budget that is 7.55% smaller than the budget of the reference year.

To adjust UPR expenses to the new budgetary reality, UPR central administration imparted instructions and defined guidelines on the priorities for the entire UPR system, including a moratorium for all faculty promotions and new hiring. The freeze in promotions and hiring lasted from 2009 to 2013. Under the direction of Dr. Jorge Rivera Santos, appointed as acting Chancellor on October 2009, additional internal measures were taken at UPRM to reduce institutional costs while guaranteeing fundamental services and offerings. In order to make sensible decisions several good practices were adopted. Data and analyses produced by OIIP were consistently used as a relevant piece of information to make important decisions such as: (1) the appropriate number of admissions per program, (2) the appropriate cost for summer courses, and (3) appropriate allocation of maintenance personnel. Simultaneously, a multi-year budgeting process was implemented in 2011, focused on the institutional mission and strategic objectives. Unfortunately, as part of the cost reduction plan, OMCA was deactivated in 2009. The responsibilities of following up on the strategic planning process were reassigned to the OIIP while the responsibilities of institutional assessment were not clearly assigned to any functional unit.

Along with the budget reductions resulting from the island’s weakened economy, in 2012 UPRM also faced an additional challenge, a year of funding suspension from NSF. The agency conducted a visit to the UPR early in 2010. Significant findings were identified and NSF worked with UPR as it developed a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to address shortcomings. After significant interaction between NSF and UPR, NSF determined that UPR failed to complete activities identified in the CAP regarding inadequacies in the time and effort reporting systems by the Central Administration and the Mayagüez Campus. Consequently, NSF decided to suspend all awards to the Mayagüez Campus. The suspension lasted for one year, with a double impact on financial resources: (1) all disbursements to in-progress research projects were detained and it was stated that any expenditures during the

period were “not recoverable” and (2) during the suspension, UPRM professors were unable to submit new proposals, significantly reducing access to future funds. The UPR funded all NSF ongoing projects, equivalent to more than \$7 million in two years, demonstrating the commitment of UPR with research efforts. The NSF suspension was lifted in April 2013.

In addition to cost reduction measures, the Board of Trustees approved a series of new fees and rules to collect additional income for the UPR system. The UPR system depends almost solely on government appropriations, a reality that makes the UPR vulnerable in times of economic crisis. Cost increases and new fees included tuition cost increases and a reduction of faculty compensation for summer courses to make the summer session financially viable. In addition, a reduction in honor students’ tuition waivers and an additional tuition fee of \$800 per year (cert. JS 146 2009-2010) were included. Students reacted to these new financial policies with an initial protest that started as a 24-hour walkout in April 2010 and resulted in a student-led strike for the whole system, which lasted until June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010. The new fees, tuition costs and exemptions policies remained until 2013, generating an estimate of \$40M per year in new income for UPR.

### **Most recent MSCHE- S2 and S3 related Events**

In June 2010, MSCHE decided to place all UPR campuses on probation for the "lack of evidence" that the Institution complied with Standards 4 (Leadership and Governance) and 11 (Educational Offerings) of the accreditation criteria. In September 2010 UPR submitted a monitoring report and on September 12-16, 2010 an on-site team visit took place to verify the institution's status. This Monitoring Report showed that UPRM was making tough budgetary decisions and moving forward in all its academic programs, research, and service initiatives. On November 18, 2010, the Commission acted to continue UPRM’s probation because of a lack of evidence that the institution complied with Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) and Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance). In addition, based on the UPRM 2010 PRR, the Commission found a lack of evidence that the institution complies with Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal). The Commission requested a second monitoring report due March 1, 2011 documenting that the institution achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with Standards 2, 3, and 4. The UPRM submitted the requested Monitoring Report and probation was lifted. The Monitoring Report included the following information regarding standards 2 and 3:

**Standard 2:** UPRM has clearly defined mission and vision statements. UPRM Strategic Plan and the results of assessment activities are used regularly to promote continuous improvement in its academic programs and to make resource-allocation decisions at the campus, college, and departmental levels. UPRM Administrative Board is responsible for the implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan. At the campus level, the Board regularly monitors and analyzes performance and challenges towards the goals and objectives stated in UPRM Strategic Plan. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning assists the Administrative Board, deans, and department heads in data gathering and analysis to support unbiased, impartial, and rational decision-making.

**Standard 3:** This Monitoring Report showed that UPRM is making tough budgetary decisions and moving forward in all its academic programs and research and service initiatives. The difficult financial situation has provided an excellent opportunity to assess and improve several administrative procedures and to reevaluate financial priorities.

During this process, OIIP received the responsibility to develop a tool to assess effectiveness in the use of institutional resources, based on the strategic plan. The challenge of developing the tool, as conceived, proved to be greater than expected due to the lack of data management systems. A new alternative to create a system was identified during 2012 but required the support of central administration since the purpose was to embed decision-making processes for resource allocation with the financial system. In 2012, that support was not available. In October 2013 the project took a new dimension when new options were taken to Central Administration by the acting Chancellor. The OSI Director at Central Administration took the leadership of the project and is currently under development for all UPR campuses.

In July 2014 the newly appointed Chancellor of the UPRM gave a new impulse to the strategic planning and assessment processes. One of the Chancellor's first projects was separating one million dollars from the budget to support projects specifically aligned to the strategic plan. A total of 37 proposals were submitted and 33 were recommended for support. In September 2014, OMCA was reactivated ([cert. 14-15-190 JA](#)) and the OIIP refocused its resources to continue the efforts for the strategic plan deployment and to establish the base lines for institutional indicators and to make them public, as part of the institutional assessment. OIIP invested in software, software configuration, training and human resources in order to directly support Strategic Objective #1. In 2015, the Administrative Board approved an Institutional Implementation Plan to be used as a guide to establish institutional priorities and to make decisions on resources allocation at institutional level. This implementation plan includes the scheduling of an additional annual meeting of the UPRM JA with the predefined agenda of *KPI's* analysis to make the necessary decisions to align of institutional resources and institutional priorities.

## **Findings**

### **Standard 2**

The following is a summary of the results of the self-study for standards 2 and 3 at UPRM, as evaluated by Task Force 2. It includes the most relevant actions taken during the last ten years at institutional level in regards to the standards under evaluation. Information at unit levels was collected through open questions included on the questionnaires designed by the steering committee and fulfilled by 5 out of 7 Deans and 26 out of 28 academic directors. Directors of specific administrative offices such as budget, human resources and finance were also consulted. Wherever relevant, the opinion or perception of faculty (378), administrators and students was also included. This opinion was extracted from specific questions included in the corresponding questionnaires.

### **Clearly stated Goals and objectives or strategies, based on assessment and used for planning and resource allocation**

The UPRM 2012-2022 strategic plan was developed through a comprehensive and inclusive process that included the evaluation of previous UPRM performance and an extensive environmental scan. Objectives and strategies are clearly defined as actions to promote movement towards the Institutional Vision and *KPI's* are included to measure institutional effectiveness and to foster continuity of efforts. Compared to the previous, the current strategic plan is more actionable and measurable, characteristics that should facilitate its implementation at all levels. Baselines for most *KPI's* have been established, and the results should be made public by Fall 2015-2016. OIIP is responsible for the data collection, maintenance, and actualization and sharing of results. In addition, the UPRM JA has approved an implementation plan with specific actions to address objectives and strategies, and to make decisions on resource allocations at the institutional level. Currently, six out of the seven Deanships have recently approved strategic plans. These strategic plans were the result of a process

specifically designed to include a self-assessment and to produce strategic plans that were supportive of the UPRM 2012-2022 and to include performance indicators. At the unit level, 92% of the directors reported they have a strategic plan that was reviewed in 2009 and is still in-force or is in the revision process.

Regarding resource allocations, the first priority at UPRM is to ensure that the academic offerings are sufficient to supply student's needs and fulfill the main element of our mission. Besides, the institution has made significant investments aligned to the strategic objectives. As examples, in 2014-2015, OMCA was reactivated as part of the efforts to address objective #1 ([cert. 14-15-190 SA](#)), the institutional strategic plan was used to allocate \$1M dollars on projects specifically identified with institutional objectives or strategies, and important resources were allocated to cultural and athletic activities to address strategic objectives 6 and 7.

### **Inclusive and clearly communicated planning and improvement processes**

UPRM 2012-2022 strategic process was designed to allow the participation of the campus community. During the first phase, every dean reached for feedback from associate deans and directors. During the second phase, the whole campus community was invited to participate and share opinions over the preliminary objectives and strategies. Several meetings and workshops were held with the community. Two years after the effort began over 88% of teaching personnel are knowledgeable of institution's mission and objectives, and 52% believe that the faculty participates in the planning process. Unfortunately, 54% disagree on the statement that assessment results are used for decision-making and resource allocation. Among the non-teaching personnel, 66% reported to know the institution's mission and objectives but roughly 30% believe that resources are assigned accordingly and only 20% believe assessment is part of the resource allocation process. Eighty-five percent of students reported to have been informed about the institutional mission and objectives.

### **Well defined decision-making processes and authority that facilitates planning and renewal**

There is a well-defined command of line for most processes at UPRM. This pyramidal structure hardly facilitates planning and renewal. Therefore, the strategic objective #4 calls for the adoption of "agile and expedient processes." Currently UPRM, and in particular the Administration Deanship, is reviewing its internal processes and defining more effective ways to facilitate decision-making and institutional renewal in compliance with regulations imposed by external entities. As examples, new procedures have been adopted for (1) the allocation of funds from "technology fees" ([cert. 14-15-297 JA](#)), (2) recruitment of temporary non-teaching personnel, using a pool of talents to reduce paperwork and to speed-up the hiring process ([cert. 14-15-271 JA](#)), and (3) reassignment of facilities to better serve the institutional needs ([cert. 14-15-195 JA](#)).

### **The assignment of responsibility for improvements and assurance of accountability**

Even though there is not a clear procedure in place to assign responsibility for improvement and assurance accountability, the UPRM Bylaws provides the spaces and opportunities to foster improvement, at least for academic and research endeavors. Faculty and departmental permanent committees and the Academic Senate are primary responsible for UPRM academic excellence and renewal. Eighty-five percent of students and all deans agree on the statement that there is an environment of continuous improvement at UPRM, although all deans also recognize there is room for improvement on assessment.

The current situation of the lack of a procedure to assign responsibility for improvement is about to change, in particular for strategic objectives and strategies. In June 2015, the UPRM JA approved the



implementation plan for the UPRM 2012-2022. This implementation plan includes specific efforts and actions to be taken to move the institution towards its Institutional Objectives and identify the person responsible for each of these efforts, and the current status. The plan itself includes a UPRM JA annual meeting for the revision and evaluation of the status and making decisions on resource allocations.

### **Record of institutional and unit improvement efforts and their results**

There are significant improvement efforts in both academic and administrative endeavors, with tangible results that benefit UPRM entire community. A few of them are: (1) significant increase in the proportion of professors with PhD's, (2) the recent approval of five new academic programs, (3) the creation of curricular sequences with multidisciplinary component, and (4) the increase in the number of students successfully participating in national and international professional events.

Improvement efforts in administrative endeavors can be seen as well. Several procedures have been recently created or modified to improve institutional processes, for example, CID adopted *Kuali-Coeus* as the platform to document and submit new proposals. This change provides the CID with the ability to easily follow-up on a specific proposal and to perform research assessment that was not possible before *Kuali-Coeus*. Additional efforts can be identified at the Administration Deanship, including several projects defined in response to the satisfaction survey administered to students as part of the UPRM reaccreditation process. The continuous effort on providing an adequate and pleasing atmosphere at the campus is also an administrative endeavor with verifiable results. Major remodeling and construction projects were held and completed during the last decade (Celis, ADEM, MUSA, OF).

The new format UPRM Annual Report, adopted in 2012, simplifies the documentation of these improvement efforts and are now aligned with the strategic plan.

### **Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes.**

One of the first actions included in the implementation plan certified on June 2015, is for the UPRM JA to hold an annual assessment meeting. In this annual meeting, the UPRM JA will evaluate all UPRM key performance indicators and allocate resources based on results. Besides, the Budget Office is continuously assessing the use and availability of institutional funds, and applying controls to ensure they are used properly and according to the planned budget. The Budget Office prepared quarterly reports for the central administration. At the unit level nearly 54% of academic directors reported they did some informal assessments of the planning process, mainly at departmental meetings.

## **Findings**

### **Standard 3**

#### **Strategies to measure and assess the level of, and efficient utilization of, institutional resources**

The level of utilization of institutional funds is continuously assured by the Budget Office, and by office directors as well. Though there are not structured and systemic strategies to assess the level and effectiveness of resources utilization, UPRM has taken the first steps on moving towards institutional assessment all around. Some systemic efforts have been made during the last years for example, in 2010, a capability analysis was made to assess maintenance needs based on facilities configuration and utilization. In 2014 OIIP developed a tool to assess the level of utilization of classrooms and, more recently, a comprehensive assessment on institutional effectiveness was made and shared with the community. Other important initiatives have taken place at the Administration

Deanship. Along with the reactivation of OMCA and the inclusion of a specific strategy on the UPRM 2012-2022 and its implementation plan that stressed in the desirability of the use of institutional data to make sound and responsible decisions, and the use publication of KPI's, should foster this kind of assessment activities in the near future. At UPR level, in May 2015 the UPR-BT approved the [certification 135 2014-2015](#) requiring to all finance offices of the UPR campuses to establish performance metrics by the end of fiscal year 2015-2016.

**Allocation approach that ensures adequate faculty, staff, and administration to support the institution's mission and outcomes expectations**

Puerto Rico devotes 9.6% of state appropriations to its only public university system, the UPR. The UPR Government Board has the responsibility to distribute UPR general funds among the campuses and other institutional needs and services. For UPRM, the allotment from UPR general fund represents more than 84% of total UPRM funds. During the last ten years, UPRM tendencies on budget-share and total UPR enrolled students go in opposite directions. While the percentage of the total UPR enrolment being serviced by UPRM has been increasing, the budgetary allotment remains in between 15% to 16% of the UPR general fund. For year 2004-2005, UPRM received 16.2% of UPR general fund to serve 18.1% of UPR total enrolled students. Figures for 2014-2015 show that the share of UPR enrolled students being served by UPRM rose to 20.9% while the budgetary allotment represented 15% of the total UPR general fund. In terms of dollars per student UPRM has fallen behind UPR-RP campus which currently receives allotment equivalent to about \$15,300 per student versus the \$12,400 per student equivalent assigned to UPRM, an amount even lower that the allotment per student received by UPRH. The kind of disparities in times of unprecedented difficulties and challenges for the government, force the institution to identify opportunities for improvement and efficiencies.

Despite the budgetary reductions, the reductions in the amount of teaching and non-teaching personnel of about 10% and the overall increase in the amount of students, UPRM has been able to keep its academic offerings and services, demonstrating its commitment with institutional mission. During academic years 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 UPRM administration took the hard decision to reduce the yearly new admissions from about 2550 per year to less than 2000 to face the budget reduction of \$20M compared to the 2008-2009 budget. The decision was made to guarantee the academic offerings, services and the appropriate level of facilities maintenance to the students already in the system while controlling the expenditures in teaching compensations and contracts. As a result of the 2013 government announcement of additional funds for the UPR, and the [certification 50 2014-2015 GB](#), the yearly admissions rose again.

Until 2015, UPRM has successfully managed its resources to fulfill student's needs. Comparing 2014-2015 to 2005-2006, the proportion of students taking less than 12 credits in a given semester has dropped from about 16% to about 14.5%. Even though 2014-2015 looks better than 2005-2006, it has the highest proportion of non-regular students since 2008. In terms of students (FTE) per professor (FTE) the ratio has been kept between 17.3 and 18.8 except for 2013-2014 when the ratio rose to 20.1. All deans agree that instructional facilities and instructional equipment are adequate to achieve UPRM mission. Students expressed general satisfaction with the academic services received at UPRM. Eighty-one percent of students believe that faculty resources are sufficient and 72% believe that academic offerings are adequate. Students are satisfied with the services provided as well, with an average satisfaction index of 83%.

On the other hand, R&D and CTI reported to be critically understaffed. Recruitment at both units has been a challenge for a while mainly because available personnel classifications do not match

responsibilities; therefore salary scales are not competitive. The CTI situation have been aggravated by a systemic project from the central administration that is been designed, developed, and implemented by UPRM CTI developers, reducing the amount of human resources available to work on UPRM technology-related improvement projects.

### **Financial planning and budgeting process**

At the institutional level, decisions regarding the allocation for the general funds among deanships are made at the UPRM JA. Each Dean prepares a budget proposal including primarily all fixed costs such as wages and overhead, and any foreseen additional investment needed to fulfill the demand for academic offerings. Besides these basic elements, any request for additional funds should be justified on the basis of the strategic plan or the development of the faculty. After the budget is distributed among the deanships, a similar process occurs within the deanships. This process is repeated every year, following the same procedures. Multi-year budget projections were made for fiscal years 2012 and 2013 but the effort proved to be extremely time consuming and meaningless at the end. The then UPR BT members, and current Governing Board members do not consider the results of such efforts to make decisions on budget allocations among campuses.

Typically, during the year UPRM receives additional funds from the central administration. These funds are requested for special needs, for example, facilities renewal. Although allocating funds for facilities maintenance is the responsibility of UPRM, funds for major renovations or for projects to address safety hazards and architectural barriers, should be requested at the central administration. Given the permanent limitation of institutional funds, these projects are prioritized at UPRM based on urgency, considering safety issues first. Then at the central administration, the projects are prioritized against proposals from the entire system.

### **Facilities Master Plan**

There is a comprehensive facilities master plan for UPRM that dates from 1996 and is in-force until 2020. The plan included enrollment projections, technology infrastructure, surroundings maintenance, art works, and even projection on city developments. Unfortunately, budgetary restrictions have limited the implementation of the plan. By this date, two of the proposed buildings were constructed during the last decade and are in use. (New Business Administration Building, and Biology Building). Other buildings like Luis D. Celis, the Institute of Tropical Agriculture (MUSA), and the Dean of Students' building, have been restored to address institutional needs. The technology infrastructure has improved significantly and the Athletic Track will be renovated during 2015-2016 for the second time in 10 years.

### **Facilities are adequately supported and staffed to accomplish the institution's objectives for student learning**

Classrooms, laboratories, computer centers and the library are the main learning centers, but the UPRM is continuously improving its technological offerings to improve the learning experience. Most classrooms in UPRM are equipped with projectors and wired or wireless internet2 access to facilitate the integration of technology into the courses. In addition, the UPRM internet2 Wi-Fi signal covers the whole campus and surrounding area, providing access to students even if they are not physically in the campus. The CTI has also included the Virtual Computing Lab (VCL) into its offerings. The VCL provides the students with access to the UPRM software licenses over the internet. Along with these access opportunities, the UPRM provides also physical computer centers and study centers. Currently the campus counts with 37 computer centers and 14 study centers distributed throughout the campus. According to 83% of the students, UPRM resources are adequate to achieve its mission and objectives and to support academic programs. According to all deans,

library resources, service and staffing is adequate to achieve institutional mission and objectives. Among students, 91% agree on the statement that library resources are adequate and 74% have the same opinion about the computer centers.

### **Educational and other equipment acquisition and replacement process and plan, including provision for current and future technology, as appropriate to the educational programs and support services**

Before 2014-2015, different strategies were used at the UPRM JA to distribute the technology fees, from the evaluation of proposals submitted by the units, to the proportional distribution based on the number of students served. In 2014 UPRM JA determined that those procedures might result in a less than optimal distribution of funds, limiting the opportunities to embrace significant technology projects with impact to the whole campus. In response UPRM JA approved [certification 14-15-297](#) creating a committee entrusted to produce “*an institutional strategic plan for the development of the infrastructure for education and information technology.*” This plan will define the policies for the use of technology fees charged to students as part of their enrollment. At unit levels, 50% of academic directors reported to have a plan for the renewal of technological equipment.

### **Adequate institutional controls to deal with financial, administrative operations, and Annual independent audit confirming financial responsibility**

Controls over financial and administrative operations are continually assessed by several audit processes. UPRM is subject to frequent internal audits from the Office of the Comptroller of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to assess internal controls and compliance with principles of sound administration, and to annual external independent auditors who assess controls and compliance with external regulations including the OMB Circular A-133 report on federal financial assistance programs. The findings of any of these audits are reported directly to the Chancellor, along with the management letter. The UPRM audit coordinator is responsible for addressing the findings. During the last three years, the Office of the Comptroller has assigned three resident-auditors to the UPRM. During this period, the auditors have submitted five reports, and all have been answered. Control in all financial and administrative operations at UPRM is enforced by internal and external regulations. Even though R&D center, Information Technology Center and SEA are all UPRM units, they all are subjected to separate audits from the Office of the Comptroller.

### **Suggestions:**

- To strengthen its continuous improvement efforts UPRM should create an institutional permanent self-standing committee responsible for overseeing and assessing institutional effectiveness. This committee will serve as a support for OMCA and provide a mechanism for continuity of efforts. The specific task of the committee should be to identify institutional improvement opportunities.
- Keep assessment as simple as possible, focused on critical elements and in the results of the decision-making process. Assessment is not about overwhelming paperwork but about decisions, actions and results.

### **Recommendations**

- UPRM should enforce the use of standardized and scientific methods to make an appropriate assessment of staffing and facility’s needs in all units. (CRP)
- UPRM administration needs to communicate effectively the decision-making process and explain how resource allocations align with the institutional strategic plan and assessment process.

- Continue the efforts to maintain and publicize an Institutional Dash Board to ensure decisions are aligned to the institutional mission and objectives.
- UPRM must pursue its fair share from the UPR general fund. The funds distribution among campuses should consider changes in the enrollment, programs costs, institutional fiscal responsibility demonstrated on the management of previous budgets and institutional effectiveness, and the viability of the strategic plans of the campuses.

### **Commendations**

- UPRM should be commended for the inclusion of key performance indicators as part of the strategic plan and for the development and approval of an implementation plan at the UPRM JA. These actions should foster institutional awareness and facilitate the achievement of institutional goals and objectives.
- The UPRM Chancellor is to be commended for his commitment with strategic planning and assessment evidenced in the actions taken as soon as he was appointed in July 2014, specifically the reactivation of OMCA and the allocation of a \$1M to exclusively support projects aligned to the UPRM 2012-2022 Strategic Plan.
- The Administration Deanship should be commended for noticeably taking the leadership in strategic planning, assessment and resource allocation. After the UPRM 2012-2022 Strategic Plan was approved, the Administration Deanship was the first unit to have a revised, complete and aligned strategic plan for the unit. The current Dean and unit directors have consistently demonstrated their commitment with, and complete understanding of, the planning process, as well as their eagerness to obtain results.
- The OIIP must be commended for its fortitude, effort, and dedication to creating, publicizing, and implementing the mission and objectives within the UPRM community.

## **Standard 4: Leadership and Governance and Standard 5: Administration Background**

The MSCHE requirements of affiliation and standards for accreditation define Leadership and Governance as characteristics of institutions that have a system of governance that clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance organization includes a governing body with autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution. Correspondingly, Administration is defined as the institution's administrative structure and services that facilitate learning, research, and scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance. The "2005 MSCHE Report to the Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students" concluded that UPRM met both *Standard 4: Leadership and Governance* and *Standard 5: Administration*. Moreover, concerning Standard 4, MSCHE commended the UPR President for establishing an environment of communication and collaborative work and the UPRM Chancellor for setting a bold and ambitious vision for the campus. On the other hand, the 2005 MSCHE Evaluation Team documented that "The (2005) Self-Study repeatedly describes a history of tension and conflict with the governing body of the UPR system. Many of the difficulties expressed by the Mayagüez campus are, however, not unique to this system but in fact reflect the dynamics of many structures in higher education" (p. 8). In regard to Standard 5, MSCHE suggested that (1) the roles and responsibilities of the Dean of Academic Affairs should be expanded and strengthened to become a chief academic officer; and (2) the immediate supervisor, i.e. the UPR President and the UPRM chancellor be included in the selection of candidates for Chancellor and deans, respectively, to make the selection process more comprehensive and effective. UPRM did not act upon these suggestions because they are in conflict with current UPR Law and Bylaws.

