

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students

of

The University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez
Mayagüez, Puerto Rico

by

A Self-Study Evaluation Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared After a
Visit to the Institution on:
April 10 – 13, 2016

The Visitors:

Dr. Manuel Pacheco (Team Chair)
Former President, University of Missouri System

Dr. Arturo Alonzo, Jr. (Team Member)
Former Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration/Chief
Operating Officer, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Dr. JoAnn Canales (Team Member)
Professor and Founding Dean, College of Graduate Studies
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Dr. Jaime Chahín (Team Member)
Professor and Dean, College of Applied Arts
Texas State University

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Assistant Instructional Professor, Department of Construction Science
Director, Mobilization 2 Completion Initiative
College of Architecture, Texas A&M University

Dr. María Maricela Fuentes-Martin (Team Member)
Associate Vice President and Dean of Students
Louisiana State University

Dr. Arturo Madrid (Team Member)
Norine R. and T. Frank Murchison Distinguished Professor of the Humanities
Trinity University

Working with the Visitors:

Dr. Tito Guerrero, III
Vice President
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

At the Time of the Visit:

President/Chief Executive Officer:
Dr. John Fernández Van Cleve, Chancellor

Interim Dean of Academic Affairs:
Dr. Antonio González

Chair of the Governing Board:
Dr. Jorge Sánchez Colón

I. Institutional Overview

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 Morrill-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, and

- Performing creative work, research and service to meet society's needs and to make available the results of these activities.

The institution provides 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 within the UPRM community, has seven objectives to:

1. Institutionalize a culture of strategic planning and assessment;
2. Lead higher education throughout Puerto Rico while guaranteeing the best education for students;
3. Increase and diversify the Institution's sources of revenue;
4. Implement efficient and expedient administrative procedures;
5. Strengthen research and competitive creative endeavors;
6. Impact Puerto Rican society; and
7. 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 treatment in fulfilling the Mission with excellence as the institution consistently directs its efforts to reach the institutional Vision. The set metrics accompanying the document and analysis by the institution's constituents are designed to gauge the advancement of established objectives and to 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 the 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.

The 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*.

II. Nature and Conduct of the Visit

This visit was conducted by a team of peer evaluators as part of UPRM's self-study process. The team reviewed the institution's self-study report, supporting materials, and related documents. It also met with a number of individuals associated with UPRM. Among them were included the following:

Friday, April 8, 2016

Faculty – Isla Magueyes

- Dr. Nick Shizas
- Dr. Richard Appeldoorn
- Dr. Roy Armstrong
- Dr. Juan J. Cruz Motta
- Dr. Juan G. González Lagoa
- Prof. Julio Morell
- Mariana C. León Pérez- Student

Monday, April 11, 2016

Team Meeting with Administrative Board

- Mr. Wilson Crespo – Director Budget Office
- Dr. Raúl Machiavelli – Dean of Agricultural Sciences
- Dr. John Fernández Van Cleve – Chancellor

- Mr. Joseph Maya – Administrative Board Student
- Prof. Lucas N. Aviles – Dean of Administration
- Dr. Noel Artilles – Professor of Engineering- Elected
- Dr. Manuel Valdés Pizzini – Dean of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Antonio González Quevedo – Dean of Academic Affairs
- Dr. Francisco Maldonado – Dean of Students
- Prof. Ana E. Martín – Dean of College of Business Administration

Team Meeting with UPRM Self-Study Steering Team

- Dr. Noel Artilles- Standards 4 & 5
- Dr. Sonia Bartolomei- Standard 8
- Dr. Roberto Vargas- Standard 14
- Prof. Mercedes Ferrer- Standards 2 & 3
- Dr. Jorge González- Standard 11
- Dr. Gayle Griggs- Standard 10
- Dr. Betsy Morales- Standard 1 and UPRM MSCHE Coordinator
- Dr. Mariel Nieves- Standard 12
- Dr. Omell Pagán- Standard 9
- Dr. Rocío Zapata- Standard 7
- Dr. Halley Sánchez- Standard 6
- Dr. Pedro Vásquez- Standard 13

Team Meeting with Academic Directors

- Dr. José Colom – Electric Engineering
- Prof. Ismael Pagán – Civil Engineering
- Dr. Aldo Acevedo – Chemical Engineering
- Dr. Paul Sundaram – Mechanical Engineering
- Dr. Aidsa Santiago – Ciencias de Ingenieria y Materiales
- Dra. Viviana Cesaní – Industrial Engineering
- Dr. Didier Valdés – Graduate Studies
- Dr. Rebeca Orama – Teacher Preparation Program
- Dra. Carmen Bellido – Center for Professional Enhancement
- Prof. Luis Orlando Casiano – Director of the Library
- Dr. Matías Cafaro – Biology
- Dr. Ernesto Otero – Marine Sciences
- Dr. Luis E. Nieves – Social Sciences
- Dr. Jeffrey Valentín – Economics
- Dr. Luis del Río – Kinesiology
- Dr. Celia Colón – Nursing
- Dr. Maribel Acosta – Hispanic Studies
- Dr. Rafael Ramos – Physics
- Dr. Lizzette Rodríguez – Geology
- Dr. Roberta Orlandini – Humanities
- Dr. Rosita Rivera – English
- Dr. Olgamary Rivera – Mathematical Sciences
- Dr. Aidalú Joubert – Chemistry
- Prof. Aixa Rivera – Food and Technology Agricultural Sciences

