2016 Self-Study Report

University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus

Prepared for the Reaffirmation of Accreditation through Self-Study

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

January 2016

Middle States Commission on Higher Education
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Certification Statement:
Compliance with MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation
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Effective August 1, 2015

University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus
(Name of Institution)

is seeking *(Check one)*:
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_X_ Reaffirmation of Accreditation through Self Study
___ Reaffirmation of Accreditation through Periodic Review

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.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	English	Spanish
ACOI	Authorization to Take Courses in Other Institutions	Autorización para Tomar Cursos en Otras Instituciones
ACUDEN	Integral Childhood Care and Development Administration	Administración para el Cuidado y Desarrollo Integral de la Niñez
APPU	Puerto Rican Association of University Professors	Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarios
CAUCE	Center for Urban, Community, and Entrepreneurial Action	Centro de Acción Urbana, Comunitaria y Empresarial
CDLC	Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies	Centro para el Desarrollo de Competencias Lingüísticas
CEA	Center for Academic Excellence	Centro para la Excelencia Académica
CEDESP	Center for Studies and Research on Puerto Rican Higher Education	Centro de Estudios y Documentación Sobre la Educación Superior Puertorriqueña
CEPR	Puerto Rico Council on Education	Consejo de Educación de Puerto Rico
CFO	Chief Financial Officer of the University of Puerto Rico	Director Financiero de la Universidad de Puerto Rico
CGS	College of General Studies	Facultad de Estudios Generales
CIP	UPR-RP Institutional Budget Committee	Comité Institucional de Presupuesto
CIPSHI	Institutional Committee for the Protection of Human Beings in Research	Comité Institucional para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación
DAA	Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs	Decanato de Asuntos Académicos
DARI	Office of the Assistant Dean of International Relations	Decanato Auxiliar de Relaciones Internacionales
DCODE	Department of Counseling and Student Development	Departamento de Consejería para el Desarrollo Estudiantil
DCODE	Department of Counseling and Student Development	Departamento de Consejería para el Desarrollo Estudiantil
DECEP	Continuing Education and Professional Studies Divisions	Division de Educación Continua y Estudios Profesionales
DEGI	Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research	Decanato de Estudios Graduados e Investigación
DSA	Office of the Dean of Student Affairs	Decanato de Asuntos Estudiantiles
DTAA	Academic and Administrative Technologies Division	División de Tecnologías Académicas y Administrativas
ELASH II	English Language Assessment	Sistema de Avalúo del Inglés para

	System for Hispanics II	Hispanos II
ESLAT	English as a Second Language Assessment Test	Prueba de Avalúo del Inglés como Segundo Lenguaje
EXADEP	Postgraduate Studies Admission Test	Examen de Admisión a Estudios de Posgrado
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid	Solicitud Gratuita de Ayuda Federal para Estudiantes
FIPI	Institutional Fund for Research	Fondo Institucional para la Investigación
GDB	Government Development Bank	Banco Governmental de Fomento
GE	General Education	Educación General
GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test	Examen de Admisión para Graduados en Gestión Empresarial
GRE	Graduate Record Examination	Examen de Registro para Graduados
GSC	General Student Council	Consejo General de Estudiantes
GSP	Graduating Student Profile	Perfil del Egresado
HEPT	Humanities English Placement Test	Prueba de Ubicación en Inglés para las Humanidades
HRS	Human Resources System	Sistema de Recursos Humanos
IACS	International Association of Counseling Services	Asociación Internacional de Servicios de Consejería
IACUC	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee	Comité Institucional para el Uso y Cuidado de Animales
IGS	General Admissions Index	Índice General de Solicitud
iINAS	Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Initiatives	Iniciativas de Investigación y Actividad Creativa Subgraduada
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System	Sistema Integrado de Información Educativa Postsecundaria
IR	Institutional Research	Investigación Institucional
ISEP	International Student Exchange Program	Programa Internacional de Intercambio de Estudiantes
LIM	Children's Lab	Laboratorio de Infantes y Maternales
LS	Library System	Sistema de Biblioteca
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	Administración Nacional de la Aeronáutica y del Espacio
NIH	National Institute of Health	Instituto Nacional de la Salud
NSE	National Student Exchange	Intercambio Nacional de Estudiantes
NSF	National Science Foundation	Fundación Nacional de la Ciencia
OAPI	The Office for Students with Disabilities	Oficina de Asuntos para la Persona con Impedimento
OCIU	Office for the Maintenance of University Installations	Oficina para la Conservación de las Instalaciones Universitarias
OEAE	Office for the Evaluation of Student Learning	Oficina de Evaluación del Aprendizaje Estudiantil