During the period 2005 to 2009, both the UPR Board of Trustees (UPR BT) and the Presidency continued to be advocates of the institution and to promote the institution's integrity. In addition, UPRM seemed to accept that the central administration governs and administers the UPR system and that has an authority to control costs, increase tuition charges, approve degree programs, and appoint and terminate chancellors, as it deems appropriate.

By 2009 also, the global recession observed in world markets severely affected Puerto Rico and, as usually occurs during times of financial constraints, tough decisions had to be made, and tensions started to surface in the UPR community. These pressures prompted some sectors of the UPRM academic community to make allegations of political interference, improper use of authority and micromanagement of UPRM especially by the UPR-BT and the Office of the President. In July 2009, the UPR-BT placed in moratorium all faculty promotions. This freeze lasted for four years; currently promotions are delayed only by one year. Many faculty members believed that this directive violated the UPR Law because the authority to grant faculty promotions and tenures resides on the UPRM Administrative Board and not on the UPR-BT. On the other hand, the UPR-BT and the President have always claimed to be advocates and defenders of the UPR system as a whole, to be responsible for its quality, to govern and administer an entire system of institutions and that, consequently, they have indeed a very legitimate authority to control costs.

MSCHE is well aware of "*the idiosyncrasies and nuances of Puerto Rican politics and its effect on the university*" and the consequences of these peculiarities. However, on October 22, 2009, Vice Presidents of MSCHE asked for an Information Report from the UPR because of their concerns

about actions supposedly associated to the UPR-BT and the then Acting President of the UPR. On November 13, 2009, the UPR Central Administration submitted to the Acting President of MSCHE the requested Information Report. This report recognized that the 2009-2010 transition process was atypical and surrounded by an extraordinary set of circumstances both internal and external to the University that had led the MSCHE Vice Presidents to misinterpretations of its causes and effects on the UPR system. The Report clarified to MSCHE that (1) there were no resignations or changes in the composition of the UPR BT prompted neither by the change in government (in 2009) nor by the resignation of the President of the UPR, Antonio García Padilla; (2) the actions of the UPR BT during the transition process were in compliance with the Law and institutional regulations; (3) there was no removal of key leadership positions in the UPR prompted by the UPR BT; (4) the credentials and experience of the then Acting President, his appointed staff and body of Chancellors ensured the continuity of the University affairs.

During the last 10 years, the UPR system has had only one period of student unrest in response to increases in tuition charges. On April 12, 2010, the UPRM General Student Council rejected the increase in tuition charges for the summer session. About a week later, students at UPR Río Piedras declared a 48-hour walkout from classes and academic activities and closed the campus gates protesting for a proposed revision of the tuition waiver rules being considered by the Central Administration. The following day, a group of UPRM students decided to join the walkout at UPR Río Piedras and closed UPRM campus gates. Within days, ten campuses joined this protest that soon became an indefinitely student walkout from classes and academic activities at the UPR system. On May 3, 2010, the UPRM General Student Council conducted a student referendum - 5,750 students (41.6%) participated - and an indefinite student walkout was approved by a majority of 50.4% (a difference of 44 votes). On May 17, 2010, Commission staff met with senior University officials and members of the UPR-BT concerning the ongoing student walkout. At the time, UPR agreed to provide a voluntary report, received by the Commission on June 1, 2010, responding to the Commission's concerns regarding UPR being operational, the availability and accessibility of UPR resources, UPR leadership and governance, and UPR educational offerings. On June 21, 2010, representatives of the UPR system administration reached an agreement with representatives of the students to end the walkout from classes and academic activities. Because of activities in the Mayagüez Campus related to the Central American and Caribbean Games, classes could not resume until August 2, 2010.

On June 15, 2010, five years after the decennial self-study and re-affirmation of accreditation, UPRM submitted its Periodic Review Report (PRR). This UPRM PRR summarized activities in progress pertaining MSCHE accreditation since 2005. The PRR was very optimistic about the short-term future of UPRM, partially based on the highly positive comments from the MSCHE Special Evaluation Team visit held in March 2008. The Report discussed six major challenges and opportunities, three of which were internal to UPRM and three were related to the UPR Central Administration. The PRR correctly identified as a challenge the first budget reduction in the history of the UPR System. At MSCHE, peer reviewers appraised the PRR and submitted a report to the institution, and UPR Mayagüez prepared its formal response. These reports were considered by the Commission at its November 18, 2010 meeting.

On June 24, 2010, MSCHE decided to place all UPR campuses on probation for the "lack of evidence" that the Institution complied with Standards 3, 4 and 11. MSCHE requested that - by September 1, 2010 - UPRM submitted a monitoring report (1) demonstrating compliance with the accreditation standards 4 and 11; (2) ensuring the rigor, continuity, and duration of the courses that

were affected by the closing of UPRM; and (3) presenting evidence of the development and implementation of a long-term financial plan (Standard 3).

In August 2010, the government decided to [amend the Law of the University](#) to change the composition of the UPR-BT by increasing its number of members from 13 to 17. The new UPR-BT was composed by fourteen citizens appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate of Puerto Rico and they would serve for six-year terms. It also included two UPR faculty members, elected by and among the faculty representatives in the UPR University Board and one student, elected by and among the student representatives in the UPR University Board; all three of them would serve for a one-year term. All members of the previous Board kept their appointments until their corresponding terms expired ([CERTIFICACIÓN NÚMERO 6 2010-2011](#)).

On September 2010, UPR submitted a Monitoring Report as requested by the Commission and, on September 12-16, 2010, an on-site team visit took place to verify the institution's status. This Monitoring Report showed that (1) UPRM was making tough budgetary decisions and moving forward in all its academic programs and research and service initiatives; (2) the difficult financial situation had been an excellent opportunity for assessment, for improvement of several administrative procedures, and for pondering UPRM expending priorities; and (3) although academic activities were interrupted, UPRM was able to comply with the rigor, continuity, and length of its offerings. The monitoring report, the on-site visiting team report, and the institutional response were reviewed by the MSCHE Committee on Follow-Up Activities and on November 18, 2010, the Commission acted to continue UPRM's probation because of a lack of evidence that the institution complied with Standard 3, Standard 4, and, based on the 2010 UPRM PRR, Standard 2. UPRM remained accredited while on probation.

On March 1, 2011, UPRM submitted its second Monitoring Report to MSCHE in less than one year. In this Report, UPRM addressed all the issues raised by the Commission and concluded that UPRM continued being the premier system of higher education in Puerto Rico and maintained its forefront position in teaching, research, and dissemination. At its session on June 23, 2011, the MSCHE accepted UPRM second Monitoring Report and, based on the recommendation of a small team visit that took place after the submission of the Report, MSCHE decided to remove probation and reaffirm UPRM full accreditation status. However, MSCHE requested a third monitoring report documenting further progress in (1) strengthening institutional resources; (2) the timely production of audited financial statements; (3) steps taken to improve communication and shared governance; (4) implementation of the UPR Action Plan; (5) steps taken to assure continuity and stability of institutional leadership, particularly in times of governmental transitions; (6) communication between the Central Administration and UPRM; (7) implementing a procedure for the periodic objective assessment of the UPR-BT. On March 1, 2012, UPRM submitted, on time, its third Monitoring Report documenting the progress in each of the seven areas specified by MSCHE. On June 28, 2012, MSCHE accepted the Monitoring Report and scheduled the next evaluation visit for academic year 2015-2016.



On April 29, 2013, the newly elected Government of Puerto Rico [repealed](#) Article 3 of Act No. 1 of January 20, 1966, as amended, known as the "Law of the University of Puerto Rico", and replaced it with a new Article 3, for the purpose of eliminating the UPR BT. A new Governing Board of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR GB) was created with its composition, functioning rules, duties, and powers. On April 30, 2013, Law No. 13 was enacted. Under Section (a), the amendment eliminated the administrative role of the UPR-BT, leaving only its governance function. Once this law took effect, all members of the UPR-BT were terminated in their functions, with the exception of the student representative and the two faculty representatives, who became part of the new UPR-GB. The Law also empowered the Governor to appoint the first eight members of the UPR-GB to take immediate possession of their respective offices. On June 13, 2013, MSCHE requested a Supplemental Information Report addressing (1) impact on institutional leadership of the recent changes in governance and administration and (2) the UPR investigation by NSF's Office of the Inspector General. UPR submitted the information requested and explained that the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico exercised its constitutional prerogative and authority and reorganized the UPR-BT so that the Institution might be able to fulfill its mission and objectives and renamed it to UPR Governing Board (UPR GB). With this reorganization, the Legislative Assembly of PR decided (1) to reduce the size of the UPR governing board back to 13 members; (2) given the recent challenges at UPR, to emphasize the responsibility of the new Board in ensuring the fulfillment of all requirements made by accreditation agencies of recognized academic value; and (3) to protect the University from political interventions as well as any anti-intellectual trends, which may manifest themselves within the community, that are prejudicial to the academic and public mission of UPR. The intention of Law 13 of April 30, 2013 was to initiate efforts in reclaiming the interests of UPR, so that the Institution may possess the necessary conditions to advance teaching, research, and continue offering its services for the benefit of society. In addition, this law addressed other demands voiced by the academic community, such as the restoration of the 9.6% assignment in the University budget formula; the return of the lands that were taken from its Agricultural Experiment Stations; and the elimination of the stabilization fee (\$800/year/student).

The imminent approval of this law prompted the resignation of the UPR President, Dr. Miguel Muñoz and other high-ranking UPR officials on April 28, 2013. Dr. Jorge Rivera Santos, UPRM Chancellor, submitted his resignation effective on May 1, 2013. On May 2, 2013, the UPR GB convened and, in its first meeting, appointed Dr. José Lasalde as Interim President of the UPR. Dr. Lasalde had been Vice President for Research and Technology of the UPR since 2010; the UPR GB accepted the resignations of the Chancellors of several campuses. In light of the UPRM Chancellor resignation, the UPR GB carefully considered the credentials of each candidate for the positions of Interim Chancellor. Student and faculty representatives in the UPR GB informed Academic Senators and members of the University Board of the new process and requested from them and the community recommendations for candidates. The UPR-GB encouraged the active and ample participation of the academic community, including professors, students, and staff. Because of this process, a list of candidates was generated. The Chair and Secretary of the UPR-GB conducted public hearings at the Mayagüez Campus. They met with various groups and individuals who shared their views and many endorsed specific candidates for the interim position. On May 13, 2013, Dr. Andrés Calderón was appointed Interim Chancellor for UPRM.

On June 24, 2013, MSCHE requested that a new Supplemental Information Report addressing (1) the impact on institutional leadership of the recent changes in governance and administration; (2) the investigation by the NSF's Office of the Inspector General, and (3) actions planned or taken by

the University to ensure ongoing compliance with Standards 4, 5, and 6. The report was submitted, on time, by Dr. José A. Lasalde Dominicci, Interim President of the UPR and stated, “We are confident that the University of Puerto Rico is in full compliance with Standard 4, as required by the Fundamental Elements of Leadership and Governance. We are also convinced that the itemized actions of the UPR-GB since the enactment of Law 13 of 2013, as previously described and documented, attest to the functional normalcy of the University of Puerto Rico and the diligent efforts to secure the continued wellbeing of the institution.” On November 21, 2013 MSCHE accepted the supplemental information report submitted by the Interim President of the UPR and requested a monitoring report, due April 1, 2014, documenting evidence of an independent audit for FY2013, with evidence of follow-up on any concerns cited in the audit's accompanying management letter for both FY2012 and FY2013 (Standard 3). MSCHE also reminded the institution of its obligation to inform the Commission about all significant developments related to the investigation of the NSF within ten business days of their occurrence. MSCHE further reminded UPR of its obligation to ensure timely production of audited financial statements.

In 2013, in response to university community’s longstanding need for profound changes in governance, the UPR University Board requested all academic senates to elaborate proposals for a university reform. The Board urged the senates to create committees with representation from faculty, students and support personnel. The UPRM Academic Senate formed such a committee. This Committee worked on the reforms to be proposed for approximately a year and organized a system wide Symposium on University Reform which was held in January 2014 at UPRM. Experts with different perspectives on the complex subject were invited to the event. Student representatives, administrative personnel, and mostly faculty from all UPR campuses attended the Symposium. The work of UPRM’s Institutional Committee culminated in May 2014 when the Senate approved its proposal to promote changes in university culture directed towards a more participative university and recommendations to make key modifications to the University Bylaws.

The Committee and the UPRM Academic Senate agreed that modifications to the UPR Law would require a concerted effort that would take more time and would require the sort of external political support that still had to be cultivated. It proposed three reasonable changes in the Bylaws that should to some extent protect the University from the administrative instability and excessive centralization that results from political parties taking turns selecting academic administrators and micro-managing the University from the Governing Board and party headquarters. The recommended changes involve:

1. Strengthening the university community’s participation in the procedure for introducing amendments to the University Bylaws and in the processes for establishing institutional policies.
2. Modifying the selection processes for president, chancellors and deans and to introduce fixed terms and periodic evaluations by their respective constituents.
3. Creating a rigorous impeachment process in the University Bylaws.

In November of 2014, the UPRM Academic Senate approved the specific changes proposed by the Committee and agreed to submit them to the scrutiny of all UPR academic senates, the students throughout the system, and the Governing Board. There are 11 academic senates in the UPR system. At this time, six academic senates have endorsed the changes as they were proposed. Two academic senates endorsed them with minor changes. One academic senate endorsed a specific change and

did not say anything in relation to the others; and two academic senates proposed changes in support for the general concept.

### **Findings**

In this Section, Task Force 3 reports what was found regarding (1) UPRM system of governance; (2) how UPRM defines the roles of its constituencies in policy development and decision-making; and (3) how UPRM administrative structure assists in learning and research activities. It also describes UPRM governance structure and procedures according to its regulations and how this structure and its actions are perceived by the community according to the responses to surveys and questionnaires received by TF3. Emphasis is placed in addressing the issue of whether the governing bodies assure institutional integrity and that policy and resources are developed consistently with the UPRM vision and mission. All statements regarding beliefs of faculty members concerning the standards of excellence are based on the results of a survey to a self-selected sample of 328 faculty members. Statements regarding particular Colleges and Dean Offices are based on responses to questionnaires and surveys submitted by the corresponding units. Two deans decided not to respond the questionnaires and surveys prepared by this Task Force. TF3 really missed the potential valuable inputs from the Dean of Art and Sciences and the Dean of Students.

### **Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

The structures of the UPR System, in general, and of the UPRM, in particular, are established by the Law of the University of Puerto Rico. The Law and the UPR Bylaws define the UPR governance structure; describe the collegial nature of its governance; and the duties and responsibilities of its constituencies. These documents also explain the selection process for governing body members, chancellors, deans, and department directors. Both documents, the UPR Law and its Bylaws are available, in Spanish, at

- [http://juntagobierno.upr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Ley\\_1-1966\\_UPR\\_Comp.pdf](http://juntagobierno.upr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Ley_1-1966_UPR_Comp.pdf), and
- <http://www.uprm.edu/ac/regulaciones/reglamentoupr.pdf>, respectively.

TF3 has found that UPRM has a well-defined system of collegial governance that clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making; their roles are stated in the UPR Law and Bylaws. The top governing bodies at the University of Puerto Rico are the Governing Board, the University Board, and the President. The UPR-Mayagüez governing bodies are the Chancellor, the Administrative Board, and the Academic Senate. Students have representatives in the Administrative Board and in the Academic Senate; these representations provide appropriate opportunities for student input regarding decisions that affect them. Moreover, current regulations provide these bodies with the necessary independence to guarantee UPRM integrity; the regulations also allow them to accomplish their policy and resource-development duties according to UPRM's strategic plan.

TF3 has found that UPRM has written governing documents, specifically, the Law the University of Puerto Rico and the UPR Bylaws that (1) delineate the duties and responsibilities as well as the selection process for the members of this structure; and (2) assign authority and accountability for policy development and decision making, including a process for the involvement of appropriate institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making. All UPR governing boards have representation from both faculty and students.

The UPR Governing Board is not chaired by the UPRM Chancellor or by the UPR President. According to the UPR Law, its President is elected by and amongst its members. The UPR Board guides the direction and development of the university system, examines and approves general operating rules proposed by the legislative and administrative bodies, and monitors the functioning of the institution. The Law also explicitly requires that the Board represent the public interest at the UPR and protect the University from partisan political interests or any other interests undermining its autonomy, and from anti-intellectual movements that oppose academic freedom.

The UPR Law and the UPR Bylaws describe and regulate the selection process for governing body members. In particular, the UPR Governing Board is composed of thirteen members: One undergraduate student; one graduate student; two tenured professors; the Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico; one professional with extensive knowledge and experience in the field of finance; one PR resident with well-known leadership participation in social and community issues; five outstanding professional PR residents (at least three of them should be UPR graduates); and one PR resident linked to Puerto Rican communities abroad. Other than the two students and the two faculty members, members of the UPR Governing Board are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate of Puerto Rico.

Similarly, the composition of the UPR University Board, the UPRM Administrative Board, and the Academic Senate and the selection of their members are also clearly defined in the UPR Law and Bylaws. Regrettably, the perception of the UPRM community regarding the selection process of the non-elected members of the UPR-Governing Board and the UPRM Administrative Board is unsettling. Sixty one percent of faculty members believe that administrators at UPRM are selected for political reasons, and only 8% do not believe so. In addition, 52% of the faculty members do not perceive the process for selecting administrators as being fair; 21% of them perceive the process as just. Only 18% of the faculty considers the process for selecting administrators as open and transparent, and 55% do not. About half of faculty members believe that UPRM does not have a transparent process for selecting administrators based on their qualifications, which is more than twice the percent of members that believe it does (21%). Forty-seven percent of the faculty thinks the Chancellor is not held accountable for the primary responsibilities of the position, while 21% of the faculty thinks he is. These beliefs might be rooted in the fact that changes in leadership and senior personnel at UPR and UPRM are, more often than not, the result of changes in the political party controlling the PR government rather than the result of formal, transparent, objective, and periodical assessments of the performance and effectiveness of the UPR President, the UPRM Chancellor, and Deans. This is not a new concern. In Section II of the “1995 MSCHE Evaluation Team’s Draft Report to the Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students of UPRM”, the visiting team stated:

We believe that the entire public system of higher education together with the help of enlightened legislators must work to secure for higher education on the island the autonomy necessary to insulate it from political changes on the island. If the campuses of the University of Puerto Rico were not buffeted by political change and if there were greater continuity and more predictable terms of office in administrative positions, we might see evidence of improved stability and continuity, a better campus morale, an end to the existence of political winners and losers on the campuses, and the beginnings of more cohesive campus communities. (p. 9)

Twenty years later, UPRM is still longing and yearning for processes and legislation from enlightened lawmakers that secure and enhance UPRM autonomy to protect it from political

vicissitudes. Although the unpredictable terms in senior administrative positions have not stopped this institution from moving forward, certainly, they have not contributed to an improved morale, confidence, and optimism, or to a more unified academic community, and may have slowed its progress. In general, the academic community is exasperated with its inability to deal with this issue, as demonstrated by the decision of the UPRM Academic Senate of not participating in the most recent consulting process for selection of the UPRM Chancellor, and the unusual low number of candidates available for several dean positions. Almost 90% of UPRM academic senators opine that UPRM administrators, especially chancellors and deans, are selected for political reasons.

During the last ten years, the UPR governing board has changed its composition twice. First, in 2010, its size was changed by the Government of PR from 13 to 17 (the new law added four members to the existing Board of Trustees). Three years later, in 2013, the Government of PR changed the UPR Law to replace the seventeen-member UPR Board of Trustees with a new thirteen-member UPR Governing Board. TF3 could not find written evidence of a formal process for orienting new board members during these transition periods; however, the Office of the President regularly provides them with updates on the UPR mission, its organization, and the direction and objectives of its academic programs. This task force believes that both governing boards were and are capable of reflecting constituent and public interest and their size was appropriate to fulfill all their responsibilities; both boards included members with sufficient expertise, knowledge, and competencies to assure that the Board could, appropriately and timely, carry out its fiduciary responsibilities and duties. The capabilities, experience, and abilities of the members of the Board are clearly documented in the reports on the state of the UPR system that the Board submits annually to the UPR Legislature. On the other hand, several members of the UPRM academic community feel that the UPR Boards have been often heavily influenced by the Central Administration and, on occasions, they may have improperly used their authority and micromanaged the academic affairs at UPRM. For example, the UPRM Dean of Academic Affairs believes the Board has the expertise to fulfill its responsibilities; “however, sometimes over the past ten years, the board assumed responsibilities that the academic community perceived that belonged to other university bodies; for example, making final decisions about academic programs.” He states, “During the last ten years, there has been dissatisfaction in our academic community with the work of the people assigned to that position. It was perceived that the Office of the VPAA was not taking into consideration the particularities of each campus and overemphasized uniformity, limiting our campus academic development. It was also perceived that many processes were centralized without adequate justification or authority.” He also recognizes that “recently, it is perceived that a better relationship is evolving between [UPRM and] the Vice-Presidency of Academic Affairs (VPAA).”

TF3 has found that UPR and UPRM offer appropriate opportunities for student input regarding decisions that affect them. Students have representation in the UPR Governing Board (2 out of 13 voting members), the UPR University Board (11 out of 38 voting members), UPRM Administrative Board (1 out of 11 voting members), and the UPRM Academic Senate (9 out of 50 senators). In addition, the UPRM General Student Council is the UPRM students’ official voice; it represents them in all events, and it has played a leadership role in student activities that have motivated policy changes in the UPR system. Students are also represented in all general meetings at both college and departmental levels.

The UPR Law was amended by Law No. 13 that was enacted on April 30, 2013. Under Section (a), the amendment eliminated the administrative role delegated to the Board of Trustees in the 1998

amendment, leaving only its governance function; consequently, at UPRM, its Chancellor is responsible for certifying compliance with the requirements of MSCHE. However, given the recent challenges to UPR accreditation, the UPR Governing Board is making sure that all UPR units are fulfilling all requirements made by accreditation agencies of recognized academic value, including both institutional and professional accreditations, as well as being in full compliance with all the regulations of agencies providing funding and sponsoring research. During the recent years, the UPRM chancellors have been submitting reports and certifying to MSCHE that the UPRM complies with the eligibility requirements, accreditation standards, and policies of the Commission. All submitted reports to MSCHE have been accepted; the relevant contents of these reports are also used for UPR licensing requirements by the Puerto Rico Council of Education making sure that UPR describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting and regulatory agencies. In June 24, 2010, when UPR was placed on probation by MSCHE, an announcement was promptly circulated to the UPRM community and this event was widely reported in the local press. Throughout the years, UPRM has disclosed information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. During the last five years, in addition to its 2010 UPRM Periodic Review Report, UPR and UPRM have submitted four other reports to MSCHE to provide information required by the Commission regarding specific standards of accreditation.

TF3 has found that UPRM has a clearly written conflict-of-interest policy for all the members of its governing bodies (UPR-BT, UPR University Board, UPRM, and Administrative Board) as well as for all its employees. The Ethics in Government Act of Puerto Rico (as amended in 2012) was enacted to promote and preserve the integrity of public officials and institutions of the Government of Puerto Rico; it is available (in Spanish) at <http://eticapr.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/OEG-Ley-Num-1-de-3-de-enero-de-2012.pdf>). The Act establishes a code of ethics for all public officials and employees. Senior government officials and UPR administrators in sensitive positions are required to submit annual reports on their personal finances. The Act establishes (1) a Code of Ethics for current and former public employees and former public servants; (2) prohibitions related to other employment, contracts or business; (3) prohibitions related to the representation of private interests that might be in conflict with official duties; (4) the duty to report possible unethical situations, actions, or conflicts of interest; (5) restrictions on the actions of former public employees; (6) sanctions and penalties for violations of the Code of Ethics, both criminal, civil, administrative or judicial; (7) provisions on financial reporting; its applicability; (8) the frequency and scope of the financial reports; (9) the content of the reports, the term to audit and actions related to financial reporting; among other provisions. More specifically, Certification 159-1995-1996 of the UPR-BT amended Article 2 (Structure, Internal Composition of the Board, Duties, and Ethical obligations of the Trustees) of the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees adding Section G. The Section describes the ethical duties and responsibilities of the Trustees and disciplinary proceedings and sanctions. The [document](#) is available in Spanish. The Ethics in Government Act of Puerto Rico and internal regulations address matters such as remuneration, contractual relationships, employment, family, financial or other interests that could pose conflicts of interest, and that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution.