- Dr. Alwin Jiménez – Agricultural Education
- Dr. José Latorre – Animal Sciences
- Prof. Héctor O. López – Agricultural Engineering
- Dr. Elvin Román – AgroEnvironmental Sciences
- Dr. Pablo Morales – International Programs in Agricultural Sciences

Team Meeting with the Presidents of Permanent Academic Senate Committees and the President of the Generate Student Council

- Prof. Freya Toledo- Industrial Engineering
- Francisco Vargas- Student President of Academic Senate

Dr. Fuentes Meeting with Directors of Student Services

- Ms. Xenia Ramírez – Director of Registrar’s Office
- Ms. María I. Alemañy – Director of Admissions Office
- Prof. Pura Vicenty – Disabilities Officer
- Ms. Larizza Hernández – Ombudsperson

Drs. Alonzo, Fuentes, Canales and Madrid meeting:

- Dr. Paul Suleiman – Assessment Officer for Engineering
- Dr. Betsy Morales – OMCA Director

TUESDAY, APRIL 12 2016

Drs. Alonzo, Fuentes, Madrid and Canales meeting

- Dr. Francisco Monroig – Associate Dean of Agricultural Sciences
- Dr. Edly Santiago – Assessment Coordinator of Agricultural Sciences
- Ms. Nitza Pérez – Budget and Planning Director in Agricultural Sciences

Drs. Alonzo and Chahín meeting

- Mr. Angel Pérez – Director of Finance Office
- Mr. Wilson Crespo – Director of Budget Office
- Dr. Noemí Maldonado – Humanities Professor- Member of Arts and Sciences General Education
- Dr. Leonardo Flores – Department of English
- Prof. Jaime Sepúlveda – Academic Senate

III. Affirmation of Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

Based on a review of the institution’s self-study and appendices, interviews, and other institutional documents, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet the Requirements of Affiliation.

IV. Compliance with Federal Requirements; Issues Relative to State Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements

Based on the separate verification of compliance with accreditation-relevant provisions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 and, as necessary, review of the self-study, certification by the institution, other institutional documents, and/or interviews, the team affirms

that the institution meets all relevant federal and state regulations and the requirements of other Department of Education recognized accreditors.

The team conducted additional reviews of the following compliance categories: Transfer of Credit Policies and Articulation Agreements, Title IV Program Responsibilities and Institutional Records of Student Complaints. The team affirms that the institution is in compliance with the federal requirements of these categories.

V. Commendations and Summary of Institutional Strengths

Commendations made by the team are identified in the narrative addressing the institution's compliance with the Standards for Accreditation.

VI. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

- The Mission Statement has undergone a few changes since the last Middle States reaccreditation to reflect the strengths of tradition as the institution positions itself to address the modifications proposed in the President's Agenda for Planning in the future.
- The development of the Mission Statement included the involvement of a broad array of stakeholders after being widely publicized by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP).
- UPRM's Mission Statement emphasizes the need for continuing to be responsive to the unique higher education needs of Puerto Rico and its society.
- UPRM is successfully maneuvering its transition from the 2003 – 2011 Strategic Plan to the 2012 -2022 Strategic Plan with ample involvement of a wide spectrum of University Community involvement.
- The seven broad objectives identified in the 2012 – 2022 Strategic Plan are clearly communicated and widely disseminated in several institutional documents and have increasingly become the focus of institutional resource allocation and implementation.

Suggestion:

The Visiting Team appreciates UPRM's candor in recognizing the importance of the relationship between the goals of access and excellence. It is suggested that the institution expand its efforts to communicate to students, faculty, and Puerto Rican society the importance of providing good educational opportunities to all students, but especially to those who are under-prepared, as a vehicle to positively impact Puerto Rican society.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

UPRM is engaged in a robust and comprehensive process of strategic planning, evaluation and institutional renewal. Although the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the University System and ultimately, the UPRM are facing considerable economic and fiscal challenges, UPRM is using the self-study process and other measures in a balanced approach to evaluating strengths and weaknesses. There are strategic plans, both at the System and University level, that are ongoing and that lead to goal setting in a strategic manner, promoting accountability and improvement.

Key Points:

- The steering committee that developed the self-study report is a broad and representative group of faculty, students and administrative staff. Numerous individuals were engaged by contributing reviews and providing feedback on the drafts.
- The self-study steering committee operated in an open and transparent manner, communicating frequently and openly with constituents.
- The self-study committee adopted an approach that integrated the concepts and relationships between and among the 14 standards.
- Planning at the System level has been robust, with the adoption of *Ten for the Decade: 2006-16*, a plan that has guided decision-making within the institutions and identified specific areas that should be evaluated in order to measure institutional effectiveness.
- UPRM approved its ten-year plan, *UPRM 2012-2022*, in compliance and in support of the system-level plan.
- *UPRM 2012-2022* is a strategic plan for the University that allows the campus to examine all aspects, including academic offerings, enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. The University-level planning has complemented the strategies and goals set by the University system. The university strategic plan is linked to the system-level plan at approximately a 90% level.
- *UPRM 2012-2022* includes seven strategic objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess improvement for each strategic objective.
- Planning has involved encompassing and representative groups of constituents, including teaching staff, students and support staff.