OLAS	Online Learning Assessment System	Sistema Digital para el Avalúo del Aprendizaje
OPASO	Office of Environmental Protection and Occupational Security	Oficina de Protección Ambiental y Seguridad Ocupacional
OPDF	Office of Planning and Physical Development	Oficina de Planificación y Desarrollo Físico
OPEP	Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting	Oficina de Planificación Estratégica y Presupuesto
PAAED	Academic Support Program for Special Skills Students	Programa de Apoyo Académico a Estudiantes con Destrezas
PACTIC	Administrative Project for Certification in Communication and Information Technologies	Proyecto Administrativo para la Certificación en Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación
PAE	Financial Aid Program	Programa de Asistencia Económica
PAEI	Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan	Plan de Assessment de Efectividad Institucional
PEAF	Formative Academic Experiences Program	Programa de Experiencias Académicas Formativas
PEAU	Evaluation Tests for University Admission	Pruebas de Evaluación y Admisión Universitaria
PECA	Continuing Education for Adults Program	Programa de Educación Continua para Adultos
PICIC	Project to Integrate Information Skills into the Curriculum	Programa para la Integración de Competencias de Información
PIE	Educational Initiatives Program	Programa de Innovaciones Educativas
PRAAR	Recruitment Program for High-Performing Athletes	Programa de Reclutamiento de Atletas de Alto Rendimiento
PREI	Interdisciplinary Studies Program	Programa de Estudios Interdisciplinarios
PRREE	Recruitment and Retention Program for Student Success	Programa de Reclutamiento, Retención y Éxito Estudiantil
PSAE	Academic and Educational Services Program	Programa de Servicios Académicos Educativos
SAGA	Managerial, Academic, and Administrative Support System	Sistema de Apoyo Gerencial Académico Administrativo
SIS	Student Information System	Sistema de Información Estudiantil
UNICA	Association of Caribbean Universities and Research Institutes	Asociación de Universidades e Institutos de Investigación del Caribe
UPR	University of Puerto Rico	Universidad de Puerto Rico
UPR-RP	University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus	Universidad de Puerto Rico Recinto de Río Piedras
VU 2016	Vision University 2016	Visión Universidad 2016

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EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

The UPR-RP's 2016 Self-Study covers the period 2005-2015. The report introduces and discusses numerous topics concerning the past and present of the institution, but its main aim is to share conclusions, suggestions, and recommendations that will be useful in the future.

The discussions and findings included in the six chapters that follow have two main purposes. First, they evidence our compliance with our institutional mission, which is presented in Chapter 1, and the 14 Standards described in the MSCHE publication *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*. Second, the contents of this document offer information, observations, and insights that students, faculty, non-teaching staff, and campus leadership can use in improving services and fostering institutional renewal.

In the U.S., Europe, the Caribbean, and Latin America, the UPR-RP maintains a reputation as an institution of higher education that is firmly committed to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, the promotion of values and ethics, and contributions to Puerto Rican society. In the period since our last accreditation visit, the university has experienced changes in leadership, institutional policies, student body characteristics, and financial resources. The most significant of these changes relate to the debt crisis facing the Commonwealth government. While Puerto Rico's fiscal situation presents substantial challenges for the UPR-RP, the institution has cut costs, launched new initiatives, and worked to increase institutional effectiveness. But most significantly, it has succeeded in providing thousands of students with a high quality affordable education. Our graduates, the professionals and leaders of tomorrow, will be vital actors in the economic recovery of the country.

The completion of this report was overseen by a Self-Study Steering Committee composed of faculty and student representatives from a variety of the colleges and schools on our campus. Working on the project over a period of two years, the Self-Study Steering Committee oversaw the development and design of the larger self-study project as well as the completion and editing of this report. Since its inception this project has been supported by the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs.

The project's purpose, design, and method was presented to each of the colleges and schools on campus during the first semester of the AY 2014-15. This information was also shared on our project website and distributed to all members of the campus community through institutional mail. Approximately 50 faculty, non-teaching staff, and students served as members of working groups that created the initial documents upon which this report's chapters are based. Hundreds of others participated by commenting on drafts and serving on satellite and liaison committees that were active in specific stages of the process.

Two drafts of this report, a preliminary draft and a revised draft, were made available for review and commentary to promote discussion and engagement across our diverse constituencies. Sharing these drafts also kept our campus community aware of progress on the report and promoted familiarity with the issues it addressed. The preliminary and revised drafts were distributed in August 2015 and November 2015, respectively. The revised draft included changes

made after the careful consideration of approximately 150 pages of comments, queries, corrections, and recommendations that were submitted by each of our colleges and schools. This input assisted in adjusting the scope and focus of the report and ensuring that it addressed the concerns and opinions of the campus community.