### **Standard 5: Administration**

The UPRM Chancellor is the maximum administrative and academic authority within UPRM. The Chancellor is appointed to the position by the Governing Board at the request of the UPR

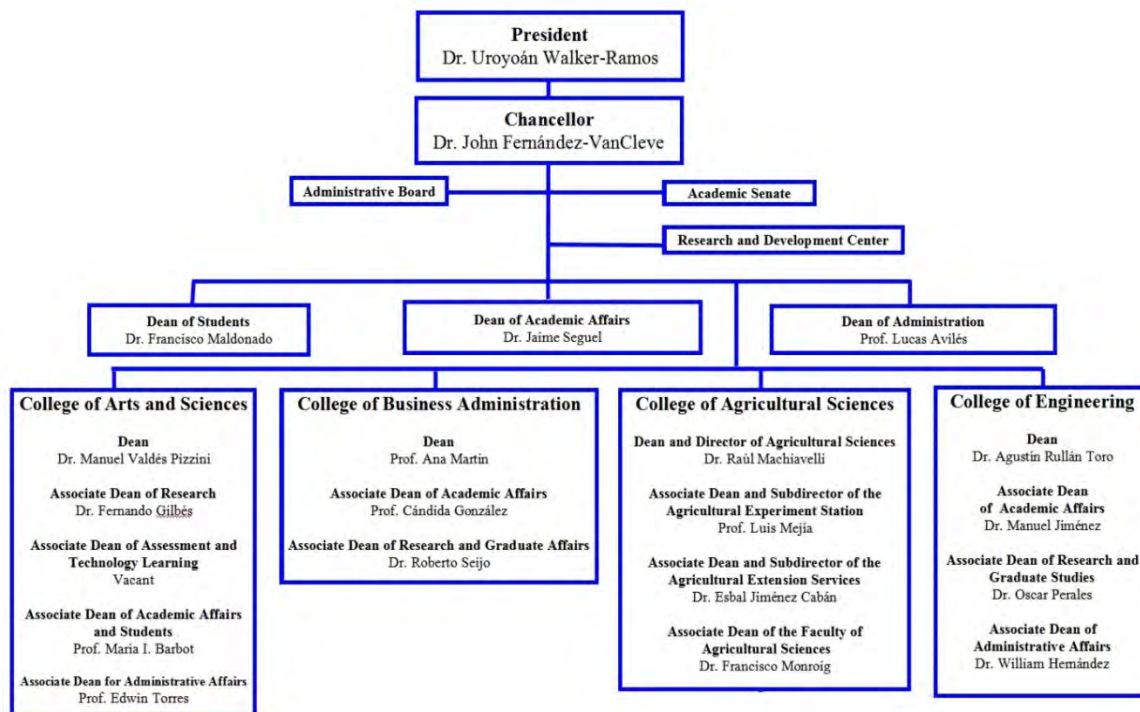
President, in consultation with the UPRM Academic Senate. In general, the Chancellor administers the institution and, based on the Strategic Plan, leads UPRM toward the achievement of its goals. The Chancellor carries out duties and responsibilities by:

- Preparing an annual budget proposal - based on the recommendations of the departments, colleges and other units - which, after being approved by the Administrative Board, is submitted to the President and the UPR University Board.
- Submitting an annual report on the UPRM activities to the UPR President and the UPR Governing Board.
- Establishing the necessary mechanisms for the Administrative Board, Colleges, and Academic Senate to carry out their lawful decisions.
- Presiding over the Academic Senate, the Administrative Board and the UPR faculty meetings.
- Appointing Deans - after consultation with the personnel of the corresponding college – and simultaneously notifying the UPR President and the UPR Governing Board. The UPR Governing Board summons the Chancellor and the President to a hearing to assess the benefits of such appointments. These appointments are made effective by the UPR Governing Board within sixty days from the date of notification. Deans serve at the pleasure of the Chancellor. The appointments of the Dean of Students, Dean of Administration and Dean of Academic Affairs are made in consultation with the UPRM Academic Senate. The UPRM Chancellor also appoints, with the approval of the Governing Board, the directors of the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Agricultural Extension Service, in consultation with the staff of these agencies.
- Appointing the department heads, with the recommendation of the dean, after consultation with the faculty and staff of the corresponding department.
- Hiring tenure and tenure-track faculty members, visiting professors and lecturers. Deans propose these appointments based upon the recommendation of the director of the department and the corresponding personnel committees.
- Hiring administrative personnel based upon the recommendation of the corresponding dean and department director.
- Supervising the university administrative personnel and faculty members in their managerial, teaching, technical, and research functions.
- Representing UPRM in events, ceremonies, and academic functions.

TF3 has found that during the last ten years, all UPRM Chancellors have had the blend of educational background, professional experience, and leadership qualities necessary to guide the institution toward its vision and facilitate the accomplishment of its mission. In particular, the UPRM current Chancellor, Dr. John Fernández Van Cleve is a professor in the Department of Animal Science of the College of Agricultural Sciences at UPRM. He was appointed Chancellor by the Governing Board on July 1, 2014 based on the recommendation of Dr. Uroyoán Walker Ramos, the UPR President. Immediately before his appointment, Dr. Fernández Van Cleve was serving as associate director in his department, and from 1994 to 1997 and from 2002 to 2009 he served as Dean and Director of the College of Agricultural Sciences. Dr. Fernández Van Cleve, who is well known for being a spokesperson on the issue of food security, has a bachelor's degree in Animal Science from UPRM; a master's degree in Dairy Cattle Management from Texas A&M University; and a Ph.D. in Reproductive Physiology from the University of Kentucky at Lexington.

TF3 believes that, in general, UPRM has administrative leaders, deans, and academic directors with the appropriate combination of abilities, talents, academic degrees, and practical experience to perform their duties and day-to-day functions. However, TF3 found quite troublesome that two of UPRM deans failed to embrace fully the MSCHE accreditation process and decided not to answer the questionnaires and surveys submitted to them. On the other hand, less than a third (32%) of the faculty perceive that administrators have appropriate skills, education, and training to carry out their responsibilities and functions, and 42% believe that administrators do not have the appropriate level of such skills, training or education. Less than a fifth (19.8%) of the faculty believes that administrators are selected based on their skills and education, while 53% of them consider that they are selected based on other characteristics. In addition, only 16% of the elected academic senators believe that, during the last 10 years, the UPR Central Administration has consistently had administrative leaders with the appropriate set of skills, degrees, and training to carry out their responsibilities and functions.

TF3 found evidence that there is clear documentation of the lines of organization and authority at UPRM. The following organizational chart illustrates such lines for high-level positions; a more detailed chart is available from OIIP.



TF3 believes that, in general, UPRM has a staff that is appropriately qualified to support the day-to-day operations of the institution; this task force, however, could not find any empirical study to justify current staffing levels in each unit (college, department, or office) according to their complexity. However, staffing levels are regularly being assessed – mostly by deans – and adjusted following ad hoc procedures to manage organizational changes, special circumstances, and events. Most of UPRM faculty members (54%) believe that the number of administrators is sufficient for the complexity and size of the institution and enough to attain UPRM’s goals, and only about 13% of them do not believe so.



#### **Commendations on Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

- The UPR University Board, the UPRM Academic Senate, and specially the UPRM's Institutional Committee must be praised for gaining the backing of the UPR community to support changes in university culture directed towards a more participative university and recommending modifications to the University Bylaws that, to some extent, will protect the University from more centralization and micro-managing and the administrative instability that results from external political influence.

#### **Recommendations on Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

- UPRM and UPR in general should take steps to assure continuity and stability of its high-level leadership (UPR President and UPRM Chancellor), particularly in times of governmental transitions.
- UPRM should develop a procedure that guarantees that, in times of changes in leadership, the changeover is not abrupt, sudden, and disruptive, but one that includes a short but gradual transition period that assures the stability of the day-to-day activities and the continuity of the mission-critical projects and strategic initiatives under way.
- The UPR GB and the UPR President should improve the flow and exchange of information, and broaden opportunities for productive communication and input from the UPRM community to stimulate a climate of trust, collaboration, and commitment with the UPRM mission, goals and challenges, especially on issues such as resource allocation and academic autonomy.

#### **Recommendations on Standard 5: Administration**

- UPRM through OMCA should implement an assessment plan that regularly measures the effectiveness of UPRM administrative structures and the services that they provide.
- UPRM through OMCA and OIIP, with the support of in-house experts, should initiate an institution-wide and systematic assessment of the sufficiency of clerical, technological, and other administrative personnel.
- UPRM should develop and implement a plan for periodically reviewing the effectiveness of its deans, directors, supervisors, and administrators to carry out the functions of the institution and make them accountable for their performance.

## **Standard 6: Integrity**

### **Background**

The 2006 MSCHE *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* synoptically defines integrity as: “In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom” (p. 21). Thus integrity concerns much more than whether an institution represents itself truthfully to its stakeholders. Integrity involves adherence to ethical standards, including fairness, due process, and respect of individual human beings, as well as internal and external consistence. In addition to intellectual honesty, issues to be taken into consideration include the right to free and informed consent; fair and impartial processes concerning areas such as hiring, evaluation, admissions, dismissal, and grievance procedures; mutual respect among its constituencies; and the respect for academic and intellectual freedom.

The 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report commended the 2005 Self Study for its effective “use of survey data to gather information regarding faculty, staff, and student perspectives on a number of important issues related to fairness, due process, impartiality, and respect for persons” (p. 10). The attempt was made to follow the same procedure for the Standard of Integrity in the 2015 Self Study, all the while making extensive use of the information that appears in the UPR *By-Laws*, *Manuals*, and in official certifications.

The 2005 Final Visit Report, however, noted some concerns:

The Self Study does point to concerns by faculty and staff regarding the clarity of policies and due process, particularly in the area of personnel evaluation. The need to make policies and practices clear and accessible was a recurrent theme. For example, it is evident that policies relating to conflict of interest and plagiarism need to be communicated more effectively. (p. 10)

Accordingly, the 2005 Report recommended that:

The UPRM needs to provide clear information to all employees regarding evaluation procedures. Staff and administrators should be evaluated formally on an annual basis according to established goals. (p. 10)

In addition, on 24 June 2013, UPRM received a letter from Dr. Tito Guerrero, III, MSCHE Vice President, requesting a Supplemental Information Report be prepared by the UPRM that:

[A]ddresses the impact on institutional leadership of the recent changes in governance and administration, the investigation by the National Science Foundation's Office of the Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and actions planned or taken by the University to ensure ongoing compliance with Standards 4, 5, and 6.

According to Dr. Guerrero's letter, the request was triggered by “recent coverage in the media” concerning the above mentioned issues. The report was submitted to MSCHE and UPRM was notified on 22 November 2013 that the report had been accepted. The UPRM's response concerning Integrity is available as part of said Report which is accessible in the Appendices. However, as background for understanding the political issue in the proper context, a quick overview of the political climate in Puerto Rico is helpful.

Puerto Rico, a U. S. Commonwealth, is politically split more or less equally down the middle because about 45% favor continuing some form of the present relationship with the United States and another 45% favor the idea that Puerto Rico should be a state of the union. This has led to the existence of two major parties in Puerto Rico with one defending the first point of view and the

latter the second. The result of this more or less even split, as well as of the overall financial difficulties of the Commonwealth due to, among other things, its extended welfare-state policies, the lack of sufficient economic development, and its dependency on increasing the number of governmental employees to cover somewhat the high rate of unemployment, may be interpreted as some of the reasons, that since about 1968, there has tended to be a turnover in the Commonwealth-level government every four or eight years. This, of course, has had its effect on the upper level management of the university. The Governing Board of the University (formerly called the Board of Trustees) is responsible, among other things, for appointing the upper-level management of the university. The Board, whose members have staggered terms, is appointed directly by the Governor. Thus, when the current party in power obtains a majority of members on the Board, there tends to be a change in the university's upper management.

This may account for the opinion on the surveys regarding the influence of politics on the university. However, as is explained in more detail in the full TF report on integrity, it can be argued that while upper-level management at UPR and UPRM has tended to change every few years, this has not affected significantly the everyday functioning and well-being of the university, and thus the education received by students. A shorter and a longer justification are given in the full task force report. The shorter answer is that given the enabling law of UPR, the nature of UPR regulations and procedures, the existence and inviolable nature of faculty tenure, the long-established custom of a bottom up decision making for academic decisions consonant with the guild-like medieval nature of a traditional university, the strictness of the laws governing the firing of governmental employees, including non-teaching personnel, and the feisty independent nature of UPRM faculty and the Academic Senate, the institution's integrity is not affected adversely. To repeat what was said in 2005:

[In spite of changes in top level administration] students receive a high caliber education, they are granted their degrees, curricula are modified and improved, grants are obtained, research is carried out, graduates are recruited by the best companies in the United States and in Puerto Rico, the institution develops and improves, and the social goods of an institution of higher education are accomplished. The fundamental reason for this, according to the opinion of the task force and of the UPRM-MSCHE Steering Team, is the dedication of the faculty and especially of those who carry out the fundamental work done in committees and in the academic senate, backed up, of course, by dedicated and knowledgeable staff. One member of the steering team has fittingly referred to this as the 'permanent government.' Top-level administrators may come and go, but the dedicated faculty and staff keep the institution on track" (2005 Self Study, p. 51; also reproduced in the 2013 Supplemental Information Report)

## **Findings**

Regarding the present Self Study, the surveys and questionnaires administered again show no indication of any attempt on the part of UPRM to deceive any of its stakeholders or the public in general. It continues to be an honest, fair, respectful, well-intentioned institution working on behalf of the public good through the preparation of well-educated professionals. However, there continues to be some areas of dissatisfaction, particularly among the non-teaching personnel. In the survey administered to the latter, the satisfaction numbers regarding fairness of procedures concerning recruitment, evaluation, discipline, grievance, and conflicts of interest, were very low. On the contrary, the surveys administered to faculty and students tended to show more positive results regarding these issues, except, of course, regarding political influence. All of the data is provided and analyzed in detail in the TF 4 report. For this Self Study a synopsis of the most outstanding

findings and conclusions according to the surveys and questionnaires is provided below, although, to obtain a complete picture of the situation, the points of concern need to be compared with the actual existing institutional procedures (see full TF report). To facilitate a cross-reference with the fundamental elements, the latter have been numbered and are indicated after each specific finding in the table below.

<b>Finding – Topic: Information – Free and informed consent</b>	Fundamental element(s)
1. Information about UPRM is readily available to stakeholders, the general public, funding agencies, and accreditation agencies, and is deemed accurate	10 – 14, 16, 17
2. Information is disseminated in accord with the stated mission, goals, and objectives, and UPRM informs stakeholders of any changes in these in a timely fashion	10-14
3. Students have easy access to admission criteria and are informed about academic offerings, placement, employment prospects, evaluation, assessment, grievance procedures and disciplinary procedures	8, 10-12, 15, 16
4. Faculty is informed about procedures and requirements regarding: evaluation, promotion, tenure; but not procedures regarding discipline (only 50% positive) and dismissal (only 48% positive)	2
5. Non-teaching employees agree that they receive information regarding what is expected of them, but less than a majority of non-teaching personnel affirmed that they were provided accurate information about: evaluation procedures (46% positive versus 36 negative); disciplinary procedures (37% positive versus 43% negative), and conflict of interest procedures (30% positive versus 47% negative)	2, 3
6. Faculty acknowledges receiving information regarding property rights but just a slim majority (51%) opines that they receive information regarding conflicts of interest	3.6
7. Less than 50% of faculty opined that they are informed about student grievance procedures and disciplinary procedures, although, ironically, students believe that faculty is so informed	1
8. Only 58% of students claimed to be informed of grievance procedures – yet these procedures exist, are readily available, and UPRM has a student ombudsperson to provide students with help in this respect	1
<b>Findings – Topic: Procedures – Fairness of procedures and due process</b>	
9. Students believe that required courses are readily available and that academic offerings are adequate	9
10. Only a little over half of faculty (56%) expressed that the procedure at UPRM to deal with cheating and plagiarism (among students) is adequate, fair, and in accordance with due process; but they believe that the procedures to deal with intellectual honesty and research integrity are fair and in accord with due process	4
11. A majority of students believe that the grievance and disciplinary procedures are handled fairly and justly	1, 4
12. Faculty procedures regarding hiring, evaluation, promotion, and tenure are deemed fair and in accord with due process, but not disciplinary procedures	2, 4

13. Faculty, but not non-teaching employees, believe that procedures dealing with intellectual property rights and conflicts of interest are fair and in accord with due process	3, 6
14. Less than a majority of non-teaching deemed the following procedures to be fair and in accord with due process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment procedures – 54% negative, only 23% positive</li> <li>• Evaluation procedures – 49% negative, only 28% positive</li> <li>• Promotion procedures – 58% negative, only 20% positive</li> <li>• Disciplinary procedures – 49% negative, only 22% positive</li> <li>• Grievance procedures – 52% negative, only 21% positive</li> <li>• Conflicts of interest – 47% negative, only 20% positive</li> <li>• But here it should be noted that only 30% of non-teaching employees affirm having received information on avoiding conflicts of interest</li> </ul>	2, 4
15. While opining that procedures on recruitment, evaluation, promotion, and tenure are fair and in accord with due process, only 44% of faculty believes disciplinary procedures are fair and in accord with due process and only 46% agree that the procedures to deal with faculty grievances are fair and in accordance with due process	2,4
16. Only 46% of faculty believes that there is a procedure to assess integrity at UPRM	18
<b>Findings – Topic: Adherence to ethical standards, climate of respect, sense of community, and possible undue political influence</b>	
17. Faculty and students, but not non-teaching personnel, opine that they are treated fairly and with respect and that there exists an ambience of respect at UPRM	3, 7
18. The policies of the university are implemented in a manner that fosters an adherence to ethical standards, human dignity, and respect of the individual	3, 17
19. There is a respect for diversity at UPRM	3, 7
20. There is respect for academic freedom and a climate of academic inquiry at UPRM	3, 5
21. Only 27% (versus 51%) of non-teaching personnel believe that there is a sense of community at UPRM; only 50% of this personnel believe that the administration treats them justly and with respect; and only 44% believe that the norms and procedures at UPRM are carried out respectfully and with respect for human dignity and ethical norms	3,7
22. Only 32% of faculty and 20% of non-teaching employees opine that UPRM avoids undue political influence in the implementation of policies and procedure	General MSICHE policy – see Background

## **Suggestions/Possible Areas of Improvement:**

- The institution could carry out a detailed study of why, on the survey administered to the non-teaching employees, the opinions about various procedures and about the receiving of adequate information scored such high negatives. An effort might be made to discover why a majority of non-teaching employees do not believe that they are treated justly and why, in their opinion, there does not seem to exist a sense of community at UPRM. A concerted effort should be undertaken to improve the situation, especially since the appropriate regulations exist, they seem to be consistent, and that many years ago employees, including the non-teaching employees, used to speak of the “college family” (in Spanish: “familia Colegial”).
- An effort could be made to assure that faculty is knowledgeable of student grievance procedures. Although a majority of students acknowledged that they were familiar with these procedures, given that it was only a majority of 6 percentage points (56%), and increased effort to disseminate these procedures might also be extended to students.
- The procedures to deal with possible student cheating and plagiarism could be clarified and made better known to the faculty. The policies exist and a majority of faculty (56%) acknowledged being familiar with these procedures, but this number should be higher.
- UPRM should initiate a program that assesses integrity at the institutional level. This could be one of the duties of the Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment (OMCA).
- As regards the dissemination of information in general, TF 4 reiterates a suggestion made in the 2005 Self Study Report. It is not sufficient to publish existing regulations in the catalogue and in manuals and make them accessible on-line, but proactive steps could be taken to disseminate relevant information about policies and procedures dealing with all aspect of university life (partially paraphrased from recommendation 3, 2005, p. 54). Rules and regulations dealing with integrity could form part of workshops that faculty and non-teaching employees should be able to count towards their required ethics hours.
- Regarding possible political influence in relationship to the standard of integrity, TF4 refers to what was said in the 2013 Supplemental Information Report and in the Background section above. It recognizes that the chief manifestation of political influence on the university during the last ten years has been the frequent changes in upper-level administrators and that the primary difficulty this has caused has been to interrupt continuity and long range planning, although it has been argued that UPRM’s compliance with its mission, goals, and objectives, as well as its compliance with integrity, have not been significantly affected. Nevertheless, while recognizing that much of what can be done about this is beyond the direct authority of the UPRM administration, and even beyond that of the Office of the President and of the Governing Board, TF 4 would like to endorse as its own the recommendation that was made by the MSCHE Evaluation Team after their 1995 campus accreditation visit: “We believe that the entire public system of higher education together with the help of enlightened legislators must work to secure for higher education on the island the autonomy necessary to isolate it from political changes on the island” (Report of the MSCHE Evaluation Team, March 26-29, 1995, p. 9). This recommendation is as valid today as it was in 1995.

## **Commendations**

- The Chancellor is to be commended for having reestablished directly under his authority and given support to the Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment (OMCA), not just in order to provide support for the current re-accreditation effort, but also to remain as a permanent program to make sure that assessment continues at UPRM. As is evidenced in other parts of this Self-Study, the reestablished OMCA has already had positive results.
- In order to deal with possible research misconduct at UPRM, the position of Research Integrity Officer was established in 2011 and has been given ample support. This forms an essential part of institutional integrity. Several inquiries and investigations have been undertaken since 2011, including, as mentioned earlier, two forwarded to UPRM by NSF. The results of the first investigation for NSF were accepted in total by NSF and the report of the second case was submitted to NSF on 10 July 2015.
- As a proactive measure to attempt to prevent the future occurrence of plagiarism at UPRM, the Chancellor has approved the acquisition by the institution of the license for the use of a high-powered plagiarism checker called Turnitin. This should prove helpful for teachers as well as graduate and undergraduate students, all of whom will have access to such a program.

## **Standard 7: Institutional Assessment Background**

The MSCHE *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* (2006) seeks that:

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards. (p. x)

The 2005 MSCHE Final Visit submitted recommendations and suggestions after their last visit and they are as follows:

### **Suggestions**

- UPRM should continue to provide training to administrative staff in order to enhance its ability to identify important problems, develop appropriate strategies of analysis, and prepare recommendations that take into account institutional priorities and context.

### **Recommendations**

- UPRM needs to identify specific aspirations and goals for each division and unit of the Colleges based on what is most important to that area in light of the institutional mission. The process should be consultative and should lead to assessment projects that foster imaginative solutions based on careful analysis in the context of existing resources.
- In order to sustain the continuous improvement effort into the future and ensure its success, the UPRM needs to coordinate and formalize the roles of OIIP, CIEI, the Budget Office, the Registrar's Office, and other related offices. It will be important for the Chancellor to sanction and support the organization of these offices in a meaningful way. (pp. 11-12)

In the aftermath of this visit, strenuous efforts were made to promote assessment in a collaborative process involving faculty and administration through the establishment of the Assessment and Continuous Improvement Office in 2005, formerly known as the CIEI.

This office is in charge of helping in formalizing the roles in assessment as informed in the 2005 Final Visit Report. OMCA's responsibilities include:

- Design and implement an institutional administrative assessment plan.
- Design, administer, and coordinate institutional level assessment methods and processes.
- Guarantee the implementation of the strategies and objectives related to institutional assessment and continuous improvement which are a part of the strategic plans of the campus and of the university.
- Coordinate institutional accreditation procedures.
- Lead the preparation and submission of documentation and reports related to institutional accreditation.
- Advise any academic unit in any process of professional accreditation which may be related to an area of specialty.