- The University is sensitive to the need to link planning and budgeting in order to meet the needs of the projects on its campus.
- The University recognized the importance of linking planning and resource allocation via the creation of the Office of Continuous Improvement and Assessment (OMCA) in 2005. This office was created with the specific mission of institutionalizing a culture of continuous improvement at the university. In 2009, due to budget cuts and other factors, the OMCA was deactivated.
- In 2014-2015, OMCA was reactivated as part of the effort to address Objective 1 of the strategic plan.
- Great strides have been made in the last 10 years in linking long-range planning to decision making and resource allocation.
- With increased communication between the Office of the Chancellor and the academic components, there is increased accountability and an atmosphere of transparency.

Suggestion:

UPRM should explore how best to solicit the participation of key leadership in future accreditation efforts. It is unacceptable to allow important stakeholders in this process to opt out of an important quality assurance process. In addition to the demoralization of those who actively participate in the process, potentially critical information is denied to the University Community as it tries to improve its effectiveness. It should be clearly understood that accreditation is an important, if not critical, component of UPRM's quest for excellence.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the UPR System, and UPRM are all facing significant challenges in the economic and fiscal areas. As of this review, the future of the Commonwealth's economic challenge remains unresolved and casts a shadow of uncertainty on the University's ability to continue to fulfill its mission. Two facts are known that are of utmost importance to the University. These facts are that the Commonwealth is facing its most severe economic recession in modern times and is confronting very serious and financial difficulties that have affected its source of revenues, its borrowing capacity and has eroded investors' confidence in the Commonwealth's ability to meet its obligations.

- Key facts that are of utmost concern, include:
 - The economy of Puerto Rico has shown contraction in the last 10 years, with the economy showing signs of worsening in the last few years.
 - Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has remained negative since 2007.
 - Unemployment rates continue to increase, averaging a 13% unemployment rate and reaching a high of over 15% in 2014.

- The Commonwealth relies on deficit financing, borrowing money to pay recurring expenses.
 - Rating agencies continue to downgrade general obligation and other debt instruments.
 - Lines of credit from the Government Development Bank are not available at this time.
 - Outmigration from the island continues at unprecedented levels.
- It is against this background that the University continues to do the best that it can with available resources amid the worsening economic situation.
 - The University, though faced with great fiscal adversity, is examining ways to reduce costs, become more efficient, and continue to “guarantee” fulfillment of its mission.
 - The funding level for the UPR was frozen at the 2013-14 level (\$833.9M for the system). Internal Distribution to the system campuses, including UPRM, is at the discretion of the Governing Board and has been similarly limited.
 - Funding for instruction has remained fairly stable and, in some cases, has even improved despite the budget reductions experienced in the last 5 years.
 - One of the first steps that the Chancellor took upon his appointment in 2014 was to set aside \$1M to fund projects specifically aligned to the strategic plan, showing commitment to the university’s strategic plan.
 - The Commonwealth requires an annual audit of its financial statements only at the System level. Individual campuses submit their financial data to the central office where they are consolidated.
 - Concerns over internal controls are noted by the auditors, specifically:
 - Closing not done timely, resulting in post-closing adjustments;
 - Posting and reconciliation of financial data not performed on a timely basis; and
 - Financial operations at certain campuses are not able to detect accounting errors, resulting in audit adjustments.
 - The system office has taken steps, through the Governing Board Certification #135 (2014-15), to address these concerns. These corrective steps include:
 - Requiring campuses to convert their financial statements from a cash basis to an accrual basis every six months or possibly on a quarterly basis;
 - Hiring a Director of Accounting who works on the annual financial statements and is responsible for the day-to-day accounting duties;
 - Requiring that the System CFO participate in the hiring process for the campuses’ Directors of Accounting;
 - Providing monthly reports to the Board of Governors; and
 - Increasing contact with the campuses.

Recommendations:

1. UPRM should work with UPR's central administration to increase the percentage of the general fund allocated to UPRM to be proportionate to the percentage of students enrolled.
2. UPRM, in consultation with appropriate constituents, should develop a comprehensive plan to address further budget reductions that may be implemented in the near future in order to:
 - Protect the funds that will allow it to continue to fulfill its mission of serving the citizens of the Commonwealth;
 - Protect the academic offerings to the students;
 - Protect its accredited programs; and
 - Protect its research mandate.

Suggestions:

1. The University should continue its efforts to attract external funds, not only through grants and contracts, but also through fund-raising activities and donations.
2. The University administration should investigate why such a low percentage of faculty and non-teaching personnel believe that assessment is part of the resource allocation process.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

The institution's system of governance is clearly delineated by law. The organizational structures, duties and responsibilities of the constituencies of UPR and the UPRM are defined by university bylaws.