This report consists of an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion. It should be read alongside a separate document that contains its appendices. The reader will find a list of conclusions and next steps after the discussion of each of the 14 Standards. Some chapters also contain recommendations. Next steps and recommendations are two different categories of suggestions for institutional improvement. Next steps represent more routine aspects of institutional life, and many of them relate to existing initiatives. Recommendations are suggestions that the Self-Study Steering Committee has identified as deserving of emphasis. They are not necessarily linked to existing initiatives and should be considered in the development of the campus's next strategic plan, and their implementation should be monitored in institutional assessment.

Findings, Next Steps, and Recommendations: Our compliance with the 14 Standards is documented and supported by data discussion throughout the six chapters:

- Chapter 1 "Mission and Goals" presents the UPR-RP Mission and documents compliance with Standard 1.
- Chapter 2 "Sustaining Excellence and Institutional Improvement" demonstrates compliance with Standards 2, 3, and 7. Its section on Institutional Resources contextualizes the university's finances and budget in terms of the larger fiscal situation facing the government of Puerto Rico. Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Assessment are linked to the discussion of our current strategic plan.
- Chapter 3 "Linking Leadership and Dialogue" documents compliance with Standards 4 and 5. The chapter describes self-governance on campus and policy development and decision-making at the level of the UPR System. It offers suggestions for quality improvement in the areas of technology and data management.
- Chapter 4 "A Tradition of Scholarship and Engagement" demonstrates compliance with Standards 6, 10, and 11. It addresses the role of research within the institution, in terms of educational offerings, publications, and institutional support. Special attention is given to policies related to integrity, internationalization, program accreditation, and faculty recruitment and hiring.
- Chapter 5 "Foundations for Positive Learning Outcomes" documents compliance with Standards 12 and 14. This chapter discusses General Education alongside the Assessment of Student Learning. It pays special attention to changes following the creation of the "new" bachelor's degree and the work done by the campus office in charge of coordinating the assessment of student learning.
- Chapter 6 "Cultivating Knowledge and New Perspectives" evidences compliance with Standards 8, 9, and 13. It discusses admission, retention, and graduation rates as well as support services available to our students. The chapter presents details about current initiatives to ensure that the UPR-RP remains accessible to socioeconomically disadvantaged applicants as well as efforts to increase graduation rates.

Identifying problems and articulating critiques is important to the self-study process, but it is not the sole focus of this work. The self-study process has shown that promoting awareness of our strengths and achievements is also an effective way of cultivating growth and progress. Thus, the completion of this self-study has facilitated a balanced approach to the evaluation and assessment of the university's performance under our current strategic plan, Vision University 2016, which will end in our next academic year. This approach has assisted us in envisioning how to better assess our performance, how to move forward, and how to promote unity of purpose as we engage in new planning processes that will improve our institution and nurture those areas in which we have excelled.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras Campus (UPR-RP) is the oldest and largest of 11 campuses in the University of Puerto Rico System. A public research-oriented comprehensive doctoral institution, our campus is distinguished by diverse academic offerings that include 68 undergraduate programs, 48 master's degrees, and 16 doctoral programs, as well as postgraduate certificates and a continuing-education program.

Known affectionately as "la YUPI," the campus, which was founded in 1903 as Puerto Rico's first public university, began with a mere 173 students. Over the last 112 years, growth has been exponential, in terms of both size and the achievements that have contributed to our status as the most prestigious and respected institution of higher learning in Puerto Rico. The UPR-RP is recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a Doctoral Research Intensive University.

Today our reputation extends beyond national and international borders, crossing languages and academic disciplines. It is bolstered by the solid formation and professional success of UPR-RP graduates as well as the accomplishments of first-rate faculty members committed to the goals of a tertiary education of excellence. Experienced non-teaching staff members provide support and services that enrich course offerings, campus activities, and the intellectual and professional formation of students.

The UPR-RP has a diverse faculty with academic degrees awarded by world-class universities. As detailed in Chapter 5, the institution has striven to support internationalization and increase diversity. Today 52% of the faculty are female and 48% male. Our faculty includes a number of professors who have recently received prestigious international awards and prizes, among them recipients of the Andrew Gemant Award from the American Institute of Physics, the *Encomienda de la Orden de Isabel la Católica*, the Rómulo Gallegos Prize in Literature, the Caribbean Philosophical Association's Frantz Fanon Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Dr. Etta Z. Falconer Award for Mentoring and Commitment to Diversity.