From 2005 until 2008 the different administrative offices were trained in identifying problems, developing strategies of analysis, and recommending solutions. Although this priority was dropped in 2009 due to administrative decisions, as of 2013, the training sessions have begun and the offices are setting forth each unit's priorities. As part of this process, the units of the Administration



Deanship at UPRM have identified specific goals for each division and unit of the Colleges based on what was most important according to the institutional mission. This process was consultative and led to assessment projects that foster solutions based on careful analysis in the context of existing resources. Also, assessment efforts in the Administration Deanship have been sustained as part of all administrative processes and are supported by OMCA's guidance and follow-up. Administrative assessment plans are in place, assessment cycles are in progress and key reports, documents and performance indicators for decision-making are identified.

## **Findings**

The self-study process delivered valuable information and findings on Standard 7. A summary of the most relevant findings related to fundamental elements for Standard 7 is included below. For in-depth information, please access the TF5 Report.

**An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate documented, organized, and sustained assessment processes to evaluate and improve the total range of services.**

As a result of the creation of OMCA, 2005 marked for administrative and non-teaching personnel a firm path towards continuous improvement. Assessment plans were developed, revised, and implemented in 2006 and 2007 in the Administration Deanship. As of 2012, assessment efforts were renewed while developing the Administration Deanships strategic plan, alongside the development of the institutional strategic plan. The Administration Deanship completed its strategic plan in 2014 and all Directors were instructed to work on an assessment project to be completed by June 2014. With the resurgence and support of OMCA unit directors began an ongoing assessment program that is in place and resources were allocated by the Chancellors Office to the Offices of Human Resources, Buildings and Grounds and the Office of the Dean of Administration to further the development and implementation of assessment projects. This process was carried on in all of UPRM's deanships and new projects are due in July 2015.

As for the implementation of sustained assessment procedures, when asked 42% of non-teaching personnel agree that procedures are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution, 44% agree the implementation of the rules and procedures at UPRM are carried out in an atmosphere of respect for people, the dignity of human beings and ethical standards, 44% of non-teaching personnel agree that the institutional assessment results are used to improve UPRM's services and 55% agree that UPRM offers professional development programs on a regular basis. On the other hand, 32% of faculty members agree that overall, assessment results are used in decision-making processes and for resource allocation

**Maximize the use of existing data and information in order to purposely relate to the goals they are assessing and inform decisions based on reliable results.**

The Self Study survey shows 64% of non-teaching personnel agree they are provided with clear information about their duties and responsibilities and 46% are clearly informed about assessment procedures. As for the information provided about disciplinary procedures and management of conflicts of interest, family relationships, friendship or favoritism that can influence professional decisions, 34% agree that they are provided clear information. As part of this element, the achievement of clear realistic guidelines and a timetable, supported by appropriate investment of institutional resources should be reported and are as follows: 41% of the non-teaching personnel

agree that the tasks assigned to each unit are based on priorities; 45% agree there is clear and appropriate distribution of time to perform assigned tasks.

**Periodically evaluate the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the institution's assessment processes.**

UPRM's General Plan for the Implementation of the 2012-2022 Strategic Plan (certification 14-15-374) provides UPRM's Administrative Board (AB) the means to achieve strategic institutional goals, allocate resources and facilitate the implementation of an effective and comprehensive assessment process as of 2015. Clearly outlined strategies are identified for all objectives. An annual assessment session is included in the AB work schedule as part of decision making processes based on the strategic plan's metrics and their outcomes. The evaluation of UPRM's institutional environment is important mainly because of its impact on the effectiveness of its processes and the well-being of its constituents. The human element cannot be excluded from the continuous improvement effort. Therefore, the fact that a 57% of the non-teaching personnel and 67% of the faculty expressed that an atmosphere of harmony exists at UPRM is a positive factor conducive to receptiveness of all processes. In keeping with this, 64% of the non-teaching and 66% of the faculty agreed that UPRM's administration promotes an environment of respect for diversity, whereas 50% of the non-teaching personnel and 62% of the faculty believe that the administration treats non-teaching personnel with respect and dignity. Relative to service and program offerings, 43% of non-teaching personnel agree that the institutional assessment results are used for improvement whereas, 63% faculty agree that the administration is concerned with the professional development of its faculty and other professionals, including teaching assistants. However, this result contrasts with 15% who agree that UPRM regularly evaluates the effectiveness of leaders and administrators in the performance of their duties, and 20% regularly revise the administrative and technological support provided to deans and directors. The response from the non-teaching personnel about institutional procedures and their perception of fairness resulted in a consistent tendency of an average of 22% agreement. Therefore, the general perception of unfairness among non-teaching personnel in procedures used at UPRM to recruit, evaluate, promote, impose disciplinary actions, attend complaints, and manage conflicts of interest, family relationships, friendships or favoritism that can influence professional decision is an average of 78%. On the other hand, an average of 75% of faculty agree that tenure track, tenured faculty, temporary faculty member, administrative officials and nonteaching staff faculty members are treated fairly and with respect.

The institutional environment is characterized by a general perception that the institution's assessment process needs to be regularly assessed. In light of this fact, OMCA is actively conducting a unit-level assessment evaluation in the Administration Deanship that will be expanded to all academic and administrative units and deanships.

**Evidence that assessment results are shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and used in institutional planning, resource allocation and renewal to improve and gain efficiencies in programs, services and processes, including activities specific to the institution's mission.**

Assessment projects that resulted from recommendations presented in 2005, were discussed in the Administration Deanship and significant improvements were made in the Purchasing Office by 2008. In 2011, the unit directors collectively wrote the strategic plan of the Administration Deanship (ADSP) and then proceeded to do the same at the unit level. The DASP was discussed at the unit level and signed validation lists remain as part of the unit's records. Consequently, as part of the actualization of the unit's web pages, ADSP and unit strategic plans are included. In 2014,

academic and administrative deans were asked to submit proposals for **improvement projects**, proposals were evaluated and resources were allocated by the Chancellor. Results and changes are still to be evaluated and discussed.

In keeping with achieving institutional mission, goals and plans, a significant percentage of non-teaching personnel, 66%, are aware of the mission and objectives established by the institution, and 49% are aware of the initiatives implemented to achieve them. On the other hand, a sound 90% of faculty survey responses agree on being knowledgeable about the institutions stated mission and objectives, 51% agree the institution strategic plan is being implemented and faculty members participate in the strategic planning processes at all levels. A mere 27% non-teaching personnel believe that there is a sense of community at UPRM where all members are encouraged and supported to achieve its mission and objectives. On the other hand, 50% of non-teaching personnel agree that student support services are designed and offered considering the student's best interest. Consistent with that result, 48% are convinced that services are adequate and made accessible to the students and 39% agree that construction, remodeling, and changes in services are consistent with UPRM's missions and objectives. Faculty members (76%) agree that scholarly and creative activities support the institutional mission and objectives and 48% faculty agree university services are effective in meeting the institutional mission and objectives.

**Possess a written institutional strategic plan that reflects consideration of assessment results.**

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, UPRM's Administrative Board approved an institutional strategic plan. UPRM's first objective is to institutionalize a culture of strategic planning and assessment that will be accomplished through four strategies. These strategies are directed to: maintain and publish updated institutional metrics, develop a system that for the opportune updating or modification of the strategic plan based on assessment results, develop a system that allows to establish the relationship between assignment of resources and the priorities stated in the Strategic Plan and to develop an assessment plan that examines the performance-level of internal processes as well as the effectiveness of teaching-learning process. The Administration Deanship completed its strategic plan in 2014. Consequently, unit level strategic plans were written, publicized and the first assessment cycle for each unit was in place by 2014. Units are currently working on a new assessment cycle and are expected to conclude by July 2015. However, regarding the present Self Study, the surveys and questionnaires administered show that 50% of non-teaching personnel have no judgement whether priorities are assigned according to the institutional and unit strategic plan and if the institutional strategic plan and institutional assessment processes are used as a tool for allocating resources to the various units. This finding is inconsistent with the actual situation. The Dean of Administration has been adamant in requiring from unit directors the completion of these projects; assessment cycles have been completed, resources allocated, and improvement activities have been carried out.

Pertaining UPRM's faculty surveys responses show that 63% agree the information disseminated by the university is consistent with its stated mission and objectives and 51% agree the institution strategic plan is being implemented.

## **Recommendations**

- Although the mission and objectives are communicated, there is room for improvement in the methodology used to effectively disseminate the mission and objectives. Awareness workshops, especially non-teaching personnel in the academic units throughout UPRM, should inform them about the process of mission and objectives process and to train them in assessment and strategic planning.
- The Chancellor should provide adequate resources and formal soundness to the OMCA office so it can manage effective assessment processes at all levels thus, insulating them from changes in the upper administration.
- The Chancellor should appoint a permanent institutional assessment committee to promote an assessment culture among all administrators, including academic administrators.
- The Chancellor should enforce existing mechanisms for the evaluation of directors, supervisors and high level administrators. In doing so, a process for human resources assessment and continuous improvement will be in place.

## **Commendations**

- The Administration Deanship is to be commended for its consistent effort to move from a “compliance mode” as reported in the 2005 Self Study to a “continuous improvement mode”, mainly because of its Dean and Unit Director’s tenacity and dedication towards overall effective improvement. Their dedication and effort in promoting an ongoing assessment culture among all administrative units qualify them to serve as leaders in the revision, development and implementation of administrative assessment plans across the board.
- The Chancellor must be commended for his initiative and commitment to an ongoing process of institutional improvement and strategic planning through his support to OMCA and OIIP whose effort and dedication have been instrumental in achieving an assessment culture among UPRM administrators.
- The Chancellor must be commended for his commitment with assessment results by allocating resources to the Administration Deanship for the development and implementation of improvement projects that contribute adequately trained personnel to carry out their assigned duties and responsibilities.

## **Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention**

### **Background**

The MSCHE's Characteristics of Excellence (2006) defined Standard 8 – Student Admissions and Retention as the ability of an institution “to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students’ educational goals” (p. 31).

The 2005 MSCHE Visit Report stated the following:

The admissions policies and procedures are in accord with the mission and goals of UPRM. Policies and procedures are clearly delineated, and there is a good recruitment plan. There is dissonance between the frequent assertion that the institution has a highly selective admissions policy and the high proportions of entering students with basic skills deficiencies in English, Mathematics, and Spanish. This dissonance may be partly explained by the process by which students varied qualifications are admitted to the different campuses of the System (p. 12).

In this past report only admissions was assessed; the retention practices were not evaluated. The task force analyzed if, during the past ten years, the admissions and retention practices at UPRM ensured that students have a reasonable opportunity for success in meeting their educational goals. To accomplish this task, the first step was to understand how Standard 8: Student Admissions was evaluated by the MSCHE Evaluation Team, after the study of the UPRM’s self-study report and the visit to the campus during March 6-9, 2005.

The task force found that during the last ten years, the UPR Board of Trustees (UPR BT), UPR Governing Board (UPR GB), UPRM Administrative Board (UPRM AB), and UPRM Academic Senate (UPRM AS) approved certifications that influenced the admissions and retention processes. Some of these certifications addressed the concern addressed in the 2005 MSCHE Visit Report regarding dissonance between a highly selective admissions policy and the high proportions of entering students with basic skills deficiencies in English, Mathematics, and Spanish. Other certifications approved by these bodies have the intention of improving the processes of admission and retention for undergraduate and graduate students. Also, during these years UPRM has developed programs to recruit and retain students, and to motivate low-income students to study at the UPRM. This document presents the findings of this task force related to UPRM’s admissions and retention policies, procedures, and practices since the last MSCHE visit.

### **Findings**

The following is a summary of the results discussed in the Task Force 6 Report. The MSCHE fundamental elements were used as a guide to provide results. Each element is in bold and the response is followed. For in-depth information, please access the TF 6 Report.

#### **Admissions policies, developed and implemented, that support and reflect the mission of the institution:**

The UPRM Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogues present the UPRM mission (p. 2). The UPRM admission policies and standards support the mission of the institution as it admits the most academically qualified students on the island (see Figure 8.1). This figure shows that the average General Admission Index (GAI) for UPRM has been consistently higher than the average GAI for the UPR System from 2005-2015. To meet the mission, UPRM admits these students and transforms them into educated, cultured, and capable critical thinking citizens, professionally prepared in the fields of agricultural sciences, engineering, arts, sciences, or business administration so they may contribute to educational, cultural, social, technological, and economic development.

Figure 8.2 presents UPRM capacity and the number of applicants admitted and students enrolled from 2005-2015. During these years, UPRM has a selectivity index that fluctuates from 66% to 78%. The selectivity index is measured by the percentage of students admitted from the ones that applied. The lower the percentage, the more selective the school is in admitting. According to a 2013 report from the National Association for College Admissions Counseling, the average acceptance rate for all four-year colleges in the US is 63.9%.

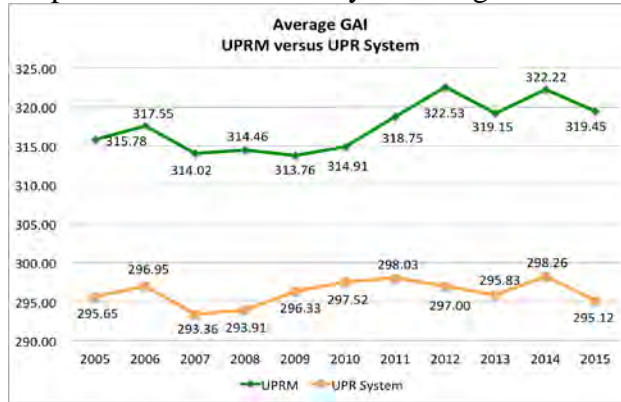


Figure 8.1 Average GAI - UPRM versus UPR System from 2005-2015.

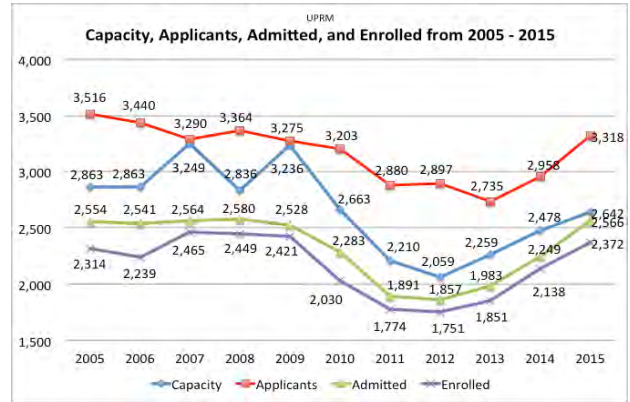


Figure 8.2. Capacity, Applicants, Admitted, and Enrolled Students from 2005-2014.

- 89% of the academic directors agreed that the undergraduate and 86% agreed that the graduate admission policies support and reflect the mission of the UPRM.
- Two of the academic deans (Business Administration (BuAd) and Agricultural Sciences (AgSc)) agreed that the undergraduate and graduate admission policies support and reflect the mission of the UPRM. The Dean of the College of Engineering (CoE) did not agree with this statement. The Dean of Academic Affairs (AcAf) did not respond to these two questions.

**Admissions policies and criteria available to assist the prospective student in making informed decisions:**

The admissions standards for **undergraduate students** were established for the UPR System through [certification 25 2003-2004](#) of the UPR BT. The [UPRM Undergraduate Catalogue 2015-2016](#) (UPRMUC15-16) publishes the admissions standards (p.72). This information is also available at the UPRM webpage, [Admissions](#). On this webpage, a calculator is available to estimate the GAI. In addition, the webpage of the UPR System, [UPRM Admissions](#); provides information to assist prospective students in making informed decisions.

- 79% of the academic directors agreed that the undergraduate admission policies and criteria are available to assist prospective undergraduate students in making informed decisions.
- All academic deans that answered the questionnaires and the Dean of AcAf agreed that the undergraduate admission policies and criteria are available to assist prospective undergraduate students in making informed decisions.

The admission policies for **graduate students** were established through certification 09-09 of the UPRM AS and amended by UPRM AS certification 15-21. The [UPRM Graduate Catalogue 2015-2016](#) (UPRMGC15-16) presents the application procedure, admissions policies, and academic requirements (p. 55). This information is also available at the UPRM webpage, <http://grad.uprm.edu/oeg/>.

- 86% of the academic directors agreed that the graduate admission policies and criteria are available to assist prospective graduate students in making informed decisions.

- All academic deans that answered the questionnaires and the Dean of AcAf agreed that the graduate admission policies and criteria are available to assist prospective graduate students in making informed decisions.

**Programs and services to ensure that admitted students who marginally meet or do not meet the institution’s qualifications achieve expected learning goals and higher education outcomes at appropriate points:**

Students admitted to UPRM that do not qualify for advanced placement must take the first level course in Spanish, Mathematics, and English, but they may be placed in different tracks following criteria defined by the respective academic departments. In the case of mathematics, there is a pre-calculus intervention system established by UPRM AS Certification 99-15. Students who score less than 650 on the mathematics part of the achievement test of the College Entrance Examination must take a diagnostic exam prepared by the Department of Mathematical Sciences. Students who score less than 50% on the diagnostic exam are required to attend an institute for strengthening mathematics. After attending the institute and obtaining a passing grade on the diagnostic exam, the student registers in the pre-calculus course. Students who obtain a score between 50% and 65% on the diagnostic exam are advised to voluntarily attend the institute and pass the diagnostic exam before taking the pre-calculus course. This has increased the probability for students to pass the course successfully. In addition, certification 25 2003-2004 of BT created a program to admit students with special abilities (i.e. sports, music, arts) that do not meet the GAI; they are granted 20 additional points in the GAI. The UPRM AS requested that the OIIP compare the performance of admitted students with special abilities and admitted students through the regular process with a GAI at the inferior tail of the distribution of all admitted students from 2004-2013. The results are that the admitted students with special abilities performed better than the other ones ([see report](#)). Furthermore, the College of Arts and Sciences has a tutorial program in math, chemistry, and physics; and the General Engineering Department runs a tutorial program in the basic engineering courses, both available to the general student population. The Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS) attends to the general education language and science needs of pre-college and UPRM students.

- 75% of the academic directors agreed that UPRM complies with this element.
- The Dean of Business Administration and the Dean of Academic Affairs agreed that UPRM complies with this element.
- The other two academic deans disagreed that UPRM complies with this element.

**Accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs, including any required placement or diagnostic testing:**

The UPRMUC14-15 and the UPRM Admissions Office webpage, [undergraduate programs](#), present all the undergraduate programs offered by UPRM. In the catalogue, there is a description of each program including the curriculum and the student learning outcomes. Also, each academic department has a webpage with accurate and comprehensive information about their program’s offerings. The catalogue provides information about Advanced Placement, Placement in First Level Courses, and the Pre-Calculus Intervention System, which includes the diagnostic testing for **undergraduate students** (pp. 73-74). The UPRMGC14-15 and the UPRM Graduate Studies Office webpage, [graduate programs](#), present all the graduate programs offered by UPRM. In the catalogue there is a description of each program and its curriculum. In addition the catalogue provides information on admission requirements for **graduate students**. Some departments and programs require admission exams such as the GRE, TOEFL, and EXADEP. The UPRM Graduate Studies Office webpage has links to each of the graduate programs. All academic directors, the academic deans who answered the questionnaires, and the Dean of Academic Affairs agreed that the

information regarding academic programs, including any required placement or diagnostic testing, is available to prospective students in the catalogue and webpage.

**Statements of expected student learning outcomes and information on institution-wide assessment results, as appropriate to the program offered, available to prospective students:**

The UPRMUC14-15 (p. 3) presents the institutional student learning outcomes. In addition, 81% of the UPRM programs present the student learning outcomes in the UPRMUC14-15. With respect to the availability to prospective students of the information on institution-wide assessment results, as appropriate to the program offered all the academic deans that answered the questionnaires and the Dean of Academic Affairs agreed that the institution-wide assessment results have not been made available to prospective students.

**Accurate and comprehensive information, and advice where appropriate, regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds:**

The UPRMUC14-15 and the [Financial Aid Office](#) webpage present information on financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds. On this webpage there is a link to a calculator that provides estimated net price information to prospective students. The UPRM average net price is \$ 5,923/year. The UPRM 3-year official cohort default rate is 12.5%, 13%, and 11.6% for years 2009, 2010, and 2011, respectively. The national cohort default rate is 13.7%. UPRM is in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education cohort default rate. Even though tuition at UPRM is considered low, each year approximately 70% of the student body qualifies for financial assistance. This assistance is provided through federal, state, institutional, and private sources. These programs include grants and scholarships, part-time employment, and loans. In order to be considered for all financial aid programs, each academic year, students must complete and submit the Federal Application for Student Aid, the Institutional Application Form and all other required documents. The financial aid programs are: The Federal Pell Grant Program, the Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), the Leveraging Educational Assistance Program (L.E.A.P.), the Legislative Scholarship Program, and private scholarships and grants.

- 86% of the academic directors believe UPRM complies with this fundamental element.
- All the academic deans that answered the questionnaires and the Dean of Academic Affairs believe UPRM complies with this fundamental element.

**Published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit and credit for extra-institutional college level learning (i.e.: advanced placement, coop, and internships) that state the criteria established by the institution regarding transfer of credit:**

The UPRM policy about transferring credits is clearly defined in the UPRMUC14-15. UPRM reserves the right to accept, as transfer credits, those courses taken at other institutions of higher education. Only those courses with a grade of C or better will be evaluated for credit transfer. The maximum number of transferable credits is half of the total required for the degree. The Registrar's Office (RegOf) informs transfer students when the equivalencies are received from the academic departments. However, this mostly occurs after the students are accepted and registered. UPRM does not have a standard procedure to determine if a course is equivalent to another course. Students must apply for authorization to take courses for credit in other universities. During this process the academic departments that offer the desired courses inform the students of the courses they are authorized to take. The RegOf informs them about the academic regulations with respect to the grades that would be acceptable. As mentioned before, the advanced placement policy is available in the catalogue (p. 60). The information on Coop and internship courses is available in the catalogue and departmental webpages. All academic deans who answered the questionnaires and the Dean of Academic Affairs agreed that UPRM complies with this element.



**Ongoing assessment of student success, including but not necessarily limited to retention, that evaluates the match between the attributes of admitted students and the institution’s mission and programs, and reflects its findings in its admissions, remediation, and other related policies:**

The assessment of student success is measured at UPRM through statistics on retention and graduation, on-time graduation, and employment rates. The OIIP publishes these statistics on <http://oiip.uprm.edu>.

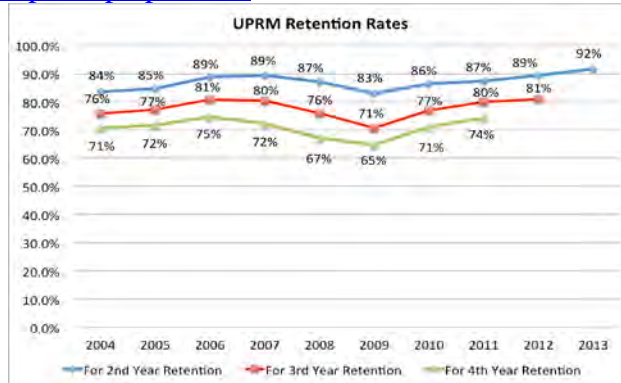


Figure 8.3 UPRM Retention rates from 2004-2013.

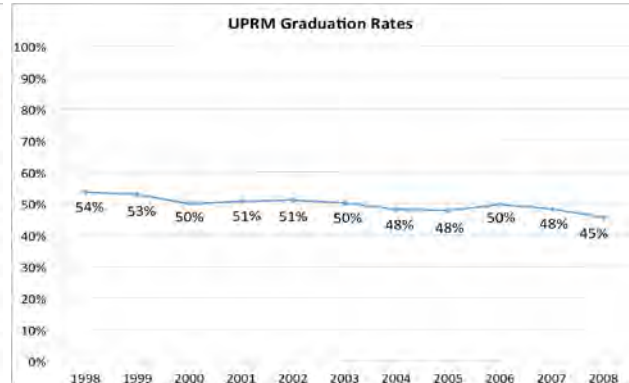


Figure 8.4 UPRM Graduation rates from 1998-2008.