These laws and bylaws describe and regulate the selection of the governing body members. The UPR Board of Governors is composed of 13 members: two students, one undergraduate and one graduate student; two tenured professors; the secretary of education of Puerto Rico; one professional with extensive knowledge in finance; one Puerto Rico resident with well-known leadership participation in social and community issues; five outstanding Puerto Rico residents linked to Puerto Rico communities, and one linked to Puerto Rican communities abroad. The group should consist of three UPR graduates. Other than the students and the faculty, all members are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the senate. Student representation is all also reflected in all governance committees at the institutional level.

The University is organized with the Chancellor as the CEO and chief academic officer. All the Deans, including the academic Deans, report to the Chancellor. The organizational structure is very centralized and supports the mission of the institution.

The OIIP office is generating data for assessment and planning that is helping academic departments and administrative units assess the impact of their activities and student results.

The staff, faculty and administrators have the academic qualifications and experience to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

Standard 5: Administration

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

The institution's administrative and organizational structure facilitates learning, teaching and research. The academic and administrative units support the mission of the University.

The Chancellor of the UPRM has the academic authority and responsibility to lead and administer the institution in consultation with the Academic Senate and the Administrative Board. The Chancellor has the academic credentials and experience in the institution and system to carry out the duties of the office of the Chancellor.

The Chancellor, in consultation with department heads and deans, prepares an annual budget that is submitted to the Administrative Board, the UPR President and the UPR Board of Governors. The annual budget approval process is documented in Appendix K of the self-study.

The Chancellor presides over the Academic Senate and Administrative Board meetings. In consultation with the Academic Senate, the Chancellor appoints deans of the respective colleges and directors of the Experimental Station and Extension Service. All tenured faculty appointments recommended by the directors and deans are approved by the Chancellor. Deans and Department heads curriculum vitae are listed in Appendix P of the self-study.

The OIIP and OMCA assess and collect data to support the administration on decision making related to the strategic allocation of resources and program evaluation. This assessment complements the needs of accreditation for professional programs like Engineering (ABET), Nursing (NLNAC), Chemistry (ACS) and Teacher Preparation (NCATE/CAEP).

Overall the organizational structure and allocation of staff and faculty resources are efficient and meet the needs of the students and addresses the mission of the University.

Recommendations:

1. UPRM should assess how to develop a comprehensive assessment plan to evaluate staffing patterns, technological needs, research infrastructure and administrative functions.
2. The UPRM governing bodies (the Administrative Board and Academic Senate and student members) should be transparent in their deliberations and use data to make decisions concerning the allocation of human resources during the current economic circumstances.

Suggestion:

Assessment of the staffing patterns should be continuous to determine the most efficient allocation of faculty and staff given the finite financial resources.

Standard 6: Integrity

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

- There is ample evidence that good survey data were used to gather information regarding perspectives on issues of fairness, due process, impartiality, and respect for persons. The 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report commended the self-study for its effective use of these data and the same approach was used for the one under review.
- Overall, the self-study reflects good work done to analyze compliance with the standard while identifying appropriate areas of concern and progress made since the last accreditation.
- Several challenges regarding this standard presented themselves since the last accreditation. Changes in governance and administration as well as an investigation by the Inspector General of the National Science Foundation and by the Federal Bureau of Investigation prompted Supplemental Information Requests from the MSCHE. These requests asked for the description of actions planned by the UPRM to ensure compliance with Standards 4, 5, and 6. Subsequently, UPRM submitted reports that were accepted and the institution remained accredited.
- Surveys and questionnaires administered for the self-study indicate support that faculty and students believe that the principles of integrity are adequately communicated, adhered to, and promoted in most instances. There is, however, a continuing concern among these groups that political influences could erode confidence in the institution concerning fairness, grievances, and conflicts of interest.

- There is strong dissatisfaction by non-teaching personnel regarding the fairness of procedures in recruitment, evaluation, disciplinary procedures, grievance procedures, and the resolution of conflicts of interest. While acknowledging that proper information is available for these matters, both individually and collectively, for the most part, many do not know what the information is or it is ignored. There is a general belief that a climate of respect and a sense of community are lacking, and that there is undue political influence in decisions regarding the implementation of policies and procedures.
- The self-study describes a political situation in Puerto Rico that may directly contribute to perceptions of undue political influence on the University. Specifically, because there is basically an even split between citizens who believe statehood should or should not be conferred to Puerto Rico, when the party in power changes, leadership in government, at UPR, and at UPRM also change to reflect the newly elected official policies. As a result, upper level administration changes every few years. Despite efforts in the past to ameliorate these consequences of elections, there have been minimal impacts of these efforts. Fortunately, the relatively strong shared governance structure at UPRM, embedded policies and procedures, and the dedication of the faculty and knowledgeable staff seem to have prevailed and have prevented major changes that would negatively affect the integrity of the academic enterprise. However, it also appears to create disquiet among non-teaching personnel.
- Despite the aforementioned conditions, the institution operates as an honest, well-intentioned enterprise working on behalf of the public good with its integrity well-protected.