Our institution has a long tradition of welcoming academic, scientific, and government leaders from the U.S., the Caribbean, Latin America, and other parts of the world to join us in our academic endeavors and the enrichment of the educational experience of our students. Many still remember when Nobel laureate Juan Ramón Jiménez graced our classrooms as a professor; more recently, distinguished Puerto Rican U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor inspired us with her passion for justice, Palestinian-American literary theorist Edward Said expanded our cultural understandings, and American public intellectual and author Cornel West deepened our understanding of the importance of equality and difference in our complex societies.

Our Most Important Constituents

Each year the most talented and academically promising students among Puerto Rico's high-school graduates choose the UPR-RP as the place to complete their higher education. Upon enrollment, they have access to the most comprehensive academic offerings anywhere in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, with a wide range of majors and opportunities for coursework on a par with large public research institutions in the mainland U.S. and Latin America. They are provided

with the best educational resources available on the island and the support services needed to benefit from the challenging learning experiences offered by our first-rate faculty.

Our campus serves approximately 18,220 students annually. Recent figures show 14,000 undergraduates, with 3,500 students at the master's level and 770 pursuing doctoral degrees. This population makes the UPR-RP the largest degree-granting institution in the Caribbean.

Our students are educated at an institution committed not only to academic quality but also to economic accessibility. They attend the most affordable university on the island, with students who began in 2012 paying $55.00 per undergraduate credit and $137.00 per graduate credit. Scholarships are available to all economically disadvantaged students who would not be able to study without such aid, consistent with the mandate established by the organic act of the University of Puerto Rico, namely, that no qualified person should be barred from studying at the institution due solely to a lack of financial resources. Tuition waivers are also granted to graduate students who are employed as research and teaching assistants.

Our institution nurtures the formation of professionals in the arts, business, and science, providing our community with a substantial portion of its most talented journalists, writers, teachers, architects, actors, musicians, historians, lawyers, medical professionals, and public relations specialists. For example, two-thirds of Puerto Rico's Certified Public Accountants are graduates of the College of Business Administration. Our institution graduates the eighth-highest number of PhDs in Chemistry in the United States and the Caribbean—more than Harvard, Purdue, and UCLA.

Our Contributions to Society

In the last decade the UPR-RP's ongoing contributions to Puerto Rican society have strengthened its position and commitment to excellence. The institution takes special measures to enrich faculty and students' involvement in its immediate local context. The Center for Urban, Community, and Entrepreneurial Action (**CAUCE** in Spanish), for example, promotes the physical, social, and economic revitalization of the Río Piedras community with the help of local businesses, community organizations, and development and housing projects. Founded in 2003, this program provides a range of services, from orientations about legal services to free workshops, tutoring, and classes for members of the community of all ages.

Another important contribution to society is our School of Law's Legal Assistance Clinic, a requisite part of the curriculum for all law students. The clinic provides *pro bono* legal services in the areas of intellectual property, patents, community economic development, and sexual and gender discrimination. It fosters in our law students an understanding of Puerto Rican society that provides grounding for the practice of law.

The institution's growth and future are part of a vision in which excellence in higher education and productivity in research and related professional activities complement and reinforce one another. The institution's commitment to Puerto Rican society and research in diverse disciplines is bolstered by significant external funding. In AY 2013-14, the UPR-RP received $69M in external funds, with more than $22M for research coming from competitive grants awarded by agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Health, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Our Campus

In the eyes of all of Puerto Rico, the UPR-RP is symbolized by its iconic Tower, *La Torre*, constructed in 1939 in the Spanish Revival style. The floor of the 174-foot carillon tower features a bronze circle with the coats of arms of the nations of the Americas, an emblem of Pan-American unity. La Torre is an important symbol not just for our campus, but for the entire UPR System.

For many, the tower represents success; for others, a vision of the island's progress as an important long-term project. Every day, passers-by from all walks of life are inspired by its hourly chime. Our constituents are likely to see the tower as a landmark on the path toward a better future, a reminder that higher education plays a central role in sociocultural and economic development. La Torre is also associated with memories of student movements and passionate debates that have involved strikes, calls for university autonomy, and questions about Puerto Rico's political status.

The campus juxtaposes lush green areas with modern and traditional architecture of historical significance. A number of buildings were designed by world-renowned German architect Henry Klumb, apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright. These include the Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art; the José M. Lázaro Library; and the main buildings of the colleges of Social Sciences and Business Administration. Many campus structures were built with funding provided by the Bankhead-Jones Act, a law providing support for land-grant colleges during the Great Depression. At the time of their construction these buildings were seen as a foundation for the island's rehabilitation.

Our recently restored UPR Theater has, since 1939, been one of the most sought-after cultural venues on the island. Located on the campus's picturesque Quadrangle, it has hosted artists and prominent figures from all around the world. Recently these have included anthropologist Jane Goodall (2009); Nobel Prize-winning scientists Leonard Nurse, John Agard, and Anthony Chen (2011); Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz (2014); and Nicaraguan writer and intellectual Sergio Ramírez (2014).