Figure 8.3 shows the retention rates for the second, third, and fourth year from 2004-2013. There is a small fluctuation in the retention rates during these years. Figure 8.4 shows the UPRM graduation rates for students who graduate at 150% of the time. UPRM has one of the highest graduation rates in the Puerto Rico; however there was a decrease of nine percent, from 1998 to 2008. The on-time graduation rate is the percentage of the graduating class that completes the program within the 100% time. The on-time graduation rate between 2007 and 2012 fluctuated from 16.32% to 9.90%, a decrease of six percent. Another statistic used by UPRM to measure the assessment of student success is the employment rates. The UPRM employment rates six months after graduation for 2013 and 2014 were 85% and 91%, respectively.

- Two of the academic deans that answered the questionnaires agreed that UPRM has an ongoing assessment of student success, including but not necessarily limited to retention. However, they could not describe how UPRM evaluates the match between the attributes of admitted students and the institution’s mission and programs, and reflects its findings in its admissions, remediation, and other related policies.
- The Dean of the CoE answered that the engineering programs assess student success periodically, sending questionnaires to their alumni. He indicated that the OIIP provides retention figures and these are discussed at different levels of the College. He believes that UPRM does not assess if there is a match between the attributes of the admitted students and the institution’s mission and programs. Finally, he thinks UPRM does not periodically revise admissions, remediation and other related policies to reflect assessment results.
- The Dean of Academic Affairs answered that the main ways to assess student success are through retention records, graduation rates, and the time to graduation variables. He indicated that the UPRM reports to IPEDs follow the usual formula: the percentage of students from each first year class who register in our campus in the second years (regardless of the program). UPRM also follows the loss of students from each cohort per program during five years. He also indicated that this academic year, he appointed a committee on retention and persistence. The committee is studying the variables associated with retention and developing interventions

For example, a statistical analysis will provide a way to identify the first year students who are at risk of dropping out of the university, based on data from their application file. Once the student is identified, a series of interventions will be available to reduce the attrition rate. He mentioned that some UPRM colleges include variables, such as employment, to assess student success.

The UPRM students answered that they are very satisfied with the easy access to the admissions standards, easy access to academic offering information, and easy access to the placement process information. They are satisfied with the availability of information related to financial aid and to the transfer process. The students are very satisfied with the amount of resources available at UPRM to support the academic programs. In addition, 86% of the students are either satisfied or very satisfied with the services offered by the UPRM Department of Counseling and Psychological Services, a key university service for admission and retention.

**Recommendations:**

- Establish a standardized and analytical way to determine the entering student capacity for each of the programs.
- Create a master list of course equivalencies and establish a standard operating procedure to evaluate if a course from another university or UPR campus is equivalent to a UPRM course. Inform prospective transfer students, before admission, if an equivalency is approved.
- Analyze the number of drop-outs and the reasons for dropping out, and use this information to develop an intervention program to increase the graduation rates.
- Revise the process for student registration priorities to increase retention and graduation rates.

**Commendations**

- UPRM should be praised for accepting the most academically qualified students on the island.
- UPR should be commended for having an average net price of \$ 5,923/year, a reduction of 7.5% from 2009 to 2011.
- UPRM should be commended for having a cohort default rate under the national cohort default rate.
- UPRM should be commended for reaching high employment rates with its graduates.

## **Standard 9: Student Support Services**

### **Background**

The *MSCHE's Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education 2006* defines Standard 9 as:

The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students (p. x).

The *2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report* stated the following findings:

#### **Commendations:**

- The Register's office for moving to a paperless electronic record keeping system.
- The Counseling Center for organizing a comprehensive orientation program, which includes students, faculty, staff and parents.
- The Health Center for establishing a comprehensive array of services for students (p.12).

#### **Suggestions:**

- Examine the distribution of fiscal resources to ensure that support services are receiving their fair share.
- Consider using of standardized tests, such as the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey, to assess student services.
- Develop a systematized approach to monitoring students on probation.
- Expand the campus-wide mentoring program.
- Clarify the role of professional counselors as different from that of academic advisors.
- Expand the services offered by the career development and learning centers.
- Augment support services to help students succeed in basic skills courses.
- Consider creating a summer academic development program to meet the needs of basic skills students (pp.12-13).

Some corrective actions have been implemented to address the recommendations of the *2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report*. A web page was established to identify the roles of academic and professional counselors and explain their complementary functions. Some offices have established systems to monitor student satisfaction. The Mathematical Sciences Department has established a program to attend students with deficiencies in mathematics during the summer. Occasionally, UPRM has used standardized tests to measure student satisfaction and student engagement.

The purpose of Task Force 7 was to examine if the student support services at UPRM are congruent with the university's mission, goals and objectives, enrich the students' quality of life beyond the classroom, and contribute to the students' development, educational processes and the institution's learning outcomes. This Self Study will provide a synopsis of findings, recommendations and commendations. To obtain a complete picture of the situation, please review the TF 7 complete report.

#### **Findings:**

##### **Student support services are appropriate**

UPRM provides robust support service offerings to students and is continuously working to develop initiatives for students as the central figures of the Institution. The student service offices are distributed in the Deanship of Students (Band and Orchestra, Department of Counseling and Psychological Services, Department of Financial Aid, Department of Health Services, Placement Office, Office of Quality of Life, Social and Cultural Activities, Student Center, Student Exchange Program and Services to International Students and Alumni Office), the Deanship of Academic

Affairs ( Library System, Admissions Office, Graduate Studies Office and Registrar's Office), the Deanship of Administration (Cafeteria, Campus Dorms, and Traffic and Surveillance) and the Chancellor's Office (Student Ombudsman Office, Department of Athletic Activities and Computer Center or CTI).

In addition, specialized services are offered to students with disabilities in coordination with the Vocational Rehabilitation Office. UPRM is committed to promoting an environment where students with disabilities have access to all academic programs, support services, social events, and physical facilities as any other student via Law 51 and Reasonable Accommodation Services.

In both planning processes from 2003 and 2011 as well as the current 2012 to 2022 terms, exercises were carried out to guarantee that each unit's strategic plan was aligned with the institutional plan.

At least 75% of the surveyed students answered that they were very satisfied or satisfied with UPRM support services. However, the following offices have the most opportunity for improvement: Internal Transit, Childcare Network, Student Ombudsperson, Transit and Security, and the Student Exchange Program.

### **Qualified Personnel**

The recruitment of faculty and non-faculty personnel is governed by the University of Puerto Rico's By-Laws. In student support service offices, non-faculty (secretaries, administrative assistants, doctors, admissions officials, etc.) as well as faculty personnel (librarians, academic counselors, etc.) are recruited. Recruitment of the non-faculty is regulated by certification 93-110 (Consejo de Educación Superior). The certification provides the rules for administrating the non-faculty recruitment system for UPR. The adopted rules conform with the regulations disclosed in Article 14, section 14.10.10, Articles 29 to 31, and Articles 71 to 88 of the UPR By-Laws. The rules apply to the hiring process of all non-faculty personnel, with the exception of personnel of confidence, as disclosed in Article 71. The system guarantees equal employment opportunity and establishes the bases for the merit system of career employees.

The recruitment of teaching personnel is governed by Chapter VII of the UPR By-Laws and certification 49 00-01 of the UPR Board of Trustees. In addition, certification 00-27 of the Academic Senate of UPR Mayagüez (Guías para la Contratación de Nuevos Profesores [Guidelines for the Appointment of New Professors]) and an official document from the UPR Central Administration's Recruitment Division of the Human Resources Office dated August 26, 2013 clarify the procedures for the recruitment and appointment of professors or visiting lecturers.

These regulations are designed to guarantee recruitment, appraisal and promotion procedures that are fair and free of political pressure. Regardless, the majority of non-teaching personnel perceived that the processes were not fair. An average of 39% of non-faculty strongly agreed or agreed that the procedures used for recruitment, evaluation, promotion, and discipline non-faculty personnel are fair.

### **Comprehensive procedures to meet the needs of students**

Student support services are concentrated within 21 units or departments. Many additional offices at UPRM also offer some type of support service. The graduate and undergraduate catalogs present the descriptions and the services offered in student support ([http://academico.uprm.edu/p/decasac/catalogo\\_academico](http://academico.uprm.edu/p/decasac/catalogo_academico)).

Analysis of the questionnaires administered to the directors of the units or offices of support services for students reflect the following results:

- 100% of support service office directors agree that the programs are aligned with the institutional mission as well as with the institutional objectives.
- 92.66 % agree that current student support programs are appropriate in meeting students' strengths and needs in three areas: personal, academic, and social.
- 94.91% agree that current student support programs are effective in meeting students' strengths and needs in three areas: personal, academic, and social.
- 81.25% agrees that student support programs are consistent with student learning expectations.
- 87.50% agree that student support programs are accessible in terms of location.
- 93.75% strongly agrees or agrees that student support programs are accessible in terms of method of delivery.
- 100% agree that the providers of student support programs are qualified professionals.
- 100% strongly agrees or agrees that the administrators of student support programs are qualified professionals.
- 92.31% agree that student support program personnel effectively fulfill their responsibilities.
- 61.53% agree that resource allocation to student support programs is commensurate with student needs.

It can be concluded that these processes are designed to provide services that are aligned with the UPRM mission and to respond to student's academic and personal needs. However, the major area of concern is that the budget is not adequate to offer services appropriate for students' needs. A great effort has been made to sustain student services in spite of the budget cuts the UPRM has suffered in the past six years.

### **Processes and Procedures for Counseling**

Academic Counseling provides individual and group counseling that contributes to satisfactory academic progress and student retention. It offers orientation to students undergoing processes of admission, reclassification, transfer, special permit, readmission, course withdrawal, university withdrawal, and poor academic progress. Furthermore, counselors are responsible for assisting and directing students in their academic planning to reach adequate academic progress. Academic Counseling is regularly carried out in the departments by academic counselors, directors, associate directors, program coordinators, or professors.

Professional Counseling services are directed towards the promotion of wholesome student development, providing support in their personal, professional and academic development. Professional Counseling addresses matters such as life and career plans, anxiety management, and adaptation to university life, time management, and study habits. It also provides psychological assistance with issues such as depression, suicidal thoughts, identity conflicts, anxiety, adaptability problems, impulse management, and much more. To satisfy these needs, professional counselors are assigned to the various undergraduate study programs.

Academic and Professional Counseling work hand in hand so that students reach their academic and personal goals during their tenure at the UPRM. Also, they collaborate in providing the best career orientation for students to reach their professional goals.

### **Athletic Programs**

Athletic activities, both intramural and intercollegiate, are coordinated and supervised by the Athletic Activities Department, which follow rules and stipulations provided by the UPRM

Campus' athletic regulations, the Inter-University Athletic League (known in Spanish as LAI) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). These rules provide a guide for institutional control to guarantee a program of excellence. All actions taken in the program must be based on fair decisions that are open to the scrutiny of the university's community. The intramural program provides activities and competitions that take place mostly on campus grounds. Students, faculty, and staff participate in a wide variety of activities including basketball, judo, soccer, indoor soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, table tennis, volleyball, water polo, weight lifting, and wrestling. Student teams in the intramural program may participate in the extramural program and compete with other universities and non-university groups. The UPRM allows the use of campus athletic facilities and equipment in support of recreational non-traditional unorganized sports. Equipment and facilities are available to students and to university sponsored teams in their free time.

### **Management of Complaints or Grievances**

To process student complaints and grievances, the UPR Governing Board and the UPRM Academic Senate have established certifications and regulations that guarantee systematic processes. The objective of these regulations and certifications is to ensure the existence of fair and reasonable processes that promote equity and justice. The Office of Student Ombudsperson (<http://www.uprm.edu/procuraduria>) is responsible for educating, orienting and advising the campus community to facilitate conflict resolution. The office was created with the main purpose of attending situations related to the services received by the UPR student population. The services must comply with the following basic principles: accessibility, neutrality, confidentiality, and independence. The Office of Student Ombudsperson is responsible for writing an annual report that includes statistics about the services offered, qualitative descriptions of problems with significant impact on student life, and recommendations to improve university coexistence.

### **Management of Student Records**

The Mayagüez Campus has developed policies and procedures to guarantee the privacy of student records. The procedures are designed to comply with applicable law requirements. All personnel who work with sensitive information receive education on safe-keeping and protection of student record confidentiality. The Department of Health Services, the Department of Counseling and Psychological Services, and the Registrar's Office have very strict policies for handling student files correctly. Students' medical and mental records are protected by the HIPAA law. Students' academic records are protected by the FERPA law. Any shared information must be authorized by the student, and must be in compliance with local and federal laws, and UPR regulations.

### **Ongoing Assessment**

In the 2005 accreditation visit, the need to fortify and institutionalize assessment and continued improvement efforts was established. With that purpose, the Continued Improvement and Assessment Office was developed on December 8, 2005 (Administrative Board certification number 05-06-158: <http://www.uprm.edu/senadojunta/docs/certjunta/11-12-065.pdf>). The office was closed in 2011 and re-opened in 2014. Currently, three committees have been created to lead the assessment process: the General Education Assessment Committee, the Administrative Assessment Committee, and the Academic Assessment Committee.

The Deanship of Administration has completed at least one cycle of assessment in all its departments or offices. OMCA is developing the necessary awareness to institutionalize assessment. Each unit's budgets must include the allocation of fiscal resources to support assessment and promote the process of continuous improvement and innovation. The institutionalization of assessment and the utilization of assessment results are vital for the adequate distribution of resources.

**Suggestions:**

- Regarding assessment:
  - Implement an aggressive communication strategy to institutionalize assessment.
  - Continue training all personnel in assessment tools.
  - Separate a portion of office budgets to implant continuous improvement and assessment projects.
  - Develop a balanced scorecard (measuring system).
  - Document assessment appropriately and centralize this information.
- The unit income sources should be diversified. Also, offices should be encouraged to raise their own funds by means of proposals, alliances, fund-raising activities, among other possibilities.
- Dissemination of procedures for student grievances should be reinforced. Grievance records must be kept and their correct handling guaranteed and records must be analyzed to identify patterns and opportunities for improvement.
- Student satisfaction with the support services should be monitored periodically.
- The enrollment process should be re-engineered.
- CTI resources should be improved in order to attend to the departments' service applications.
- The Personnel Office should guarantee that all regulations associated with the hiring, evaluating and promoting processes of non-teaching personnel are followed.
- Institutionalize the academic and non-academic management workshops to provide continuous education for administrators to permit them to be up to date with management tendencies and changes to regulations and policies.
- Promote the use of social networks to facilitate communication with students.

**Commendations:**

- The UPRM possesses a robust network of student services.
- The personnel in the student support service offices is highly qualified and very committed to the Institution.
- The Medical Services Department has established a comprehensive network of health service.
- The DCSP has a comprehensive professional orientation program.
- Services subject to specific accreditations or licenses have all acquired accreditation (Library, Department of Counseling and Psychological Services and Department of Health Services)
- The Student Exchange Programs and International Student Services offer students a great variety of exchange programs with international and US universities.
- All Athletic activities are highly regulated (LAI, NCAA and Student Athlete Handbook) to ensure institutional control and guarantee a program of excellence.
- Placement Department has organized excellent job fairs. Employers from all over US and PR participate and offer employment in a wide spectrum of professional fields.
- The Social and Cultural Activities Department is committed to support students associations. Currently, the UPRM has 237 student associations registered. They are very active and carry out a wide variety of activities: initiations, professional activities, cultural activities, social aid activities, seminars, expositions, corporative field trips, and a great many others. They have been amply recognized at an international level and have been awarded important prizes and recognitions.

- UPRM is committed to promote an environment where students with disabilities have access to all academic programs, support services, social events and physical facilities just like any other student.
- Two of the main permanent improvement projects (Student Center and Monzón Building) will contribute significantly to improving the infrastructure and resources of various student support service offices.



## **Standard 10: Faculty Background**

MSCHE's *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* (2006), directs Standard 10: Faculty to evidence that "[t]he institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals" (p. x).

"Teaching and learning are central to the activities of faculty members . . . and faculty bear primary responsibility for promoting, facilitating, assuring, and evaluating student learning" (*Characteristics of Excellence*, 2006, p. 37). Because teaching and learning are fundamental to UPRM, TF8 evaluated the extent to which our faculty is comprised of qualified professionals who excel in fulfilling the UPRM mission, reaching the student learning outcomes (SLO) of UPRM, and providing continuity, coherence, and innovation to educational programs.

The 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report recognized the UPRM faculty as "excellent teaching staff," and "competent and appropriately qualified in their areas of specialization" (p. 13). The Report also praised faculty for their "strong commitment to teaching and learning," and their active participation in "curricular planning and design" (p. 13). Moreover, it affirmed that UPRM "[f]aculty operates in an environment in which its academic freedom is protected by the administration, regardless of status or rank" (p. 13). The 2005 Final Visit Report supplied the following commendations, recommendations, and suggestions to the UPRM:

### **Commendations**

- The faculty and the administration are to be commended for recognizing the need to expand research initiatives, and for taking positive steps.
- The faculty, and administrators are also commended for efforts to improve teaching effectiveness. (p. 13)

### **Recommendations**

- The current evaluation guidelines for faculty tenure and promotion appear to be of concern and were recommended for change in 1987. In order to ensure the fairness of the evaluation process, the form and the weightings should be studied and revised as necessary, and the process itself should be readily accessible (e.g. on the web) in Spanish and English. (p. 13)

### **Suggestions**

- Develop plans to increase the number of faculty holding the highest degree in their fields. Although the numbers have increased slightly over the past 10 years, proportionally they have decreased in some colleges/departments.
- Develop a system for the equitable allocation of faculty lines based on program need and student demand.
- Conduct an analysis of the relationship between faculty characteristics as identified in the Fundamental Elements of Faculty outlined in Standard 10, and performance and student learning outcomes.
- Consider ways of reducing course overload in order to free faculty to pursue research and publish in their fields of specialization.
- Address the issue of diversity in the areas of age, ethnicity and gender, and any other categories protected by law. This area needs to be reviewed for compliance with federal laws.

In 2004, an institutional committee was established to study the existent faculty evaluation process and develop an improved system for the weightings of faculty performance levels. In 2012, this

committee, *Comité Institucional para la Evaluación de Personal Docente* (CIEPD), submitted its final report to the Academic Senate (AS) with its conceptual framework, evaluation instruments, procedures, and recommendations. This new faculty evaluation process was approved by the AS cert. [14-38](#) (22 May 2014), and is pending final JA review and implementation. Also, AS cert. [13-64](#), [14-30](#), and [14-31](#) provide the specific procedures for conducting student faculty evaluations online.

Article 42.1.2 of the UPR Bylaws mandates that, effective FY 2006-2007, all applicable faculty and researchers possess a doctorate or terminal degree in their fields. Chapter VII of the UPR General Regulation (amended 2006) explains that faculty (*docent* personnel) includes researchers, librarians, social workers, psychologists, specialists, and economists. As stated in Article 42.1.3 of the [UPR Bylaws](#), this faculty may have Master's degrees in their specialties. Moreover, as detailed in the TF8 Report, since 2005, the number of *docent* personnel holding terminal degrees has increased from 49% in 2005 to 58% in 2015 (See Figure 2: TF8 Report).

Article 42 of the [UPR Bylaws](#) provides general guidelines for recruiting faculty and cert. No. 00-27 of the AS of UPRM stipulates procedures for appointing new professors. Also, the UPR Central Administration's Recruitment Division of the Human Resources Office details recruitment and appointment processes for professors and visiting lecturers (See Cert. 00-27 and *Procedimiento para Contratación de Profesores o Confereciantes Visitantes*: TF8 Report). Equitable distribution of faculty lines is evaluated by the departments, and if a justifiable need is presented, these lines are requested from the UPR Office of the President (*Medidas Cautelares* [R-0910-14](#) and [R-0809-13](#)).

Yearly, all tenured and tenure-track faculty submit information to their departments' Personnel Committees evidencing contributions to educational curricula, excellence in teaching, professional growth and advancement, and institutional research, and service. Each semester, student evaluations ([COE](#)) are administered to gauge faculty performance and to assess their teaching skills. These processes, along with the periodic submission of performance dossiers, guarantee faculty accountability and commitment to the student learning processes.

The full credit load of the faculty is 12 credits, and each college at UPRM follows specific policies to manage course overload and support research. To foster inquiry and prevent course overload, the institution grants new professors 3-6 credits release time, and provides faculty with opportunities for release time in research and scholarly ventures.

## **Findings**

This section reports results found by TF8, Standard 10: Faculty, derived from surveys to students, faculty, academic directors, and academic deans, communications with institutional officials, and documentation gathered to evidence its fundamental elements.

### **Faculty and other professionals appropriately prepared and qualified whose roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and sufficiently numerous to fill appropriately**

Due to the economic crisis from 2009 to the present, the hiring of faculty was reduced; all vacant positions are transferred to the UPR presidency, requested based on need, and granted by the UPR President. The ratio of students per professor from 2005-2015 has dropped to 18 in 2015, signaling suitable faculty for UPRM's teaching needs. Since 2006, all regular faculty possess doctorate or terminal degrees in their fields and the number of faculty with terminal degrees has increased 9% (see TF8 Report). Article 64 of the [UPR Bylaws](#) defines a regular load as 37.5 hours weekly: 12 teaching (or its equivalent); 15 in preparation, research, and assessment of student work; and ½

hour per credit hour taught in office hours. Faculty must fulfill their responsibilities, seek professional enrichment, maintain professional behavior, collaborate in specialized activities, and contribute to the institution's function. All evidence for tenure or promotion is manifested in the faculty dossiers; full ranked faculty are required to submit these dossiers every four years (Sect. 2.3 of JA cert. [86-87-476](#)).

- 90% of the students agree that faculty know their duties and responsibilities.
- 89% of the academic directors agree that faculty roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and sufficiently numerous to fulfill their functions.
- 80% of faculty agree that necessary academic requirements are communicated.
- 81% of students agree that the quantity of academic resources is adequate.
- 75% of the deans agree with this statement.
- 100% of the college deans assert that there are insufficient professors to satisfy course demands; one commented that this can provoke course overload for *some* faculty.

### **Educational curricula designed, maintained, and updated by qualified faculty**

Each College of the UPRM has units to facilitate curricular design, maintenance, and revision. From 2005-2015, the institution's protocol for creating new academic programs followed UPR [cert. 80](#). Furthermore, [cert. 130](#) of the UPR Central Administration's [VP for Academic Affairs](#) regulates the coding and registering of courses within the UPR. However, in March 2015, the GB repealed this certification and established a new [guide](#) to centralize curricular procedures. The UPRM SA rejected it and sanctioned AS cert. [15-01](#), to code and register its own courses.

- 100% of the Deans and academic directors agree with this element.
- 71% of faculty collaborate in revising program goals and objectives; 71% confirm that graduate faculty members have the proper credentials for the graduate curricula.
- 65% of faculty agree that graduate curricula develop research and independent thinking.
- 49% of faculty agree the curricula is improved through the SLO assessment results.
- 37% of the faculty respondents have collaborated in curricular committees.

### **Faculty, including teaching assistants, demonstrate excellence in teaching and other activities, and demonstrate continued professional growth**

All faculty are accountable for teaching excellence and professional growth. The [UPR Bylaws](#) define faculty responsibilities, workload, and evaluation procedures. The annual dossiers they submit to their personnel committees evidence their accomplishments, such as academic performance, professional growth, service to the institutional and civic communities, and student assessments. All these factors are taken into account for faculty personnel actions.

Each semester, students evaluate faculty ([COE](#)) and respond to statements regarding the professor's instructional excellence in the promotion of learning, design of educational experiences, instructional management, and quality of instructional content. Results tabulated by the UPRM Computer Center are calculated on a 5 point scale, (5 being 100%). For best practice, each semester, the academic director should meet with faculty to discuss the COE results and develop effective strategies for strengthening teaching performance and quality.