Recommendations:

1. The institution should conduct a thorough study of why non-teaching personnel believe they are not respected and treated unfairly. A diverse, representative, and historically knowledgeable retinue of employees, faculty, managers and administrators should address these issues. Additionally, consideration should be given to creating and empowering an advisory council to the Chancellor of non-teaching personnel to identify perceived problems and offer suggestions of possible ways create a sense of community that seems to be lacking.
2. As the self-study indicates, consonant with recommendations made as early as 1995 by MSCHE and endorsed in the self-study under review, UPRM should work with all responsible parties “to secure, for higher education on the island, the autonomy necessary to isolate it from political changes on the island” and to enhance the integrity of higher education in Puerto Rico.

Suggestions:

1. Although a majority of students and faculty acknowledge that they were somewhat familiar with procedures regarding student grievances and plagiarism, the numbers in the survey supporting this assertion were low. A redoubled effort should be made to disseminate information about the Academic Code to both groups.
2. Since questions of integrity have arisen during the accreditation cycle, it would seem prudent for UPRM to consider offering a program on institutional ethics to faculty, students and nonteaching personnel to count towards their required ethics education.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

Despite the admitted lapse in assessment initiatives/efforts over a three-year period between 2009 and 2012, based on the narrative and a timeline provided of the comprehensive methodology employed by the task force established in January of 2013, and the lack of detail provided in the Standard 7 section of the self-study report, it appears that, in fact, a comprehensive institutional level assessment plan has been initiated and is in progress.

The supplementary report focused on Standard 7 notes four strategies to institutionalize a culture of strategic planning and assessment and evidences considerable detail, timelines and artifacts in the form of plans and matrices that clearly show the considerable effort and initiative on behalf of the reinstated assessment unit. The noteworthy indicators are:

- All of the administrative and academic units have now undergone formal assessment initiatives creating metrics and evaluation instruments to assess client satisfaction, core functions, services to be offered, and standard operating procedures.
- The three main goals drive the creation of the strategic plans. The goals are succinct, directive and actionable, thus making them user-friendly and easy to monitor.
- The OIIP website [<http://oiip.uprm.edu/>] is comprehensive and impressive. Besides the wealth of information that can be found on this website, there is the capability to retrieve the data in the Dynamics Graphics folder for example in either Spanish or English!
- The Recommendations, Commendations and Summary in the self-study report are candid, transparent, and realistic.
- The OIIP and the OMCA appear to be synergistic in their efforts to transform UPRM to an institution where there is culture of assessment, reflection, and improvement.

Recommendation:

As a way to encourage use of data for improvement/enhancement purposes, OIIP should provide guidelines on how institutional assessment findings can be used for improving teaching and learning services.

Suggestion:

Maintain a public record on OMCA's website of documents that would be useful references, e.g., the currency status of the new assessment plans, website of the master calendar for the 5-year study reviews.

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

The admissions policies for undergraduate and graduate students are in accord with the mission and goals of UPRM. Undergraduate and graduate student admissions processes, program offerings and requirements, academic standings, and program requirements are clearly articulated in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. The admissions process for undergraduate students requires that students apply to the UPR System and indicate their preferred campuses and majors (first, second and third choices). UPRM attracts the strongest pool of high school graduates and, therefore, boasts about its highly selective admissions standards. UPRM recruits by the major declared by the student. The admissions capacity is determined by the academic departments and submitted to the Administrative Board for review and approval of a cap or quota.

The College of Engineering uses a strategic approach to determine student capacity for each department on the basis of the curriculum by major, course sequencing, and faculty capacity to teach courses. Additionally, the College of Engineering has organized recruitment efforts which benefit all areas of UPRM.

The majority of students admitted have the highest General Admissions Index (GAI) in Puerto Rico, but students who do not meet the minimum score in math are advised into a course which helps strengthen their abilities.

An admissions procedure exists for students with special abilities such athletics, music and art, although the number of students admitted for special abilities is quite low.

The cost of attendance at UPRM is very affordable at an average cost of \$5,923. Even with the low cost of attendance, 70% of the student body qualifies for financial aid. The three-year

default rates of UPRM cohorts are 12.5%, 13% and 11.6%, which are lower than the national rate of 13.7%.

Transfer credits are allowed within UPRM and from external institutions for undergraduate students. It was reported that students who submit transfer credits from outside of UPR do not receive a decision about transferability of credits prior to their enrollment which therefore delays their ability to develop degree plans accordingly.

Retention rates of students decline each year of attendance. For example, the 2007 freshmen cohort had a second year return rate of 89%, third year return rate of 80% and fourth year return rate of 72%, but the graduate rate drops to 48% by year six (a loss of 24%).

There does not appear to be a strategic plan for enrollment which would encompass a comprehensive plan from recruitment to admissions to retention and, ultimately, to graduation that includes all of the colleges and deanships at UPRM.