One of the most treasured buildings among Klumb's contributions to campus architecture is the emblematic *Centro Universitario*, a space dedicated to student services. Remodeled as part of the Capital Improvement Plan, it was reopened in 2014 in conjunction with the campus's 111th anniversary.

In 2011 the Center for Professional Learning and University Development (*Red Graduada*), part of a Title V project, Expanding Graduate Education and Achieving Success for Hispanics, was opened. Located on the second floor of the main library, the Red Graduada provides a variety of technological resources as well as quiet areas for individual and group study.

Since 2014, with the renovation of the Student Center, the university has increased support for student participation in campus and governance. Additions to the center include offices for the General Student Council, which provide a space where students have easy access to all the services provided by the Student Council.

Our Decennial Review

Our campus was first accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Public Schools in 1946. Today, in addition to institutional accreditation, over 75 programs and services are accredited by more than 25 local and international agencies, a sign of the strength of the academic

curriculum at the core of students' educational experiences. Accreditation has nurtured a culture of change and opportunities for reflection and transformation in the pursuit of excellence.

The self-study process is an opportunity for the UPR-RP to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. The main task is to consider and reflect on the most recent decade (2006-2016) in the institution's life in order to better prepare and plan for our future. This exercise can help campus constituencies better understand the institution's mission and its connections to student learning, the strengths and needs of faculty, shifting societal needs, and the effectiveness of our curricular offerings and administrative structure.

The establishment of a committee to guide and oversee the decennial evaluation that leads to MSCHE reaccreditation took place in the second semester of AY 2013-2014. Dr. Ethel Ríos, Acting Chancellor at the time, appointed the Self-Study Steering Committee. Acting Dean of Academic Affairs Dr. Tania García Ramos also worked on the project at this stage.

Self-Study Organization

The Self-Study Steering Committee held frequent meetings in order to discuss reaccreditation and identify issues to be addressed in the distinct stages of the process. It selected the Comprehensive Model with the Reordering of Standards as the format. This format facilitates the integration of concepts and the discussion of relationships among the 14 standards rather than approaching each in isolation. Before work began, the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Chancellor reviewed the format options provided by the accrediting agency and approved the steering committee's choice.

Subsequently, the steering committee submitted the document *Design for the Self-Study 2015-2016* to MSCHE. This document describes the self-study process and presents the campus's preliminary project design and format preferences. Once the design and format were approved by MSCHE, work officially began. The Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs served as the administrative base for the project.

The steering committee established five workgroups, each consisting of between five and seven members. The 14 standards established by MSCHE were distributed among the workgroups as shown in the table below. The exception is the first standard, Mission and Goals, which was addressed by all the workgroups and the steering committee.

Distribution of MSCHE Standards to Workgroups

Workgroup	Main Concepts	MSCHE Standards
1	Planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal; institutional resources; and institutional assessment	2, 3, and 7
2	Leadership and governance, administration	4 and 5
3	Integrity, faculty, educational offerings	6, 10, and 11
4	General education, assessment of student learning	12 and 14
5	Student admissions and retention, student support, related educational activities	8, 9, and 13

Self-Study Process

After the five workgroups were established, the Self-Study Steering Committee met with them and discussed the standards under review. Each workgroup member received the MSCHE handbook *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* (2008). Groups were advised to closely consider the standards and to formulate a list of questions relevant to the goals of our reaccreditation process. These questions addressed three main areas: compliance, ongoing assessment, and improvement. The steering committee made recommendations about how best to address the questions that were formulated.

Dr. Carlos Severino Valdéz became involved with the process when he was named Chancellor in July 2014. The Chancellor assisted in the creation of two satellite committees. One of these completed work on planning; the other documented areas of achievement within the institution. Dr. Palmira Ríos González began supporting the project when she was named Dean of Academic Affairs in January of 2015.

During the first semester of AY 2014-2015, the Self-Study Steering Committee Coordinator visited all of the colleges and schools on campus to orient faculty members on the model to be used in the self-study process. These visits, which took place during faculty meetings, served to involve all campus units in a conversation about the value of the self-study process.

Members of the UPR-RP community had several opportunities to examine and comment on drafts of the self-study report: during two sessions of public hearings in the Academic Senate and during a longer period in which the colleges and schools reviewed a draft of the report. All campus constituencies were notified of these reviews and discussions via institutional email. Organizations were invited to participate, including our two staff unions (the *Sindicato de Trabajadores* and *Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docentes*) and the faculty organization, the Association of University Professors.