Due to the island's economic crisis, protective measures prompted a salary freeze from 2009 to 2013 (Board of Trustees [cert. 75](#)). In 2013, [cert. 52](#) of the Governing Board (GB) granted a 4.8% increase the salary scales; since then, salaries have not changed. Also, since 2011, institutionally funded study leaves and sabbaticals are under moratorium. In 2005, 45 faculty were granted institutionally funded study leaves; in 2015, no faculty did. Also, in 2005, three faculty received institutionally funded sabbaticals; in 2015, no faculty did (see TF8 report). Currently, promotions

are granted based on ranked lists; since 2009, these are delayed by at least one year. Although these measures might have thwarted our faculty's professional morale, they continue to pursue teaching excellence and commit to professional development. Through the Center for Professional Enrichment (CEP), multiple pedagogical, scholarly, service, and research-focused activities are provided throughout the year to faculty and teaching assistants. In the 2014-15 academic year, 145 hours of activities were sponsored by the CEP and over 1430 professors, staff, and students participated. In addition, professors may also fortify their teaching practices by taking pedagogy courses offered by UPRM's [Teacher Preparation](#) program.

Graduate teaching assistant (GTA) eligibility and duties are regulated by Cert. [11-12-068](#), [11-12-068](#) of the Office of Graduate Studies (OEG), and SA [05-62](#). GTA appointment is determined by the Curriculum Committees and its coordinators of the graduate programs. GTA review follows clear criteria established by each department. GTAs must also complete 21 hours of professional enrichment (SA Cert. [11-12-105](#)) in their first year teaching.

- 100% of the deans and academic directors verify compliance with this element.
- 93% of academic directors, and 62% of faculty agree with compliance.
- 86% of the students affirm faculty excellence; 83% concur they are qualified educators.

### **Institutional support advances faculty teaching, research, scholarship, and service**

The Faculty Manual ([Manual del Profesor](#)) summarizes teaching and research policies at UPRM. All new regular and adjunct faculty must take workshops (21 hours) offered by the CEP in their first semester and, during their first year, they must complete 29 hours in CEP activities.

In 2012, NSF funding was suspended for UPRM because of irregularities in the CA. The suspension obstructed the funding of faculty research projects at UPRM and threatened future funding potential from other federal agencies. To sustain these projects, the UPR Board of Trustees (BT) approved and allotted \$6.9M to UPRM. In 2013, the NSF suspension was lifted.

The CEP provides institution-wide opportunities for elevating teaching, research, scholarship, and service skills of faculty and teaching assistants. In addition, the Research Academy of the [Office of Graduate Studies](#), supported by the Deanship of Academic Affairs, provides networking, mentoring, and research seminars to faculty and graduate students. Also, the Research Center of the College of Business Administration encourages research and scholarship, and faculty regularly offer free professional services to the community. Despite promotion, salary, study, and sabbatical leave reductions, the UPRM is vigorously engaged in stimulating teaching, research, scholarship, and service endeavors.

- 100% of the deans and 75% of the academic directors concur with this element.
- 50% of the faculty agree that UPRM supports teaching advancement; 54% acknowledge opportunities for enhancing teaching skills; 45% assert UPRM support for research advancement; 42% concur that UPRM supports service efforts; and 38% agree that UPRM endorses scholarship improvement.

### **Linkages recognized in scholarship, teaching, student learning, research, and service.**

During the past 10 years, the UPRM Mission statement has valued research and creative efforts. In the current UPRM Strategic Plan (2012-2022), Objective 2 aims "To lead higher education throughout Puerto Rico while guaranteeing the best education for our students"; Objective #5 aspires "To strengthen research and competitive creative endeavors"; and 6 is, "To influence our Puerto Rican society." Each of these objectives recognizes and upholds UPRM's strong commitment to faculty scholarship, teaching, learning, research, and service endeavors.

Coexistence amongst these elements are evidenced in the faculty annual evaluation dossiers that are submitted to the departmental personnel committees. Furthermore, UPRM's Research and Development Office's (CID) primary purpose is to foster the expansion of research and creative endeavors; and the CEP, CID, the colleges, and other units promote and support faculty initiatives, activities, and services in all of these areas. Additionally, unit advisory boards communicate scholarship opportunities, the administration encourages and funds faculty and students in widespread scholarly events, and several departments have MOUs with federal agencies and universities for solidifying these linkages.

- The Dean of the College of Engineering asserted that linkages are distinguished principally through the faculty evaluation process for tenure and promotion.
- Academic directors identified linkages through student and faculty accomplishments; curricular reviews; community, research, and creative projects; and participation in student, department, college, and institutional committees.
- Academic directors reported linkages through sabbatical support (from external funds), faculty publications, and scholarly trainings and activities.

**Published and implemented standards and procedures for the appointment, promotion, tenure, grievance, discipline and dismissal of faculty, based on principles of fairness with due regard for the rights of all persons.**

UPRM faculty standards and procedures are accessible online and detail their appointment, promotion, tenure, grievance, discipline, and dismissal. This information is also in the [UPR Bylaws](#), the [Manual del Profesor](#), and the [PR Council of Education](#). The Personnel Committees of each department regularly disseminate information to the faculty (i.e., department meetings, official correspondence, one-on-one meetings with faculty). The SA also has established procedures for these circumstances. All faculty must abide by these standards and procedures.

- 89% of academic directors affirm that these are published; 93% agree they are based on fairness and due regard.
- 80% of faculty concur that academic qualifications are communicated; 81% have access to tenure and promotion information; 50% know discipline procedures; and 48% understand dismissal procedures.
- 68% of faculty agree that standards and procedures are fair and follow due process.
- 43% of faculty concur that the appointment of faculty is equal and follows due process

**Carefully articulated, equitable, and implemented procedures and criteria for reviewing all individuals responsible for the educational program of the institution.**

All standards and procedures for the faculty are accessible online with regards to faculty appointment, promotion, tenure, grievance, discipline, and dismissal. This information can be found in the [UPR Bylaws](#) and the [Manual del Profesor](#). In addition, the Personnel Committees regularly communicate this information to its faculty.

**Criteria for the appointment, supervision, and review of teaching effectiveness for part-time, adjunct, and other faculty consistent with those for full-time faculty.**

The consistency of review of this faculty is not as stringently regulated. Overall, the academic director ensures that processes are impartial and consistent with the regular faculty and the departmental personnel committees evaluate and recommend this faculty to the directors. Review is managed departmentally, and students evaluate them the same as regular faculty with the [COE](#). The appointment, supervision, and review of teaching effectiveness for all faculty (part-time, adjunct, and other) is provided in Chapter 6 of the UPRM Faculty Manual ([Manual del Profesor](#)), and in Articles 25, 31, and 63 of the [UPR Bylaws](#).

- Two of the college deans agree this criteria is consistent; one dean considered that the evaluation of this faculty was informal and inconsistent with that for full-time faculty.
- 43% of the faculty agreed with this fundamental element.

**Adherence to principles of academic freedom, within the context of institutional mission.**

Chapter 3 of the UPRM [Manual del Profesor](#) and Article 11 of the [UPR Bylaws](#) pledge academic freedom at UPRM.

- 100% of the deans and academic directors supported this statement.
- 84% of faculty agreed that academic freedom is observed for all faculty members.

**Assessment of policies and procedures to ensure the use of qualified professionals to support the institution's program.**

The [UPR Bylaws](#) and the [Manual del Profesor](#) provide these policies. Since the faculty called for a new evaluation process because the current one (Cert. [86-87-476](#)) is dated (1986), a new procedure is currently underway.

**Suggestions**

- Publish clear and concrete policies for the review of part-time, adjunct, and other professionals.
- Establish and communicate well-defined grievance and discipline procedures to UPRM faculty and other professionals.
- Increase and sustain resource allocation for the faculty's professional growth, including sabbaticals, study leaves, research and travel funds.

**Commendations**

- UPRM should be commended for increasing faculty with doctorate or terminal degrees.
- Despite sabbatical and study leave moratoria, fixed salaries, promotion delays, and research obstacles, the faculty is genuinely dedicated to teaching, learning, research, scholarship, and service.

## **Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

### **Background**

The MSCHE Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education defines Standard 11 as:

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings (p. 40).

The 2005 MSCHE Final Report presented concerns, suggestions, and a commendation for UPRM. The commendation stated that: "Several departments at the UPRM have developed academic, major-specific service courses" (p. 14). The first concern stated: "The majority of the academic programs are still working with program evaluations that are at various stages of its implementation" (p. 14). In relation to this concern, the UPR Board of Trustees in its cert. #43 (2006-2007) required that each academic program be evaluated every five years. Several of our programs were evaluated up to the 2006-2007 academic year. To fully comply with certification #43, a 2014-2022 plan was established to evaluate all the UPRM academic programs.

The second concern was the excessive number of credits students took per semester. Presently, the situation is the same, only the College of Business Administration has made changes related to this issue (<http://enterprise.uprm.edu/ases-web/progest.php>). Another concern, had to do with the duplication of some courses. UPRM understands that such duplication does not exist. Some courses may have similar titles, but their content and approach are different. A dual codification was established for those courses that have the same content, but are taught from different academic perspectives. The report also referred to ROTC courses, their courses are not counted as free electives. Currently, the ROTC courses can be used as free electives by all Departments, but the student decides what free electives to take.

In addition to the 2005 concerns, MSCHE (2010) questioned UPRM's compliance with the academic requirements during 2010. In 2010 there was a student walkout (May 3 to June 21). MSCHE requested evidence that it complied with a plan for assuring the rigor, continuity, and duration of courses affected by the institution's closure due to the walkout. Responding to this issue, UPRM adjusted its academic calendar (Administrative Board, Certifications 09-10-188, 09-10-223, 09-10-224, 10-11-057) and submitted a Monitoring Report to MSCHE in 2010 evidencing the compliance.

### **Findings:**

**The UPRM educational offerings are congruent with its mission, which include appropriate areas of academic study of sufficient content, breadth and length, and conducted at levels of rigor appropriate to the programs or degrees offered.** All Colleges and programs have aligned their mission, vision, and outcomes to that of UPRM. In order to accomplish such goals, each Academic Program establishes its own specific combination of courses according to the "**Minimum General Education Requirements,**" and their specific advanced courses (oriented elective courses, core courses, and free electives). Such selection (combination) of courses is based on the specific needs for each profession, to create a concise and strong program (Undergraduate Catalogue, 2014-15, pp.33-34). The creation and implementation of the "Philosophy for the General Education," where: "**The fundamental elements of General Education are evidenced in UPRM's institutional student learning outcomes,**" helps in the advancement toward incorporating outcomes compliance into all the programs. Presently, the UPRM offerings are congruent with its mission, including appropriate areas of academic study of sufficient content, breadth and length, with educational offerings conducted at levels of rigor appropriate to the academic programs offered. Specific information about the different program **curricula** can be obtained in the Undergraduate Catalogue (U. Cat). For example, the College of Business

Administration discussed their issue of breadth and length in U. Cat, p. 304. A survey was administered to different academic groups related to all standards, a "Likert" scaling response analysis was used. All the deans who responded, 94% department directors and 76% graduate students agreed that the programs of study had sufficient content, breadth and length, and were conducted at levels of rigor appropriate to the programs or degrees offered. Compliance is also exemplified in the **ABET** evaluation (see appendix 11.1)

**The formal undergraduate, graduate, and/or professional programs, leading to a degree or other recognized higher education credential, are designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning.** Most UPRM programs foster a coherent student learning experience and promote synthesis of learning. Some courses that help to achieve this fundamental aim are: practicum (Faculty of Agriculture, Teacher Preparation program), COOP (Practical experience in "academic program" in cooperation with private industry or government), and internships. All Colleges offer such academic opportunities. A number of students taking those courses can be seen in Appendix 11.7. The synthesis of learning is further achieved in seminars, special topic courses, undergraduate research, thesis, and dissertations. Most of the practical courses require a student to have successfully approved at least 12 credits of core courses and to be a third year student. In most of them, a final written project related to the gained experiences is submitted. Most of the seminars are based on research, and a written and oral presentation is required. The **UPRM Research and Development Endeavors**, also help students obtain professional and work experiences, and to do research or work with seminar topics (U. Cat., p. 13). An example of a coherence learning experience can be seen in the **Bachelor of Science in Industrial Microbiology (CAS)**, U. Cat. (p. 142). The items on the survey related to this element shows that all the deans, 100% directors, 85% faculty, 72% graduate and 92 % undergraduate agreed that the programs are designed to foster coherent student learning experiences and promote synthesis of learning.

**UPRM program goals are stated in terms of student learning outcomes.** Institutional *Student Learning Outcomes* are described on the U. Cat. (p. 3). Most of the academic programs indicate what learning outcomes are relevant to them. Each College and Program emphasizes specific outcomes according to their field of study, scope and objectives, and ways to accomplish them (see U. Cat., pp. 33, 86, 133 and 304 for examples). Biology (p. 139), English (p. 175), and Chemical Engineering (p. 343) are among the many departments that clearly state their student learning outcomes in the Catalogue. The Department of Physical Education presents its general education and specific outcomes (U. Cat., pp. 256-257). Survey results show that all deans, 84% directors, 80% faculty, and 82 % graduate students agree that the goals are stated in terms of student learning outcomes.

**Is there is a periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of any curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences that the institution provides its students and utilization of evaluation results as a basis for improving its student development program and for enabling students to understand their own educational progress?** First, all courses are evaluated by students during the tenth week of classes. The University has a commitment to continuous improvement, assessment and evaluation, aimed at improving the university undertakings. Certification 43 (2006-07- Board of Directors) specifically establishes a periodic evaluation for all programs. Depending on the program, this exercise can be done annually, as is for new programs until the first class graduates; or every five years for established programs on the newly created agenda. The Certification provides specific guidelines on the objectives of the periodic evaluation. Evaluation objectives include: guaranteeing offerings of the highest quality; evidencing quality of teaching and research; program effectiveness and compliance with MSCHE. The data should be used to improve the program, and also to comply with the UPR mission. The Dean of Academic



Affairs is in charge of enforcing the evaluations of all courses. OMCA is in charge of collecting assessment information. The evaluation is gathered to improve professors teaching skills and quality of courses, as stated in Adm. Board Cert. # 86-87-476. All the deans, 81% directors, and 60% of the graduate students agreed that there is periodic evaluation. As for the **utilization of the results**, all the deans, 59% directors, and 52% graduate students agreed the results were used to improve. For more information visit:

[http://www.uprm.edu/p/decasac/programas\\_academicos](http://www.uprm.edu/p/decasac/programas_academicos), <http://middlestates.uprm.edu/omca/>

**The learning resources, facilities, instructional equipment, library services, and professional library staff are adequate to support the institution's educational programs.**

The UPRM resources are used to support the institution's educational programs. Significant improvements have occurred during the last ten years in services, facilities, equipment, and resources to support the institution's educational programs. All Colleges have their own physical facilities and equipment, according to their needs. There are also common facilities and services for the general student population: General Library facilities and services information can be found at: <http://www.uprm.edu/library/>, <http://www.uprm.edu/library/biblioteca/nosotros.html> and Information Technology Center CTI: <http://cti.uprm.edu/>, [http://www.uprm.edu/p/cti/software\\_agreement](http://www.uprm.edu/p/cti/software_agreement). The UPRM internet is available all across campus. Many classrooms have Smart Boards, and laboratories facilities are highly adequate (see appendix 11.4 for more information). The order of this element was divided into separate parts and the survey responses are as follows: **Learning resources**- all deans, 75% directors, 56% faculty, 83% undergraduate and 76% graduate students agreed they were adequate. **Facilities**- all deans, 62% directors, 53% faculty, 77% undergraduate and 82% graduate students agreed they were adequate. **Instructional equipment**- all deans, 69% directors, 50% faculty and 57% graduate students agreed they were adequate. **Library services**- all deans, 94% directors, 62% faculty, 90% undergraduate and 92% graduate students agreed they were adequate. **Professional library staff**- all deans, 81% directors, 79% faculty and 90% graduate students agreed they were adequate. The undergraduate student satisfaction survey agreed that the following services were adequate: CTI, 78%, Library 91%, Access to library resources, 87%, and Internet (WIFI) 85%.

**Is there collaboration among professional library staff, faculty, and administrators into fostering information literacy and technological competency skills across the curriculum?** The General Library: " ... ensure[s] the academic community access to relevant, reliable and up-to-date information that is required so that the academic and research endeavors are carried out effectively." It fully supports UPRM's educational and research mission and objectives by providing adequate library and information resources, facilities and services. It consists of a main library and a special departmental collection." (U. Cat. p. 55). Other services include the Center for the Development of Library Research and Information Literacy (CEDIBI). Finally, Academic Affairs indicates that: Information literacy is embedded in all courses of instruction (U. Cat., p. 34). When asked about UPRM fostering information literacy skills, all deans, 81% department directors, 72% faculty, and 67% graduate students agreed. When asked about fostering technological competency skills, 75% directors, 68% faculty, 67% graduate students agreed.

**The academic programs promote student use of a variety of information and learning resources.** The CTI offers consulting and training services, preparation of user guides and manuals plus the operation of the public computer facilities, and computer equipment maintenance and repair services (p.70) to the UPRM community. Another general resource is the Library which offers information technology for learning. When relating this element to the student outcomes, programs indicate the following: General Agriculture- (i.e. INAG 4018 and EcAg 3007) Utilize computers and informatics technology as work tools (U. Cat., p. 89); Geology- Computer literacy, problem solving (p. 185); Business Adm. - Apply technological resources as a business working

tool using a computer exercise (p. 304). Arts and Sciences offers art courses (3531, 3532) and PE 4045, which use PC or other computer programs. Many science programs include courses that use computers. As mentioned, Smart Boards and laboratories such as farms in Agricultural Sciences are also learning resources. As soon as students begin at the UPRM, they are provided with UNIV courses which teach them some uses of information and learning resources. The UPRM mainly uses hybrid courses as well as a few distance education courses and some seminars which promote the use of a variety of information and learning resources. Currently, **Moodle (E-courses)** is the teaching-learning platform. In English and various Humanities course **Tell me More** is used (mostly for language acquisition courses <https://www.tellmemorecampus.com/>). Overall, UPRM does promote the use of a variety of information and learning resources. When asked if academic programs promote student use of a variety of information and learning resources, all deans, 94% directors, 83% faculty, and 81% graduate students agreed.

**The UPRM does take provision of comparable quality of teaching/instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of the institution's courses and programs regardless of the location or delivery mode.** The majority of the courses are taught using the traditional mode, face to face in a classroom or laboratory. Although UPRM has high tech on campus, with adequate facilities for online courses, the number of online courses is proportionally low. Some laboratories are held off Campus, for example geology, marine sciences, and the College of Agricultural Sciences farms from the Agricultural Experiment Station facilities or private ones. As for the delivery mode, most courses that use the distance system fit into the hybrid category, which means a percentage of the course, will be online (75%) and the remaining part on campus (25%). Online course offerings are regulated by Senate Certification # 06-43, *Academic Guidelines for the Creation (Offerings) of Online Courses*. The guidelines require that all online courses should have the same quality, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness as the onsite courses. It is mandatory that all online courses should be evaluated and approved by the concerned Department and College. Senate Certification # 9-22, states that proposal of online programs are to be submitted to the Academic Senate for revision and approval. All students evaluate their courses, be it on site or distance. The COE (student evaluations) is used for this purpose. Also an informal study conducted under the Deanship of Academic Affairs, asking online experts about both systems of delivery; they stated that there are little differences between both systems of delivery in the effectiveness of the courses. The surveys show that 75% directors, 66% faculty, 47% undergraduate, and 85% graduate students agree with this element.

**There are published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit that describe the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credits earned at another institution.** The Department Chairs are in charge of evaluating the transfer petitions, and are aware of all related certifications concerning this process, including specific Departmental requirements. The transfer procedure for undergraduate students is described and published in the U. Cat. (p. 71), including expenses and procedures (pp. 71-74). Graduate requirements are found in the Graduate Catalogue (G. Cat., pp. 58-59). For graduate students see also Senate Certification # 09-09. Other certifications related to transfer procedures are: Governing Board Cert. # 96-97-115; Administrative Board Cert. # 81-82-93; Academic Senate Cert. # 09-20. When asked if policies and procedures regarding transfer credit were published and implemented, 50% deans, 100% directors, 81% undergraduate, 92% graduate students agreed. For more information see <http://admisiones.uprm.edu/stdadvance.html> and <http://www.uprm.edu/registrar/readmission.php>.

**The consideration of transfer credit or recognition of degrees will not be determined exclusively on the basis of the accreditation of the sending institution or the mode of delivery but, rather, will consider course equivalencies, including expected learning outcomes, with**

**those of the receiving institution's curricula and standards.** Many of the variables indicated by the standard are considered when transfer petitions are evaluated. The decision about transfer credits falls under the directors, with the support of the faculty and departmental committees. Departments do have some degree of autonomy regarding transfer decisions, and academic deans assure uniformity in the interpretation of the regulations. When surveyed, all the deans, 88% directors, and 73% graduate students agreed with this element.

**Such transfer (credit or recognition of degrees) criteria are fair, consistently applied, and publicly communicated.** There is a degree of flexibility in the evaluation of the application of transfer credits and most of the decision falls under the department chair. Nevertheless, all UPR courses, which have the same code, transfer without any question. Due differences (among others schools) in curricula, laboratories, hours of conference, books used and others, are variables measured and weighted in order to reach an educated and objective decision. The student is asked to submit an official syllabus for each course requesting transfer credit. Departments have tables of equivalencies, but not all the courses can be found on them. The survey revealed that all the deans, 94% directors, 75% undergraduate and 63% graduate students agreed that such transfer criteria are fair, consistently applied, and publicly communicated.

**The course syllabi incorporate expected learning outcomes.** The course syllabi format is specified in the Board of Trustees Cert. 130-1999-2000. The certification regulates the creation of courses and specifies the information to be included in the syllabi. Outcomes are part of the required information within the syllabus. The survey responses for this element indicate that all deans, 94% undergraduate and 92% graduate students agreed.

**The assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to the goals and objectives of the undergraduate programs and the use of the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness.** Currently, the only Colleges with current assessment plans are the Colleges of Engineering and Business Administration. Presently, the College of Engineering is accredited by ABET, and the Business Administration is working to obtain accreditation. The College of Arts and Sciences has assessment plans from 2007 but there are gaps which are now being filled. Agricultural Sciences is currently inactive in this endeavor and needs to move to reinstate assessment. The survey results about the opinion of the use of assessment results were: All the deans, 81% directors, and 65% faculty.

**Does the graduate curricula provide for the development of research and independent thinking that studies at the advanced level presuppose?** The UPRM Graduate Program's Philosophy and Objectives state that the fundamental objective of the graduate programs at UPRM "is to develop in the graduate student a mastering knowledge of a particular field of study and of the resources and techniques which will enable each student to carry out independent and professional work or research. Among the additional objectives of the programs, the first states "To extend the boundaries of knowledge through research which contributes to the development of the student, the university, and the social and technological community" (pp. 57-64). The graduate catalogue states that "In addition to the numerous research laboratories under direct faculty supervision, Mayagüez Campus has several research and development institutes that provide valuable support for research activities " RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ENDEAVORS" (p. 13). Other information about research sources and funds can be found at: [http://oiip.uprm.edu/estu\\_fondos\\_CID.html](http://oiip.uprm.edu/estu_fondos_CID.html) . All the deans, 81% directors, 82% faculty and 76% graduate students agreed to element. The curricula for the MS degrees require research as do the doctorate degrees. For more information visit: <http://grad.uprm.edu/oeg/ENGLISH/> <http://grad.uprm.edu/oeg/ENGLISH/ThesesDissertations/> . For assistantships and research assistantships visit (Senate Cert. #05-62) <http://grad.uprm.edu/oeg/ENGLISH/Statics/>

**Does the graduate faculty present credentials appropriate to the graduate curricula?**

The Board of Trustees cert. No. 145–2005-2006, an amendment to the UPR Bylaws, states that a condition to hire a teaching or research personnel is that this candidate must have a doctorate or terminal degree. The UPR Bylaws regulate all the hiring processes for teaching and research personnel. The basic elements to consider during the hiring process of any potential faculty member are: degree or title; excellence of academic record and University of the degree; knowledge and capacity in professional area; experience; research completed; publications and research capacity, among others. After the candidates comply with the specific academic requirements or credentials, those who comply are interviewed by the Department Personnel Committee. On occasions, the Committee requires an oral presentation from the candidate. A detailed evaluation and a comparison chart, of all the candidates, is generated. The Department Committee presents a final report, recommending a candidate and justifying that candidate (evidence should be provided). This recommendation report is submitted to the Dean, who in turn revises it and submits it to the Chancellor for final hiring. The Dean or the Chancellor can reject the committee's recommendation. These regulated steps help select faculty with the appropriate credentials for the Graduate Curricula. When surveyed, all the deans, 81% directors, 89% faculty and 92% graduate students agreed that the graduate faculty present appropriate credentials.