There are various coordinated efforts for recruitment such as the “Dare to study at UPRM... We want you!” and open houses coordinated by admissions with strong collaborations from the colleges. Open house attendance more than doubled between 2008 and 2015 (from 2,137 to over 4,200 participants). Because high school students rely on social media for information, a campaign called Acceso al Éxito has promoted the accessibility and benefits of college attendance to this key market.

A retention plan has been proposed by the Dean of Academic Affairs which includes the existing course, UNIV: Introduction to the University Way of Life, in addition to a peer mentoring program, an institutional committee to research student retention and persistence, development of a Center for Collegial Learning and Success, pilot testing of an early warning system, and lectures/workshops on best practices for the teaching of gateway courses.

Commendation:

The Recruitment, Retention, and Distance Engineering Education Project (R²DEEP) exemplifies a high level of faculty engagement in the College of Engineering that promotes recruitment and retention of students for UPRM.

Recommendation:

Develop a strategic enrollment plan that considers the broad scope of student success including recruitment, retention and completion including

- a. Replicating the College of Engineering’s R²DEEP program;
- b. Analyzing capacity for all course offerings;
- c. Assessing the disparity between retention and graduation rates;
- d. Revising the process for student registration priorities; and
- e. Creating a master list of course equivalencies for transfer students.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

The UPRM provides student support services that are in accord with the institution's goals for students. The University offers a robust network of student services which includes departments reporting to the:

Dean of Students: Band and Orchestra, Counseling and Psychological Services, Financial Aid, Health Services, Placement Office, Quality of Life, Student Center, Social and Cultural Activities, Student Exchange Program, Services to International Students;

Dean of Academic Affairs: Library, Admissions, Graduate Office, Registrar.

Dean of Administration: Cafeteria, Dorms, Traffic and Surveillance.

Chancellor's Office: Student Ombudsperson, Athletics Activities, and the Computer Center.

Three surveys were conducted to assess the effectiveness and levels of satisfaction by students, faculty and staff of student support services: academic experiences, institutional experiences (campus climate) and university experiences (direct services). Each of the surveys had over 1,000 responses and were conducted between 2012 and 2014.

The positive responses from students in their academic experiences indicated that the syllabi outline course objectives, the library resources are good and easy to access, professors preserve matters of academic integrity, professors are knowledgeable of the institutional mission and objectives, professors are knowledgeable of their roles and responsibilities, professors maintain confidentiality and they are qualified to teach the courses. Areas where students showed dissatisfaction were in the hybrid courses, adequacy of academic offerings, lack of diverse course availability and problems with the registration process.

The campus climate survey findings indicated that the environment promoted academic integrity and that students felt respected on campus. Issues of concern focused on lack of information regarding job placement, the discipline process, and student grievances. Students felt that their complaints or grievances were not handled fairly.

In the Direct Support Services survey, students responded being satisfied, or very satisfied, with the library services, bookstore, medical services, recreational activities, computer labs, counseling and psychological services, exchange programs, orientation, cafeteria, social and cultural events, and quality of life events. Areas of concern were the financial aid office, transportation, and the registration process. An additional area of concern that surfaced from the

campus focus group with students was the issue of personal safety as well as being alerted of institutional emergencies on campus.

Personnel who work in the various departments are highly committed professionals who have substantive experience in their respective areas. The quality of services provided to students with the very limited number of staff is noteworthy. Though students may rate a service more critically than another, the overall sense of feeling supported by staff was very positive.

Within the department of Counseling and Psychological Services, there are services for academic counseling as well as mental health services. The academic counselors support students toward academic progress and student retention. It offers orientation to students undergoing processes of admissions, reclassification, transfer, special permit, readmission, course withdrawal, university withdrawal and poor academic progress. Academic and professional counseling also occurs within each college and is led by faculty and professional counselors. Also noteworthy is the number of faculty who are lead advisors.

Counseling and Psychological Services provide mental health counseling in group and individual sessions. Health Services has two part time psychologists who help with emergency or critical situations as needed. The demand exists for more mental health counselors; however, funding has not yet been allocated for additional personnel.

Students felt more personnel would be beneficial including academic counselors, personal counselors, health professionals, safety and security personnel, career/placement staff, and learning centers staff.

Students were least aware of the existence of the Office of the Student Ombudsman. The role of the office is to assist students in articulating their concerns and to guide them through the procedures to address them. Through mediation, the staff attempts to find resolutions informally in cases that are deemed as minor grievances. Cases which are serious in nature and require a formal response are directed to the Dean of Students for resolution.

The athletics and intra-mural programs contribute significantly to the high levels of pride in the Colegio. There are approximately 500 student athletes who compete in a variety of programs of which 170 live in campus housing.

The Social and Cultural Activities Department is committed to support student associations. Currently UPRM has 300+ organizations which are active and carry out a variety of activities related to their majors, professional interests and social justice to name a few.

UPRM is committed to providing an environment where students with disabilities have access to all academic programs, support services, social events and physical facilities.