A liaison person was designated in each college and school on campus in order to facilitate communications between the Self-Study Steering Committee and faculty members of the various units. The liaisons group reviewed the 14 standards considered in the review process and assisted in organizing the review process in their unit.

The five workgroups received official documents and data to be used in completing their tasks. Several workgroups completed statistical exercises and reviewed recent changes in policy. Others documented changes that have taken place within the last decade and conducted surveys and interviews in order to familiarize themselves with current institutional projects. Another dimension of their work involved verifying information and exploring opinions about services and administrative processes for the purpose of making recommendations for improvement.

Once the drafts completed by the workgroups were submitted to the steering committee, they were reviewed and edited. Steering committee members worked to provide comments and critiques, making suggestions about content and format while paying special attention to findings and recommendations. Meetings between workgroups and the steering committee continued throughout the process of creating chapter drafts.

This report has been strengthened and enriched by the review and analysis of hundreds of comments and suggestions that were submitted to the Self-Study Steering Committee between August 3 and September 15, 2015. It has also benefited from the comments and recommendations

of students, faculty members, non-teaching staff, academic senators, and alumni/ae who took part in the process.

As detailed in Chapter 2, the 2016 UPR-RP self-study serves as a key resource in creating the UPR-RP's new development plan. Improving and strengthening the self-study report required that it be reviewed and commented on by faculty members, non-teaching staff, students, and others. All comments received were carefully considered as the final report was prepared.

This final version of our report has been made available for the campus community. Of course it has also been shared with MSCHE and the peer reviewers who make up the team that will visit the UPR-RP in February of 2016. The report will allow team members to learn about the UPR-RP and about our self-study process in preparation for their visit.

Vision for the Future

Providing the residents of Puerto Rico, and particularly the young people, with the education of excellence they deserve is a huge responsibility, requiring transparency, informed planning, dedication to a common cause, and open and constructive dialogue. This self-study has assisted in creating an atmosphere of common purpose which underscores that with the campus's many responsibilities must come institutional improvements and ongoing opportunities to positively contribute to the transformation of Puerto Rican society.

CHAPTER 1: MISSION AND GOALS

Standard 1: Mission and Goals – The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom 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 utilized to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The UPR-RP Mission was reviewed by our Academic Senate in March of 1990, and after extensive discussion and analysis that body officially adopted it as Certification 67, 1989-90. The mission statement was subsequently endorsed by the Board of Trustees, the governing body of the UPR System. Since that time it has guided the institution's development and served to integrate its numerous activities and contributions to Puerto Rican society.

The mission statement's preface offers a brief overview of the institution's history and its most significant values. The body of this document, aligned with the Law of the University of Puerto Rico, articulates aspirations and core values in five main areas: student learning; graduate education; undergraduate education; teaching, research and community service; and innovative and relevant programs. These statements provide a strong foundation for the institution's work and the planning necessary for achieving its goals and vision of the future.

Preface

The Río Piedras Campus, founded in 1903 as the Insular Normal School, is the oldest and most heterogeneous and complex unit in Puerto Rico's public system of higher education. By law, the campus must pursue and uphold the general mission of the University as set out in Article 2.b of the University of Puerto Rico Act of January 20, 1966; but within this framework, the Río Piedras campus, like the other units of the University of Puerto Rico System, is given the greatest possible autonomy, academic freedom, and liberty to pursue research goals. While the Río Piedras campus is guided by the general mission of the UPR System, it also has a particular mission which emerges from and is based upon the specific historical and cultural circumstances that distinguish it from the other campuses and administrative units. The campus mission holds that the Río Piedras Campus will:

1. *Foster the integrated education of its students through programs of study which promote intellectual curiosity, the capacity for critical thinking, constant and ongoing learning, effective communication skills, an appreciation for and cultivation of ethical and aesthetic values, involvement in campus governance, and a sense of social awareness and responsibility.*

2. *Provide graduate education of the highest quality, with research and creative activity as key elements that strengthen undergraduate education; offer post-baccalaureate programs*

for the education and training of professionals of the highest caliber, persons who will be committed to the ideals and values of Puerto Rican society.