**The assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to the goals and objectives of the graduate programs (including professional and clinical skills, professional examinations and professional placement where applicable) and the use of the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness.** During the time of OMCA's inactivity, the assessment process was partially reduced, but never stopped. As mentioned before Engineering and Business Administration kept the assessment process and used the gathered data to make decisions. Although the other two academic colleges had a gap in the assessment process, programs were accredited by external agencies. Nursing, Teacher Preparation program, and Chemistry are examples of being accredited and they do have assessment plans in place. Other programs in the College of Arts and Sciences continued to use their assessment plans and there is evidence to support this at <http://www.uprm.edu/p/ac/avaluo>. When surveyed, 75% deans, 75% directors and 86% graduate students agreed that the UPRM complied with this element.

**Recommendations:**

- Enforce a program of periodic evaluation and assessment on the effectiveness of all curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences.
- Reactivate and implement a strong academic assessment program in the Faculties of Arts and Sciences and Agricultural Sciences.
- Standardize policies and procedures regarding transfer credits or recognition of degrees.
- Improve collaboration among UPRM personnel in fostering information literacy and technological competency skills across the curriculum.
- Enhance the instructional equipment, library services, and facilities in order to improve UPRM educational programs.

**Commendations:**

- UPRM must be commended for the creation of undergraduate and graduate programs, and the improvement of educational offerings via new curricular sequences, and minors.
- UPRM must be commended for its strong commitment in offering curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences.
- UPRM must be commended for the quality, commitment, and spirit of the faculty that during stressful periods and adverse conditions always comply with their duties.

## **Standard 12: General Education**

### **Background**

The MSCHE's *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* defines Standard 12 as:

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency. (p. 47)

The 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report provided the following commendation:

There are three sequences of courses that were developed specifically to satisfy general education requirements. One or more of the colleges requires each of these sequences, and each of the four colleges requires at least one of these sequences... (p. 15)

This Report recommended that UPRM:

1. Ensure that the general education program includes defined objectives clearly described in the catalogue and other appropriate publications. (p. 15)
2. Demonstrate that the general education program will give students competence in information literacy. (p. 15)
3. Review the learning goals for general education and develop a formal assessment plan that specifies an ongoing approach to studying these important goals. Responsibility for this project needs to be assigned and a schedule should be developed. (pp. 17-18)

From October 2006 to February 2007, the administration of UPRM appointed a GEA Plan Task Force to create a General Education Assessment Plan for UPRM. The GEA Plan was submitted to OMCA's Academic Steering Team on February 7, 2007 by the GEA Plan Task Force and was approved and included as an attachment to the UPRM Institutional Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning (Academic Senate certification 03-43). The UPRM Institutional GE Committee (IGEC), sponsored by the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs, was formed to implement the GEA plan. The IGEC worked from 2007 to 2009 and completed the following tasks: the initiation of a GEA cycle at UPRM; the composition of a GE Philosophy approved by the Academic Senate; the establishment of an office for GE Assessment; and the creation and maintenance of a GE web page.

Almost all of the assessment plans were developed during this period (2007-2009), including the undertaking of at least two cycles of assessment in all units, both academic and administrative, at the institutional level. On August 25, 2010, the functions of Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment (OMCA) were relegated to the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs and the OIIP. Subsequently, each college implemented its own assessment plan of general education through existing program core courses, aligned with the philosophy established by UPRM. Adding to the efforts to invest in better education in the area of general education, UPRM has successfully developed complementary projects for students, faculty and community; for example, the Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS), Writing in the Disciplines (WID), Bilingual Writing Center (BWC), among others.

UPRM recognizes the substantial progress in the area of assessment of student learning in General Education courses under the direction of OMCA (recently reestablished) and the GE Committee. In October 2013, UPRM certification 12-55 created the Institutional Committee of General Education (ICEG). This Committee is composed of elected members representing each of the

colleges of the campus. AS Certification 14-50 establishes the mission and objectives for the development of the Work Plan. The ICEG, in conjunction with OMCA, is currently aligning the student learning outcomes with the philosophy of general education.

### **Findings**

The following is a summary of the results discussed in the TF 10 Report. The MSCHE fundamental elements were used as a guide to provide results.

#### **The General Education Curriculum**

The current General Education curriculum is organized into courses focused on general education skills and disciplinary content. The fundamental elements of General Education are evidenced in UPRM's institutional student learning outcomes:

- a) Communicate effectively,
- b) Identify and solve problems, think critically, and synthesize knowledge appropriate to their discipline,
- c) Apply mathematical reasoning skills, scientific inquiry methods, and tools of information technology,
- d) Apply ethical standards,
- e) Recognize the Puerto Rican heritage and interpret contemporary issues,
- f) Appraise the essential values of a democratic society,
- g) Operate in a global context, relate to a societal context, and demonstrate respect for other cultures,
- h) Develop appreciation for the arts and humanities, and
- i) Recognize the need to engage in life-long learning.

The structure of the General Education curriculum requires students to take courses across a range of disciplines, enriching the substance of their general education as it also develops their learning skills. Although there are variations for each college, the minimum required credits are: 6 credits in Spanish, 12 credits in English, 6 credits in Humanities, 6 credits in Social Sciences, 6 credits in Mathematics, 6 credits in Sciences and 2 credits in Physical Education. Some activities and life experiences reported by UPRM's deans and directors to enhance General Education offerings are: (a) seminars (b) interdisciplinary courses, (c) summer programs (d) internships, (e) institutional coop plan, (f) exchange programs, (g) research programs, and (h) services provided by the Center for Ethics in the Professions and the Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS), among others.

#### **General Education skills and abilities transferred to major or concentration**

The UPRM Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs designed a set of interdisciplinary courses that are intended to allow students to develop general education skills and abilities necessary to their successful performance in their respective areas of studies. Some of these courses are, among others: Research Methods in Libraries, Experience in Community Development, Institutional Coop Plan, and Appropriate Technology's.

The College of Engineering (CoE) promotes a well-rounded engineering education that develops the student's ability to think critically, to communicate effectively, and to develop a fairly comprehensive understanding of human desires and aspirations, human convictions, and human behavior. Each program has integrated general education skills and abilities within the program's curriculum by providing different activities and experiences for its students. All students of the CoE, at the end of their senior year, are required to take part in a Major Design Experience (Integrated Engineering Design Capstone Course) that integrates and evaluates the application of all skills and abilities obtained through their program core courses and general education skills required by the institution.

The College of Business Administration (CBA) administers the curricular content areas of study to develop enrichment educational activities and experiences, in which students can demonstrate the acquisition of the skills and abilities of general education. Student's academic evaluations of each course evidenced not only the mastering in the of course content, but also the acquisition of general education skills. In the CBA curriculum, the student is required to take a Capstone course or may select another equivalent experience such as internship, coop program, learning service activities or the foreign interchange programs.

The College of Agricultural Sciences follows an interdisciplinary approach in its programs of study; encompass teaching in natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and languages. Each program has integrated general education skills and abilities within the program's curriculum by providing different activities and experiences for its students. Other experiences and integrative activities, in which the students are able to sharpen their general education skills and abilities, include seminars, summer practicum, and the Coop Program.

From 2012 to 2014 the Committee of Undergraduate Education of the College of Arts and Sciences conducted a self-evaluation of fourteen operational objectives. The purpose of the evaluation exercise was to show how these objectives are integrated into core courses in each academic program. The survey results clearly show how the professors conveyed general education skills and abilities in the courses they teach. In 2015 the Committee of Undergraduate Education conducted another survey, this time of graduating seniors, to obtain their perspective on the fulfillment of the fourteen operational objectives over the course of their respective academic programs. This information can be found at [http://www.uprm.edu/p/ac/educacion\\_subgraduada](http://www.uprm.edu/p/ac/educacion_subgraduada) (see Appendices).

In summary, the institution has articulated a program of General Education where the skills and abilities developed are applied in the major or concentration of each faculty in UPRM. Some of the departments in UPRM perform self-study exercises to ensure that the skills of general education are successfully conveyed in to the major courses. According to the answers from the questionnaires offered to the faculty, 44% informed that the skills and abilities acquired through General Education courses need further strengthening. The UPRM directors described several general education skills and abilities, which need further development in the majors, such as: professional and ethical behavior, and critical analysis.

#### **Study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives**

The mission of UPRM reflects the mission of the University of Puerto Rico. The mission is to provide excellent service to Puerto Rico and to the world by:

Provid[ing] our students with the skills and sensibility needed to effectively address and confront current challenges and to exemplify the values and attitudes that should prevail in a democratic society that treasures and respects diversity.

According to the results of the questionnaires, UPRM deans informed that the General Education program is designed to enable students to discover and develop their abilities, knowledge and sense of responsibility, so that they may reach their full potential as highly educated members of society and as good citizens. Sixty-eight percent of the faculty agreed that UPRM General Education courses include the study of values, ethics and diverse perspectives; nevertheless 80% of the academic directors agreed that the General Education requirements incorporate the study of ethics, values, and diverse perspectives. UPRM official data highlights that 65% of the graduates in 2014, enrolled in at least one course whose contents included the study of values, ethics and diverse perspectives. In 2015 this number was 62%.

## **Competencies in General Education**

The UPRM Colleges have designed a variety of strategies to evidence student's proficiency in the general education competencies.

There are some integrative courses in the departments of the College of Agricultural Sciences that provide assurances that, upon degree completion, students will be proficient in one or all of the following: oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and technological competency appropriate to the discipline. For example, in the Practicum course, the supervisor and the professor evaluate the student's performance and report the skills and abilities in which they had strengths and weaknesses in their major and general education aspects.

The College of Engineering ensures the acquisition of general education skills by their students through the direct integration of these components in the curriculum content of their programs. Other activities and educational experiences such as: the Integrated Engineering Capstone Design Course and the Cooperative Education Program demonstrate how the students of the CoE effectively apply the skills of general education established by UPRM. This information can be found at [http://ingenieria.uprm.edu/old\\_ing\\_site/SEED.php](http://ingenieria.uprm.edu/old_ing_site/SEED.php) (see Appendices).

The College of Business Administration has implemented a systematic assessment plan, which addresses the areas of student's proficiency in general education through existing program core courses. Some of the general education skills and abilities assessed are oral and written communication, scientific, quantitative reasoning, and technological competency, appropriate to each discipline of the Bachelor in Business Administration. The information can be found at <http://enterprise.uprm.edu> (see Appendices).

The students of the College of Arts and Sciences at the time of graduation should demonstrate competence in diverse learning objectives that include, among others: oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and technological competency appropriate to the discipline. The fulfillment of these objectives is evidenced through continuous assessment activities. [http://www.uprm.edu/p/ac/educacion\\_subgraduada](http://www.uprm.edu/p/ac/educacion_subgraduada) and <http://uprm.info/avaluo/> (see Appendices).

The academic deans of Business Administration, Engineering, Academic Affairs and Agricultural Sciences at UPRM indicated that students have obtained the competencies of general education, because students were able to perform successfully in the industry through work projects that require excellent oral and written communication, and scientific and quantitative reasoning. Some of the academic directors explained that there are practicums and seminar courses, where the students show their general education competencies; others mentioned strategies such as surveys, indirect measurements, direct measurements, and research skills to corroborate these competencies.

## **General education in official publications of the institution**

The UPRM's official publication, Undergraduate Academic Catalogue ([http://www.uprm.edu/p/decasac/catalogo\\_academico](http://www.uprm.edu/p/decasac/catalogo_academico)) highlights the official General Education requirements (see Appendices). In this respect, UPRM colleges and departments demonstrated continuous improvement compared to their own catalogs in the past. However, there are still opportunities for additional improvement. It should be noted that 100% of the academic directors understand that UPRM departments have a clear and accurate description of the general education program in the institution catalogue.



### **Assessment of General Education**

Since 2012, CIVIS supports the entire student learning outcomes and the General Education Philosophy of the UPRM. The UPRM Administrative Board Certification 13-14-006 authorized the institutionalization of CIVIS. The Project's main components (Bilingual Writing Center (BWC), Writing in the Disciplines (WID), Communicating Science, Engineering, and the Arts to K-12, Sustainable Energy Initiative (SEI), and Student Learning Modules (SLM) are designed to strengthen all of the areas of the UPRM SLOs and General Education (GE). CIVIS has designed an assessment plan, setting procedures to ensure assessment data to improve the functioning of the center and for the continuous improvement of the student learning in general. The information can be found at <http://civis.uprm.edu> (see Appendices).

From 2007 to 2009, the UPRM's IGEC and OMCA implemented the General Education Assessment Plan (GEA). This effort encompassed at least two cycles of general education results. Once the functions of OMCA were relegated to the Offices of the Dean of Academic Affairs and the OIIP, each college incorporated the general education assessment in their assessment plan. Information can be found at <http://www.uprm.edu/omca/SLAreports/> (see Appendices).

In October 2013, ICGE was created and was tasked with the following: (1) Analyze the results of appraisal related to general education in the different academic programs, (2) Make recommendations based on the analysis, (3) Propose to the Academic Senate mechanisms to strengthen general education, (4) Ensure the current review in the light of Philosophy of General Education "student learning outcomes", (5) Promote reflection and discussion of the Philosophy of General Education, so that the university community has its own, (6) Promote curricular revisions consistent with the philosophy of General Education, and (7) Analyze the need for a major review of General Education in the Mayagüez Campus.

In 2010, the Undergraduate Education Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences carried out a survey to assess the inclusion of the institutional and undergraduate SLO. In 2013, the committee surveyed professors teaching core courses of the B.A. or B.S. programs to determine the extent to which the undergraduate students developed SLO. In September 2013, results were made available to the entire university community. [http://www.uprm.edu/p/ac/educacion\\_subgraduada](http://www.uprm.edu/p/ac/educacion_subgraduada) and <http://uprm.info/avaluo/> (see Appendices).

The departments of the College of Engineering (CoE) have their assessment plans, timetable, instruments, and closing loop activities. The departments do not assess only the general education outcomes; rather it is an overall assessment of the program. There is an Office of Accreditation, Assessment and Continuous Improvement (OAACI) that proposes and evaluates strategies for the undergraduate engineering programs. A description can be found at [http://ingenieria.uprm.edu/old\\_ing\\_site/SEED.php](http://ingenieria.uprm.edu/old_ing_site/SEED.php) and <http://seed.uprm.edu/> (see Appendices).

In the case of the College of Agricultural Sciences programs, a General Education assessment is performed every 5 years in some of the programs in order to comply with requirements for MSCHE. There are some exceptions, such as the Agricultural Education and Agricultural and Bio-systems Engineering Departments that report more frequent assessments. This means that some of the programs in the College of Agricultural Sciences have yet to internalize a culture of systematic assessment and improvement. However, some improvements have been made over time.

The College of Business Administration and the Institute of Office Administration conducted assessment of the skills and abilities of general education through concentration courses. The College leads the appraisal process through courses of concentration properly aligned to the

components set forth in the ACBSP accreditation. There is an official assessment committee for both bachelor degrees, so that once the appraisal cycles are completed, the Committee may make recommendations on how to improve the educational programs, including general education skills. Information can be found at <http://enterprise.uprm.edu> (see Appendices).

The academic deans of the Colleges of Agricultural Sciences, Business Administration and Engineering indicated that assessment results are utilized to identify opportunity areas, prepare improvement plans, and develop curriculum adjustments. Eighty-eight percent of the faculty understands that institutional assessment process at UPRM could be improved. Also 33% of the faculty informed that the instructional faculty is familiar with General Education assessment procedures. There is a lack of communication between the assessment coordinators and the academic directors. Forty-six percent of the academic directors reported they were unaware of assessment. However, the Colleges were providing supporting data for General Education Assessment.

### **Suggestions**

Task Force 10 makes the following recommendations to improve UPRM performance:

- The General Education Assessment Plan should be updated and implemented at UPRM, integrating its continuous assessment into each college's and departments' assessment plans, even if the exercise is not required in the assessment for professional accreditations.
- Develop further strategies for dissemination of results of assessment of general education among the deans, academic directors and faculty.
- Continue systematically to review the goals and objectives of General Education.
- Establish uniform standards for the general education information published in academic catalogues, web pages, and other publications.
- The College of Agriculture Sciences should be provided with the necessary support from the UPRM to establish a culture of assessment of general education.

### **Commendations**

- The Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS) must be commended for the effort to strengthen General Education by fostering communication and scientific skills through student learning modules, and the outreach to the K-12 academic community.

## **Standard 13: Student Related Activities**

### **Background**

According to MSCHE's *Characteristics of Excellence* (2006), Standard 13, Student Related Activities, focuses on "Institutional programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meeting appropriate standards" (p. 51). Within separate sections, we examine the following areas of UPRM: basic skills, certificate programs, experiential learning, non-credit offerings, distance education, distributed learning, and correspondence education and contractual relationships. In the 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report, the standard received feedback for improving services and satisfying the students and institution's needs. One comment provided in the Report was concerned with students' deficiencies in English and Mathematics:

Given the deficiencies in English (22.18%) and Mathematics (59.30%) shown by entering students, a well-coordinated, supported, and structured program is needed to move students from pre-basic through the basic level courses. (p.15)

The Report also suggests that UPRM:

1. Provide coordinated support to students to successfully complete the pre-basic and basic skills courses, such as a summer academic development program for entering students.
2. Address the issue of the large size (30+) basic skills courses in English by limiting the class size.
3. [Because] on the declining skills of entering students, UPRM should consider developing systematic procedures similar to those in place for Mathematics and English to address language skills deficiencies in Spanish.
4. [P]ublications including the Undergraduate Catalog and the university web pages should provide detailed information about certificate programs.
5. Pedagogy faculty should have membership on the Academic Senate, which already includes representatives from the counselors and librarians. (p.16)

In response to the suggestion provided in the Report, the Department of English established a remedial summer program (Pre-Basic English: INGL 0066) for first-year students with deficiencies in English. However, after assessing the effectiveness of this course (a year ago), it was eliminated (cert. No. 15-53). Regarding class size, only the number of students per each Basic English course (INGL 3101) was restricted to a limit of 30 students. Concerning Mathematics, the Department of Mathematical Sciences established summer programs for incoming students with deficiencies in mathematics, which consist of three-week courses. Those who approve the course can register in Pre-Calculus I (MATH 3171).

The UPRM Undergraduate Catalog (the fourth suggestion) includes detailed information about certificate programs, curricular sequences, and minors. The number of curricular sequences and minors has increased significantly during the last decade in order to benefit our students. These programs have been created and offered, by discipline or interdisciplinary (i.e. Secondary Teacher Preparation Program (STPP), which prepares students to be certified as Teachers in Puerto Rico). As for the third suggestion, the Department of Spanish did not take any action. Regarding the fifth suggestion, the faculty from STPP has never officially requested representation in the Academic Senate.

Note: All UPRM Senate certifications can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.uprm.edu/certificacionessenado>

## **Findings:**

### **Basic Skills**

- Between 2005 and 2014 a total of 21,484 students were admitted. Of these, 12,899 students had deficiencies in Mathematics and 3,184 in English.
- UPRM has developed systematic procedures to identify students who are not fully prepared for college level work. The UPRM Catalogue outlines general admissions and enrollment procedures for students, see <http://www.uprm.edu/cms/index.php?a=file&fid=10834>, page 72. English and Mathematic courses require college-level placements. The requirements can be demonstrated through prior course work, placement testing, high school transcripts, transfer transcripts, and evaluations of the examination from the College Board (CEEB).
- The English Department has established that freshmen students with a score lower than 469 in the English Achievement Exam (ESLAT) offered by the College Board must take a diagnostic exam. The students that pass the diagnostic exam are placed in the first English basic course. Those students who fail the diagnostic exam register in the remedial course offered by the English Department.
- The English Department uses the Writing Center under the Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS) to support students with difficulties in English. This center supports students in grammar and writing skills development. This center has supported over 35,000 student visits in English and Spanish skills in the last 6 years.
- As a result of an assessment process, the English Department made a recommendation to the UPRM's Academic Senate to eliminate the prerequisite for the English Basic Course (INGL 3101). The Academic Senate approved the recommendation through certification 15-53 in May 2015.
- The Department of Mathematical Sciences has as a pre-requisite for Pre-Calculus I: the diagnostic exam or obtaining a score greater than 650 in Math Achievement Test (MAT) offered by the CEEB. Those students whose score is lower than 651 in the MAT must take a comprehensive diagnostic exam. The test requires knowing basic skills in arithmetic, algebra, and geometry. The students who approve the diagnostic exam can register in Pre-Calculus I. Otherwise, they may register in the remedial course and approve it or take the diagnostic exam again. Students registered in the remedial course take two hours of lecture and two hours of math lab. Selected undergraduate students provide support in the math lab serving as tutors and/or computer assistants.
- The Department of Mathematical Sciences received a federal grant to fund the initiative of developing an online tutorial for the remedial, Pre-Calculus I, and Pre-Calculus II courses. The grant also allowed developing databases for the topics that are considered for the diagnostic exam. All this information may be accessed through <http://quiz.uprm.edu/remediadora/>.
- The Department of Mathematical Sciences has a center to support the academic needs of undergraduate students in math courses. It includes Mathematical Reasoning, Pre-Calculus I & II, Calculus I & II, and Elementary Statistics. Graduate students from the Department of Mathematical Sciences primarily provide the tutoring.
- Some academic departments of the College of Arts and Sciences changed their curriculum to allow students to choose taking Pre-Calculus I or the Mathematical Reasoning courses. The Mathematical Reasoning course does not have any prerequisites.

Figure 13.1 shows the percentage of students with deficiencies in English, Mathematics, and deficiencies in both, for the academic years from 2005-2006 to 2014-2015.

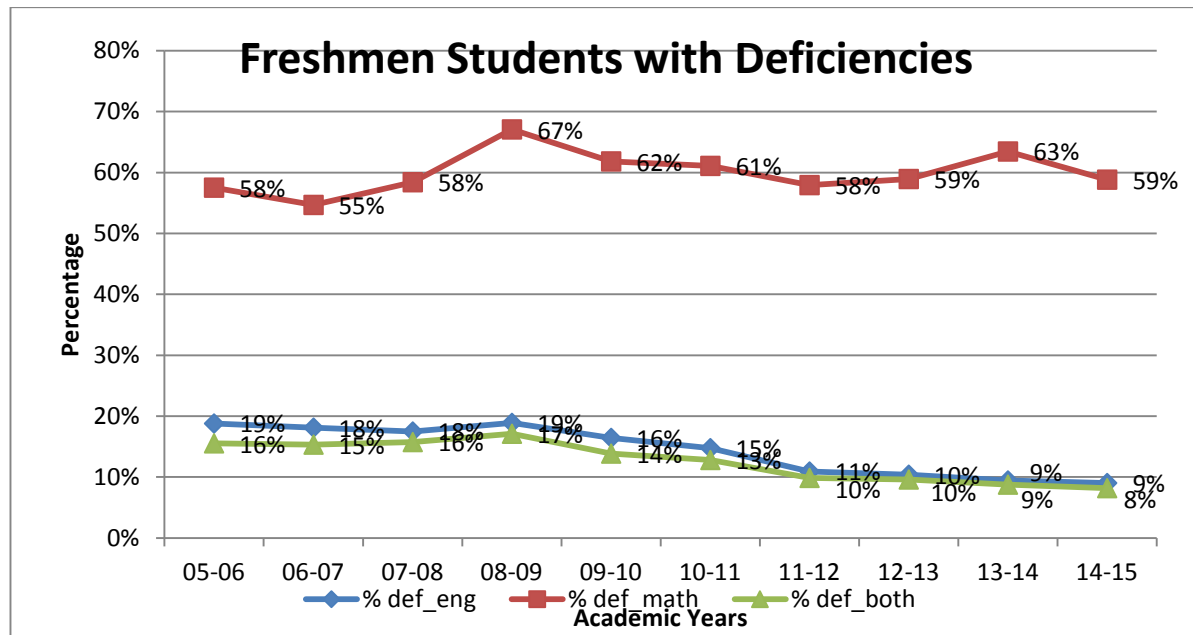


Figure 13.1 Percentage of students with deficiencies in English, Mathematics and both.