There was very limited evidence of any programmatic assessment within the departments which offer support services for students. Survey respondents, and feedback from non-teaching personnel expressed concern regarding the lack of assessment, and felt that there has not been consistent leadership at the executive level to implement assessment initiatives focused on

continuous improvement. The OMCA office has created an Administrative Assessment Council to begin addressing ongoing assessment in these areas.

Recommendations:

1. Strategies for wide dissemination of procedures for student grievances should be developed and implemented.
2. Record-keeping should be centralized to adhere to state and federal laws and regulations.

Suggestion:

Examine the distribution of fiscal resources to ensure that support services are adequately funded.

Standard 10: Faculty

The team’s judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

In response to the recommendations and suggestions contained in the 2005 MSCHE Final Report the UPRM has:

- Published, made available online, and implemented standards and procedures for the evaluation of faculty for promotion and tenure;
- Increased by 9% the number of faculty holding doctorates or terminal degrees (from 49% to 58%);
- Developed a procedure for allocating faculty lines based on program need;
- Instituted a policy of granting new professors release time and provided faculty with opportunities for release time to support research and avoid course overload;
- Provided multiple activities via its Center for Professional Enrichment for faculty development.

Notwithstanding very considerable fiscal constraints, which have resulted in a suspension of institutionally funded sabbatical leaves, a reduction in faculty hires, delays in promotion, and no salary increases since 2013, UPRM faculty remain engaged in teaching and research. A very high percentage (86%) of students affirm the excellence of the faculty. The team, however, wishes to express its concern that the financial cuts the institution has experienced over the past several years will inevitably result in serious teaching “overloads” and will affect not only the morale of the faculty but also the ability of faculty to carry out their instructional, scholarly and service obligations. In response to the concerns expressed in the self-study report, the team has developed a set of recommendations.

Recommendations:

1. Develop policies for the review of part-time and adjunct faculty and other professionals.
2. Establish and implement well-defined grievance and discipline procedures for faculty and professionals.
3. Secure resources in support of professional development, and especially of funds to underwrite research, leaves, and travel.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

UPRM is committed to the fundamental elements regarding Educational Offerings as detailed in Standard 11 of *Characteristics of Excellence*. UPRM's programs of study are consistent with its mission and core values that include the learning resources, facilities, instructional equipment, library services, and professional library staff to support the institution's educational programs – the institution is divided into one hundred four (104) Academic Programs, divided in the following way: fifty-four (54) undergraduate programs, forty two (42) master's degrees and eight (8) doctorates. The University is centered on the fields of agricultural sciences, arts and sciences, business administration, and engineering with a mission to provide opportunities to individuals from diverse backgrounds and in different locations; and to cultivate their potential for leadership, productivity, competitiveness, and critical thinking through exposure to intellectual, scientific, humanistic and technological advancement, with the purpose of contributing to regional and global sustainability.

From the self-study and the interviews conducted on campus, it is clear to the visiting team that the university utilizes the College of Engineering's specialized accreditation (ABET), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE/CAEP), the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC), and the American Chemical Society (ACS) as indicators of instructional quality, rigor, and educational effectiveness. Business Administration is currently pursuing accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

According to the self-study report, the number of university programs being offered has significantly expanded in recent years while the funds available to support these programs have substantially diminished. The conflict between expansion and available funds is causing resources to be limited for support of academic programs. This problem is greatly aggravated by a 2010 student walkout (May 3 to June 21). On a positive note, there has been an increase in the

student population and a demand for more course sections in popular programs. According to the self-study and confirmed through a number of interviews, UPRM offerings are congruent with its mission, including appropriate areas of academic study of sufficient content, breadth and length.

Commendation:

UPRM is to be commended for its professional programs that foster coherent student learning experiences and promote “synthesis of learning.”

Recommendation:

Establish uniform procedures for the periodic evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of all curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences by incentivizing faculty and staff.

Suggestions:

1. Continue to develop ways to introduce interdisciplinary and collaborative student work to leverage faculty expertise during a time of economic constraints.
2. Continue securing external funding to enable experiential student learning opportunities.
3. Consider using the undergraduate program in Industrial Microbiology as a model/template of coherent learning experience for others to emulate.

Standard 12: General Education

The team’s judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

In response to the recommendations and suggestions contained in the 2005 MSCHE Final Report the UPRM has:

- Developed a general education assessment plan; formed an institutional general education committee that has obtained Academic Senate support of the rationale for the plan; initiated an assessment cycle; established an office to direct the plan; created a general education webpage; and executed two assessment cycles in the period between 2009 and 2015;
- Established a Center for Resources in General Education, a project to improve writing across disciplines, and a Bilingual Writing Center;

- Created an institutional committee on general education composed of elected members from each of its colleges to align student learning outcomes (SLOs) with the goals of general education.

UPRM has responded very positively, if unevenly, to the recommendations made by the 2005 MSCHE team. The 2016 team, acting on the suggestions of the MSCHE self-study report, recommends further actions to assure that general education objectives are addressed and met by all academic units.

Recommendations:

1. Uniform standards for information concerning general education should be developed and disseminated via all university platforms.
2. Measurable student learning objectives should be developed and put in place.
3. All academic units should be in compliance with general education requirements.
4. All departments and colleges should integrate the General Education Assessment Plan into their assessment plans.