3. *Provide an undergraduate education of excellence which offers students a unified vision of knowledge that brings general education and specialization into harmony; foster in students a capacity for independent study and research.*

4. *Develop teaching and research skills; promote participation in the life of the community as well as service to that community; promote respect for the historical and social conditions of Puerto Rico, taking into account its Caribbean and Latin American surroundings yet reaching out into the international community; enrich and strengthen the storehouse of knowledge associated with the consolidation of Puerto Rican nationality, history, language, and culture; and simultaneously foster the growth and dissemination of knowledge at an international level.*

5. *Develop innovative, relevant programs of research, community service, and continuing education which will support and contribute to the academic and professional activity of the campus; contribute to the transformation and continuing progress of Puerto Rican society, to the analysis of its socioeconomic and political problems, to the formulation of solutions to these problems, and to the improvement of quality of life.*

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Relevance

The UPR-RP Mission has assisted diverse constituencies in defining the institution's course of development. For example, it figured prominently in the development of Vision University 2016 (**VU 2016**), the ten-year strategic plan that was approved and implemented a decade ago. In this context the mission has motivated students, faculty, non-teaching staff, and members of the wider community to pursue excellence in their work and thereby further distinguish the institution as the island's flagship campus. It has positively impacted the institution's reputation, making it known locally and internationally for its commitment to the dissemination of knowledge, the integral formation of students, and service to society.

Our mission statement figures prominently in institutional life. It is referenced in discussions and debates about policies and regulations and has been included in numerous official print and online publications, including course catalogs, presentations of our strategic plan, and information distributed to new employees. It is consulted by members of student organizations, our Academic Senate, and our Administrative Board. In addition, core values from the mission inform the creation of rubrics for the assessment of student learning outcomes and statements that justify the creation of new academic programs.

The institution's guiding document has also shaped policies related to teaching and research. For example, the mission's commitment to "graduate education of the highest quality" influenced approval of Academic Senate Certification 38, 2012-13, which reduced the teaching load of those faculty members teaching at the graduate level to six credits, leaving six credits for research, thesis direction, and dissertations. Other positive results in this area can be seen in the growing number of doctoral program graduates, and in the increase in the number of publications by professors and students, which are tallied in monthly achievement reports.

Ideas in the UPR-RP Mission have assisted the institution in advancing new educational policy, including the Governing Board's Certification 50, 2014-15, which, as explained in Chapter 6, calls for greater access to higher education for socioeconomically disadvantaged students, as well as higher rates of student retention and graduation. Core values from the mission influenced the decisions that the Academic Senate made regarding how best to pursue the certification's goals. Our mission has also motivated and assisted in sustaining significant educational experiences. For example, research, creative activity, and independent study at the undergraduate level received a sustained boost from the creation of the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Initiative (**iINAS** in Spanish). The success of this initiative's conferences, workshops, and other activities can be partially attributed to the emphasis on research skills found in our mission statement.

The UPR-RP Mission Statement is a forward-looking document that has served the institution well. It has provided a base upon which research, creative work, and public service have thrived. Our mission also enunciates a shared vision that guides students, faculty, staff, and leadership in addressing challenges such as closures, political controversies, and shifts in the budget.

The UPR-RP Mission supports the nine goals in our strategic plan. Their alignment is shown in Appendix 1.1. The goals can be divided into two groups. Those in the first group, goals 1-5, relate directly to areas of academic life explicitly addressed in the mission (research, academic programs and services, faculty, students, and internationalization). The second group (goals 6-9) provide support and ensure compliance with strategic planning. They address management, technology, physical installations, and community and alumni/ae. The relationship between mission and strategic goals is addressed further in Chapter 2 (see, for example, Table 2.4).

III. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Relevance of the UPR-RP Mission

The period under review provides numerous examples of the UPR-RP's use of its mission in developing and shaping programs and practices and evaluating effectiveness.

A Shared Vision

The UPR-RP Mission has nurtured a shared vision of the institution's main responsibilities and goals. In addition, it has served as a reminder that access to quality public higher education via our institution is one of Puerto Rico's greatest assets.

Next Steps

Strategic Planning

With respect to the development of our next strategic plan, which will begin in 2016, the UPR-RP leadership should analyze the UPR-RP Mission in our current context, taking into account the fiscal crisis facing the government of Puerto Rico.

CHAPTER 2: SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal – An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and maintain institutional quality.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources – The human, financial, technical, physical facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment – 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.

STANDARD 2: PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL

I. INTRODUCTION

Planning in the UPR System

The UPR System and the UPR-RP campus have two separate but interlinked ten-year plans. The system-level plan, Ten for the Decade: 2006-16, was adopted in 2006 by the Board of Trustees (Certification 123, 2005–06) after its endorsement by the University Board. It presents ten areas that have guided decision-making within the institution and defines the specific areas to be evaluated in measuring institutional effectiveness. The plan also establishes guidelines for organizing the distribution of resources and calls for the development of a culture of assessment and evaluation. As suggested below, these guidelines have nurtured systemic practices for measuring how well the institution achieves its mission.