### Certificate Programs

The UPRM offers Certificate Programs, Curricular Sequences, and Minors for students, non-faculty personnel and the community. The findings are:

- The certificate programs, curricular sequences, and minors are designed, approved, administered, and evaluated the same way degree programs are. Those programs are offered by the regular faculty. These programs are consistent with the institutional mission and goals.
- Some program objectives, requirements and courses are published in the UPRM Catalogue and also on the home page of each academic department and DECEP.
- 42% of the academic directors answered that the certificate program, curricular sequences, and minors learning goals are consistent with national criteria.
- 58% of the academic directors report that UPRM provides effective support service for the certificate programs, curricular sequences, and minors.
- The courses used as part of the certificate program, curricular sequences, and minors are the same courses considered for the regular academic programs; however, there is not a double count.
- In the last decade, the number of curricular sequences and minors has increased significantly. There are 18 curricular sequences and nine minors.
- The Teacher Preparation Program in Secondary Education is an intensive training program designed for students to become teachers at the intermediate and high school levels. Students registered in the Secondary Teacher Preparation Program take the courses required by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico. Our students have excelled in the national standardized tests, obtaining the highest scores.

### **Experiential Learning**

The UPRM allows its students to take courses in other accredited institutions, register for Cooperative Educational Programs (COOP), or spend a semester or a year in internship programs. The findings are:

- The credit is awarded accordingly, to similarity of course definition with the UPRM catalogue. If the course is offered by another UPR campus and has the same code, the course credit is automatically awarded.
- Every department has its own criteria to authorize students to take courses outside UPRM or to accept transfer courses.
- All courses transferred and approved at the academic departments are part of the students' program of study for their degree.
- The Departments of English, Hispanic Studies, and Mathematical Sciences have established their own criteria to award credits to students who take the advanced placement examination offered by the College Board.
- 81% of the academic directors consult with their faculty to evaluate the courses that are authorized to take outside UPRM or to be accepted.
- According to information provided by the Registrar's Office, on average, 3 % of the students take courses outside UPRM during regular semesters and 10 % of the students take courses outside UPRM during the summer.
- In the last decade, 749 COOP sections were offered and attended to by 6,605 students. Every year, the number of students interested in obtaining external experiential learning is increasing.

### **Non-Credit Offerings**

DECEP is the only unit at UPRM offering Non-credit Offerings and the findings are:

- Non-credit Offerings are consistent with UPRM mission and goals.
- The DECEP's faculty is involved in the design and evaluation of the courses and follow UPRM procedures.
- The courses taken as Non-Credit Offerings are not considered for a degree program.
- There is no periodic assessment process associated with the Non-credit offerings.
- Over the last nine years, the DECEP offerings have been diverse and have covered specific areas such as: culinary arts, fine arts, personal training, medical billing, computers, and economy community. These courses have been attended by students, non-teaching personnel, and the community. During this period there have been 710 courses, 205 special projects and 18,612 attendees.

### **Branch Campuses, Additional Locations and Other Instructional Sites**

The UPRM does not have any branch campus, additional location or other instructional sites to provide access for students.

### **Distance Education, Distributed Learning, and Correspondence Education**

The UPRM does not have distance education programs; however, UPRM offers courses entirely online, as well as hybrid courses.

- Courses delivered in an online or hybrid mode are designed, approved, and staffed, administered through established institutional procedures and governance structures accountable to the Dean of Academic Affairs.
- The faculty, curriculum committees, academic departments, college deans, Dean of Academic Affairs, Administrative Board, and the Academic Senate validate any course

material to be offered online or in hybrid mode. The online and hybrid course offerings are regulated by the UPRM Academic Senate certification 06-43.

- In order to comply with Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations related to Student Verification in Distance Learning and Correspondence Education, the UPRM's Administrative Board approved certification 2014-15-217, <http://www.uprm.edu/senadojunta/docs/certjunta/2014-15-217.pdf>.
- UPRM needs to improve its technical and physical facilities to support electronic offerings. All academic directors responded that distance learning was an area to improve and needed more resources to benefit students and UPRM.
- An assessment process for the online and hybrid course offerings needs to be implemented. 31% of the academic directors responded that UPRM should evaluate the effectiveness of its online learning offerings.
- During the last decade, a total of 18,436 students have taken hybrid/distance courses. UPRM has offered a total of 46 different courses ( courses offered by the College of Business (11), College of Arts and Sciences (32), College of Agricultural Sciences (2) and DECEP (1)). .

### **Contractual Relationships and Affiliated Providers**

The UPRM has contractual agreements with other institutions or organizations and has various articulation agreements with other UPR campuses. The findings are:

- The Chancellor signs all agreements with other universities, agencies, or UPR campuses in order to guarantee integrity and consistency with our mission and goals.
- UPRM has a procedure to assure that every course taken at another university or UPR campus is equivalent to a UPRM course. In articulated programs, students must take courses that are in the student's program of study. At UPR campuses, most of the courses have the same code.
- All students accepted at other UPR campuses under articulated programs must meet the same criteria of admission as UPRM students.
- The UPRM has agreements with the National Student Exchange, International Student Education Exchange Program and Global Engineering Education Exchange. These programs allow our students to spend a semester or a year at one of over 200 universities around the world just paying local tuition.
- The UPRM has memos of understanding (MOU) with five universities in the United States, eight universities in Spain, one university in Peru, and one university in Argentina. Students can study at these universities for a semester or a year.
- The UPRM and a local advanced high school, "Centro Residencial de Oportunidades Educativas de Mayagüez (CROEM)" have an agreement to allow students to take classes at UPRM.
- The College of Engineering has articulated agreements with five UPR campuses; the College of Agricultural Science has an articulated agreement with one UPR campus, the Nursing Department has articulated agreements with two UPR campuses, and the Department of Mathematical Sciences has articulated agreements with two UPR campuses.

## **Suggestions**

- The Department of Mathematical Sciences should continue identifying students with deficiencies in mathematics and supporting them to register in Pre-Calculus I as soon as possible. Also, the department should provide advisement to high school students interested in studying at UPRM, for example promoting the online available materials to approve the diagnostic exam.
- The Department of Mathematical Sciences should offer the summer remedial course through distance learning to allow entering students that are outside Mayagüez to take the remedial course.
- The Department of Mathematical Sciences should carry out a similar study to that of the English Department to determine the effectiveness of the remedial course.
- UPRM should study the possibility to implement distance learning in all modes of learning in order to achieve identified learning outcomes and enhance the students' educational experiences.
- UPRM should continue supporting and promoting the offering of certificate programs, curricular sequences, and minors to allow students and the external community additional opportunities to improve their knowledge, extracurricular experiences, new methods, etc.
- DECEP should establish periodic assessment procedures for the non-credit offerings.
- UPRM should establish a procedure to identify students who are registered in the curricular sequences or minors.
- UPRM should establish an assessment process for online and hybrid courses to maintain academic quality and programmatic development.
- UPRM should continue to support the COOP Program among students to allow them to explore new alternatives and obtain work experience before graduation.
- UPRM should establish a special code to identify students as part of UPRM although they are part of an articulated agreement.

## **Commendations**

- The Department of English is commended for its assessment study which led to eliminating the prerequisite for the Basic English course (INGL 3101).
- The Department of Mathematical Sciences needs to be commended for continuing to update the internet based diagnostic exams and tutorials.
- The Teacher's Certification Program is applauded for the success of its students in the national standardized tests, obtaining the highest passing rate in Puerto Rico. DECEP should also be applauded for all their efforts to be accredited by NCATE.
- The academic departments should be mentioned for developing new curricular sequences and minors.
- UPRM should be commended for supporting the COOP and Exchange programs which benefit our students.



## **Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning Background**

In the *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* (2006), Standard 14 emphasizes the following:

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals. (p. 63)

The 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report commended the efforts of UPRM to establish a systematic process for student learning goals, but requested the submission of a monitoring report to document the implementation of institutional assessment plans. The report recommended the following:

- Each program should complete at least one significant assessment project during the next academic year on a topic of importance to that program.
- The UPRM needs to establish a group or committee (such as the college assessment officers) with the formal responsibility for coordinating the ongoing, disciplinary assessment efforts of the colleges and providing the Chancellor with an annual report of activities across the campus.
- The UPRM needs to review the learning goals for general education and develop a formal assessment plan that specifies an ongoing approach to studying these important goals. Responsibility for this project needs to be assigned and a schedule developed. (pp. 18-19)

The institution, faculty, and academic programs, hereinafter referred to as programs, initiated an intense process of compliance by taking significant steps to address the recommendations put forth by MSCHE, demonstrating progress in the implementation of continuous improvement campus-wide. One of the most significant decisions was the establishment of the Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment (OMCA) in September 2005. The commitment of institutional resources to create the office and employ a professional in assessment addressed this recommendation. As interest and motivation across the institution increased, the OMCA staff recognized the need to provide timely feedback to each unit's assessment plans and reports. Based on comments from the units and observations made by the Academic Assessment Review Committee, the Student Learning Assessment (SLA) process (templates and rubrics) was restructured for the 2006-07 year. During the first cycle, OMCA developed new guidelines to ensure the completion of an entire improvement cycle by each unit.

From 2005 to 2008, the assessment efforts were robustly continued, which was commended by the 2008 MSCHE team. The MSCHE 2008 Report suggested that the Dean act to ensure that an individual from the College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS) be identified to lead the assessment initiatives for that College. Two years later, the UPRM presented a Periodic Review Report (PRR) 2010 to the MSCHE. In response, MSCHE underscored individual program accreditations, i.e., National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC), International Association of Counseling Services (IACS), and National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Moreover, the full accreditation by ABET of all six undergraduate programs of the College of Engineering was presented as a role model on campus.

The participation of the College of Business Administration, in the effort to achieve accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) was also mentioned in the report. In addition, it recommended that UPRM should ensure that all departments at the university have written self-studies in place that address the SLA within the departmental curriculum, and that reports be submitted annually to OMCA. Such plans should provide evidence

of a full four-step assessment program (articulated goals, implementation strategies, assessment of achievement, and using results to improve).

There was a change in administration in 2010 and the environment that had been created in the UPRM regarding student assessment declined. The OMCA staff was relocated in other offices resulting in the reduction of the assessment activities. Nevertheless, numerous programs continued their accreditation efforts, with such organizations as ACBSP (Business Administration), ABET (Engineering), ACRL (Library), ACS (Chemistry), IACS (Counseling), NCATE (Teacher Education), and NLNAC (Nursing).

### **Findings:**

#### **Clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes, at all levels (institution, degree/program, course) and for all programs that aim to foster student learning and development**

At the institutional level, the student learning outcomes (SLO) were established as part of the *“Institutional Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning.”* The UPRM Administrative Board (certification 03-04-180) and the UPRM Academic Senate (certification 03-43) approved this plan in 2003 (<http://middlestates.uprm.edu/web/>). The Institutional SLOs are published in the UPRM Academic Catalogue ([UPRM Catalogue](#)). Currently, the UPRM’s SLOs are under review by the General Education Committee at the Senate level and OMCA, refer to findings of Standard 12.

The expectations of the SLO in the College of Engineering (CoE), College of Arts and Sciences (CA&S), Business Administration (CBA), and Agricultural Sciences (CAS) are clearly articulated at all levels of the campus and consonant with the institution’s mission. UPRM academic departments have also used the institutional mission and the SLOs as a guide to develop their expected SLOs. In the UPRM catalogues, 81% of the departments have their SLOs published. Brochures, posters and handouts also show this information. At the course level, each department develops learning outcomes for every course within the department, according to the certification 112 of the UPR-GB 2014-2015.

The CoE performs assessment at various levels (1) at an institutional level, (evaluated by the MSCHE); and (2) at the college-level, since each program is evaluated by ABET. The assessment culture of the CoE is based on making data-driven-decisions and critically analyzing whether the educational processes are conducted with a continuous improvement approach. Each department has established its own assessment plan.

The CBA has a Learning Outcomes Assessment Program that is based on their mission statement. Its objective is to allow faculty to continuously improve the quality of the educational programs in order for students to meet the expected profile. The CBA establishes the learning goals and objectives of the undergraduate (Office Administration and Business Administration) and graduate programs (MBA) based on its mission statement and the student graduation profile. These learning outcomes have been published consistently since 2004-2005 in the UPRM Catalogue. Aligned to the CBA learning outcomes, the learning goals and objectives encompass the measurable traits that the faculty agreed that all students should possess at time of graduation. The mission statement, student profile, learning goals and objectives, and learning outcomes are the basis for the development of the CBA Assessment Plan for each program. For each learning outcome, this plan defines the competencies, the performance measurements or instruments, the performance indicators or acceptance criteria, and the assessment frequency.

In summary, to carry out a meaningful assessment of the student learning process, the institution has articulated statements of expected student learning at different levels: institutional,

departmental, program, and courses. According to the academic directors' survey responses (n=26): 85% indicated that their assessment plans were articulated with other plans in the institution, 77% have written statements of expectation for SLA work in all levels, and 75% of the programs have a SLA Plan developed, implemented, and updated and intentionally connected with the SLOs at all levels. The responses from faculty members were quite similar to those of academic directors. In addition, faculty members (n=313) responses indicated that 52% agreed that these plans were articulated and implemented at all levels in the institution, and also aligned to the SLOs (56%), and linked to the institutional mission (70%).

### **A documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve student learning**

At the College of Engineering, the assessment of student learning is course-embedded and department-based. In general, faculty members participate actively in the process, the directors supervise all assessment activities, and a faculty member coordinates assessment and accreditation activities under the guidance of an assessment coordinator at the college level. The office in charge to coordinate these activities is the Office of Accreditation Assessment and Continuous Improvement (OAACI). Faculty and other department members participate in meetings, survey activities, and are committed to participating in outcome assessment and continuous improvement. Also, each department, in consultation with the department constituencies, identifies their SLOs and establishes a process to periodically evaluate and modify them. These processes ensure that: (1) the results of the assessment are used in an on-going manner, (2) the SLO assessments are met, and (3) the quality of the programs improves.

In the College of Arts and Sciences, all the departments have designed and implemented an assessment plan. The content of the assessment plans (learning objectives, activities, methodology and tools used to collect data) vary according to the departments. Every department follows an autonomous process in which they choose the specific area of interest to assess according to their disciplines. The assessments plans are published in the website of College of Arts and Sciences at <http://uprm.info/avaluo/>. The college created the Office for Assessment and Continuous Improvement (A+Office) in 2004 to create the infrastructure, resources, and training necessary to institutionalize the assessment process and to support department assessment programs. An assessment committee was also created and each department assigned an assessment coordinator to this team. During the 2004-2008 period, the A+Office coordinated the resources and training necessary to guide the implementation efforts of the departments. The departmental coordinators, with the support of departmental assessment teams, were responsible for the implementation of the assessment plans in each department, and the coordinator received up to a 3 credit workload for this task per semester. The TF12 findings revealed that during the academic years 2009-2013, the assessment committee was inactive. However, in most of the departments, the SLA process continued. The assessment efforts of the A+Office were once again restored and reactivated in 2013. During the year 2014-15, the committee's efforts were directed to: 1) revising and updating the SLA plans, 2) identifying a new learning assessment cycle in each program, and 3) preparing an administrative assessment plan.

At the College of Business Administration (CBA), the original Assessment Plan was approved and implemented in May 2004. Since then, it has been revised at least four times by the Assessment Committee and approved by the Faculty (latest revision and approval was October 2014). Furthermore, an array of activities have been realized to revise learning outcomes, analyze assessment results and disclose them to faculty, and provide specific assessment related workshops to faculty. Also, the [CBA Strategic Plan](#) acknowledges the relevance of an Assessment Plan for student learning and administrative processes. The CBA assessment of student learning is primarily

course-embedded to align to the common professional components. For example, at the end of each semester, a standardized exit exam is administered to graduation candidates to measure the common professional components. The Assessment Committee and the faculty participate actively in identifying the courses where the professional components and major competencies are measured, as well as the performance measurement and indicators.

The College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS) does not have a formal procedure to compile assessment data or results. However, assessment methods and tools used are diverse throughout the programs, and professors have created their own methodologies to implement their assessment plans. As a result, several courses have particular tools and procedures to assess student learning. The SLOs plans of CAS can be found at the following webpage: [CAS SLOs](#).

In summary, most of the programs indicated that they have inventory methods and tools that include the objectives of the SLO plan and that they collect, analyze and disseminate this information. Individual departments along with the Center of Professional Enhancement have provided assessment-training support to faculty through workshops and seminars. In the surveys administered, directors also agreed: that they received support from the UPRM (65%), 70% indicated that the department had reviewed their Assessment Plan, 80% indicated that it was developed in collaboration with the faculty, and 58% affirmed that the assessment process to evaluate and improve student learning have developed metrics, comparable models, criteria for, and indicators of achievement in the Plan. In addition, faculty considered that assessment plans are not simple and practical enough to be effective (41%) and not easily available to the UPRM constituents (40%).

#### **Assessment results that provide sufficient, convincing evidence that students are achieving key institutional and program learning outcomes**

Overall, the SLA in UPRM departments is based on course-embedded measures such as exams, quizzes, projects, and student presentations, among others. Other departments based assessment on aspects such as graduation rate trends, retention rates, surveys and interviews (graduating students, employers, and alumni), and meetings with advisory boards. Some departments based the assessment of their student learning on the self-study formats required by the accrediting agencies (ACBSP, ABET, ACS, NCATE/CAEP, and NLNAC). Several departments have implemented SLA plans, and results have been used to improve program quality and student learning. In surveys or interviews, directors or departmental assessment coordinators indicated the use of assessment results to make changes such as: 1) modified laboratories and courses; 2) improved undergraduate research, lab safety procedures, and other student activities; 3) revised laboratory manuals, student guides, and tutorial labs; 4) created new courses, curricular sequences, workshop training, and certification programs; 5) revised undergraduate and graduate curricula and courses; and 6) developed extracurricular activities. Also, the assessment results have been used to address concerns regarding student skills and learning in the areas of math, accounting, and statistics through a mentoring program.

Several grants have been submitted and funded by various federal agencies to improve students' academic experiences. In addition, direct and indirect assessment tools are used to monitor and ensure the achievement of SLOs. For example, the College of Engineering has an assessment tool that faculty utilize to document the assessment of specific outcomes based on course evaluation activities, such as exam problems, assignment, projects, etc. An additional tool for direct assessment is the licensure examination. As a result, in these tools, faculty provides a description of modifications incorporated into the course, a reflection of what was or not effective, and suggestions for further improvements. These results are collected and discussed at department

meetings, which facilitates the adoption of teaching practices to improve course offerings. Indirect assessment tools includes surveys to alumni, employers, and graduating students, and other surveys, which include course outcomes and skills assessment, meeting with Advisory Board, COOP surveys from both participating students and employers, course student evaluations, and survey on student and faculty satisfaction, among others. All of these tools allow departments to measure how well the program has prepared graduates for careers in the private and public sector, and success in graduate or professional schools. Results obtained from these tools are compiled, analyzed, and made available to department constituents for discussion and decision-making.

Finally, faculty survey results indicated that: 45% believe that the results from assessment are used to improve curricula, teaching and to verify students learned the material, 44% indicated that as part of the process, the department uses findings to improve student learning, 50% considered that SLOs in courses and program responded to the institutional mission, goals and objectives, and 50% agreed that these SLOs are used to improve learning or that in fact it improves teaching, curricula or programs.

### **Evidence that student learning assessment information is shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and is used to improve teaching and learning**

In the College of Engineering, each department publishes their plans and results of assessment electronically (department web pages) and on paper (placed on various bulletin boards and brochures) so they are visible and available to visitors and the academic community (students, faculty, and staff). They are also available at the [OAACI](#) webpage. Some venues used by the Arts and Sciences departments to make the SLA available to professors, students and other personnel are: (1) Departmental websites, (2) Departmental meetings, (3) The A+Office webpage (<http://uprm.info/avaluo/cierres/>), (4) Publications such as *Avalúo Plus: Learning Assessment Journal* (<http://uprm.info/avaluoplus/>), and (5) Self-Study Reports (NLNAC 2013 and NCATE 2010).

At the CBA level, information about the SLA processes has always been disclosed to its main constituents through workshops and faculty meetings. During the previous assessment cycle, information was available on the CBA website. The CAS-AAC duties include presenting an annual report at the Faculty Meeting, which has not been done in the last three years. Essentially, the only method to disclose assessment plans and results is through departmental websites (<http://www.uprm.edu/agricultura/avaluo/>) linked to CAS and other offices on campus.

According to the directors surveyed: 70% of the programs have the assessment plan published and accessible, 73% expressed that the SLOs are available to the UPRM community, and 62% indicated that they had published or shared the results with others. Finally, 43% of the faculty members believe that the SLOs are published and accessible to UPRM constituents, while 39% stated that the results from assessment of learning are published and available to them.

### **Documented use of SLA information as part of institutional assessment**

Student outcomes are assessed in different courses throughout the College of Engineering curriculum. The results are used to improve learning. In addition, faculties meet regularly to discuss departmental results, to determine if the overall SLOs are achieved. At the College level, the OAACI documents that all programs are performing the assessment.

In the College of Arts and Sciences, from academic year 2005-06 to 2008-09, the departments completed some assessment cycles as part of their respective assessment plans. The procedures, data, results, and interpretations of each assessment cycle were summarized in a progress report, submitted to the A+Office, and presented to other assessment coordinators and university officials.

During the academic year 2014-15, the departments revised their respective assessment plans (SLA plans and administrative plans). The revised plans were also submitted to the A+Office. Presently, the SLA activities are in progress in each department for the documentation, analysis, and dissemination of results.

From academic years 2005-06 through 2008-09, in its Annual Report, the CBA included information regarding the SLA as stated in Section 13 of the Institutional Plan for the SLA. After that period, there is no evidence this has been done.

In the CAS, the Academic Assessment Committees (CAS-AAC) are responsible for coordinating the implementation of the assessment plan by program. At the faculty level, the CAS-AAC is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and using data to identify improvement opportunities. On May 1, 2008, the Faculty of the CAS approved a revised version of General SLOs submitted by the CAS-AAC. Regrettably, this effort was interrupted and the work plan was not completed. After 2008, the CAS-AAC has met only occasionally.

Finally, survey results indicated that UPRM faculty (87%) agreed that the assessment process is very useful for the institution, it is part of the faculty's duties (95%), and 68% agreed that the administration supports the process.

### **Recommendations**

- The College of Agricultural Science and departments, without a structured academic assessment system, should consider adopting successful assessment models such as those used at the CoE and Nursing department, among others.
- Academic assessment processes and results should be documented appropriately at the faculty level. It is the responsibility of the faculty assessment coordinator to provide this information yearly to OMCA.
- It is imperative to assign financial support to the assessment committees, both at the faculty and department level, to assure that all programs implement their SLA plans, use the results to improve the learning process, and publish results.
- CAS should provide evidence of their full four-step assessment program.

### **Commendations**

- The Chancellor is to be commended for having reestablished OMCA and supported its permanence as an office to advance the assessment process at UPRM.
- The academic departments/programs accredited by external agencies are to be commended for their continued efforts in SLO assessment.
- Departments and faculties at the colleges are to be commended for having completed various significant assessment projects.

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