Suggestions:

1. The goals and objectives goals of general education should be reviewed systematically.
2. Strategies should be developed for the dissemination of assessment results to all academic personnel.
3. Communication between assessment coordinators and academic directors should be improved.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

Having identified that 22.18% of students have deficiencies in English and 59.30% have deficiencies in mathematics, UPRM has supported their students with development of courses to increase the students' comprehension skills in both areas. After a review of the effectiveness of both courses, UPRM has seen no difference between students participating in the remedial English course and students who did not. Therefore, UPRM eliminated the course. The mathematics course has been developed and incorporated into a high school setting to better prepare the incoming students for meeting the required math skills.

There has been significant growth in the number of certificate programs, curricular sequences and minors. This growth has been attributed to the demand for students to possess the deeper knowledge and skills that interdisciplinary careers require.

UPRM has an additional instructional location at Isla Magueyes where a significant portion of its graduate program in Marine Sciences is conducted, an on-site visit by the Chair of the Evaluation Team confirms that the laboratories and classrooms are well equipped and maintained. There are on-site amenities for faculty, students, visiting scholars and researchers that meet all the standards for accreditation for student and faculty support services.

Although not required, the Chair of the Evaluation Team visited the Agricultural Experimental Station – Lajas. It strongly reinforced the value that the Land, Sea, and Space Grant Mission that UPRM fulfills has to Puerto Rico as well as to the United States. Research based information about the flora and fauna of the island is widely disseminated and contributes broadly to national and island understanding as well as providing services to the surrounding communities.

Commendation:

UPRM is to be commended for the high quality of its graduate program in Marine Sciences and the extraordinary attention it provides to its research programs. The faculty and student efforts to describe, understand, and disseminate information about the aquaculture and sea ecology and their preservation, and its attempt to advance knowledge about climate change, its consequences, and to provide models for mitigation make this program a jewel in UPRM's crown.

Suggestions:

1. UPRM should continue to monitor deficiencies in English and mathematics for students that are being accepted into the University.
2. UPRM should work to understand the structural, cultural, and socio-economic factors that affect time-to-completion.
3. Care should be taken that the economic crisis being experienced in Puerto Rico does not diminish or negatively affect the quality of such excellent programs as the Marine Sciences graduate program. Not replacing core faculty when they retire or leave can be a tempting response to save money. Depleting the ability to deliver excellence should be resisted.
4. Continue to monitor the class size for popular courses so that instruction and class effectiveness can be maintained at a high level.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

Among the indicators that there has been a concerted effort to address the recommendations in the 2005 MSCHE Final Visit Report include the following:

- A candid discussion and detailed historical account of events, the resultant findings and the activity to address the concerns raised in the report.
- All departments have written self-studies addressing the Student Learning Assessment Plan that includes the full four-step assessment program, i.e., articulated goals, implementation strategies, assessment of achievement and using results to improve, as evidenced by artifacts in Appendix F.
- 81% of the departments have their SLOs published in the UPRM catalogs.
- All of the departments in the College of Arts and Sciences have designed and implemented an assessment plan.
- Specific objectives have been developed for the self-study.

The College of Business (COB) has a clear roadmap for alignment of student learning outcomes matched to courses in program and corresponding rubrics. The rubrics evidence a level of rigor assessing outcomes at all levels of Bloom's taxonomy emphasizing the more complex levels of cognitive processing, e.g., application, evaluation, synthesis.

The COB also has a clear roadmap for continuous improvement that allows for data collection and analysis, program faculty review and adjustments to process (see Appendix F – COB Appendix B).

Similarly, the College of Agricultural Sciences has aligned its programs' objectives with the institutional objectives and has developed rubrics addressing the objectives. Descriptions have been developed for each point on the Likert Scale to guide the assessor in scoring the objectives.

Recommendation:

Develop a plan for monitoring the operationalization of assessment plans to ensure that they are implemented, sustained and monitored for quality, integrity, and efficacy.

Suggestions:

1. Monitor the development of SLOs to ensure currency as well as to ensure that 100% of the programs meet this goal.
2. The low survey ratings suggest a need to make the plans coherent and instructive, as well as formative and summative, to ensure that programs look more comprehensively at outcome results to close the loop.

3. Reference is made to standardized exams that are administered to measure the professional components. These exams should be analyzed to ensure that there is alignment with SLOs and instructional assignments and they require students to evidence higher level cognitive processing to complete the exam versus just recall of factual data.
4. Central to effective program assessment is a clear road map where SLOs are aligned with instructional assignments and assessment practices. The institution should monitor the assessment plans to ensure that there is a formal procedure to compile assessment data or results.

VII. Summary of Compliance

Based on a review of the institution's self-study and appendices, interviews, and other documents reviewed during the visit, the team draws the following conclusions. UPRM appears to be in compliance with all Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation. Altogether, 3 Commendations, 19 Recommendations, and 23 Suggestions were offered to the institution by the team of peer evaluators.