Upon approval of the plan a decade ago, the Board of Trustees requested that all units of the UPR System develop campus-level plans aligned with the system-level plan. Additionally, it requested that the units develop and share the planning tools they established. Among these tools were to be clearly defined indicators, instruments, and general protocols for assessment and evaluation. The University Board endorsed Ten for the Decade after direct consultation with each of the academic senates. Ten of the 11 academic senates in the UPR System endorsed the plan; the remaining senate sent recommendations that were readily considered in creating the final draft.

After implementing Ten for the Decade, the Board of Trustees followed up on the status of planning on each campus. The Board's findings showed that, on average, the plan's 10 goals were addressed in 90% of the units' development plans (Board of Trustees Certification 3, 2009-10). Appendix 2.1 presents the goals of the UPR System plan alongside those of our campus plan, VU 2016, showing how they reinforce one another.

Central Administration is currently working on the 2016-2021 strategic plan for the UPR System. An Executive Committee for Strategic Planning was appointed by the President, with representation by all sectors of the academic community (the Governing Board, faculty, non-teaching staff, and students). The committee has met on a monthly basis this year and examined how internal and external factors are impacting the institution's development. The government of Puerto Rico's financial crisis is one of the factors being considered. The committee has also examined the success indicators of the current strategic plan and will take into account the issues identified in this self-study. A draft of the new plan will be distributed among the 11 campuses of the UPR System in 2016 for input prior to its final approval by the Governing Board.

Central Administration is also currently analyzing academic offerings across the 11 campuses. Information about enrollment, retention, and graduation rates (topics addressed in Chapter 6 of this report) is among the data under examination. Analysis has focused on how planning can contribute to compliance with accreditation standards as well as potential adjustments needed to ensure that the institution continues to meet standards of excellence.

The Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs collaborates closely with the deans of Academic Affairs of the 11 units of the UPR System and meets with them monthly. It also monitors accreditation compliance on a regular basis. The UPR-RP and the other campuses that are currently working on their MSCHE self-studies have met with the Vice President to discuss issues specific to administrative support and coordination.

The UPR President has maintained communication with all sectors of the academic community in order to keep them aware of current priorities related to planning (e.g., retention and graduation rates, data systems, the high frequency of administrative changes, the fiscal crisis facing Puerto Rico, etc.).

Planning at the UPR-RP

In 2006 the UPR-RP approved its ten-year strategic plan, **VU 2016**, the result of a campus-wide process that involved the participation of all relevant constituencies. The plan included an evaluation of campus operations and called for a more efficient use of resources to improve the institution's "academic, social, and cultural relevance to the island's integrated development." This call is also aligned with our mission statement. In conjunction with the system-level plan, VU 2016 enunciated a new emphasis on internationalization that has enriched perspectives, resources, and dialogues and thereby enhanced teaching, research, and other priority initiatives.

VU 2016 was formulated with the participation of all relevant constituent groups and approved by both the UPR-RP Academic Senate (Certification 26, 2006-07) and the Administrative Board (Certification 41, 2006-07). Its implementation was distributed across two five-year operational plans: University Project 2011, covering 2006 to 2011, and The University Towards 2016 (***Trazos***), covering 2011 through 2016.

VU 2016 sets out nine strategic goals. The first five relate directly to areas outlined by the UPR-RP Mission. The four remaining goals can be viewed as components of institutional improvement that support the previous five goals (see Appendix 2.1). Strategic indicators were established to track performance for each goal.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Planning and Resource Allocation

The institution has taken significant actions to ensure the proper allocation of resources in accordance with academic and administrative priorities established in planning documents. These actions, three of which are outlined below, have responded to pressing needs and helped to minimize the negative impact of fluctuations and decreases in funding.

First, in 2013 the Budget Office and the Office of Academic Planning were merged to create the Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting (**OPEP** in Spanish), which is under the Office of the Chancellor. OPEP is responsible for work in three areas—(1) strategic planning and assessment of institutional effectiveness, (2) budget planning and projections, and (3) institutional research—and coordinates the annual cycle of planning and budget allocation. Using success indicators, metrics, and institutional research data, it provides guidance and support for the creation of development plans and annual work plans, the formulation of budget requests, and the preparation of institutional assessment reports.

A second initiative to integrate budgeting and planning consists of the professional activities offered by OPEP, which have strengthened the institution's performance in the area of resource allocation. OPEP has held numerous activities to ensure that VU 2016 serves as a common and useful framework for campus initiatives. For example, training has been offered to help deans, directors, faculty, and non-teaching staff prepare their unit plans and budget requests. In 2013 and 2014, OPEP held five professional-development activities in conjunction with the Center for Academic Excellence (see Appendix 2.2).

A third action to ensure the proper allocation of resources was the creation of the UPR-RP Institutional Budget Committee (**CIP** in Spanish) in 2012. The committee is composed of eleven members: the Chancellor, the Dean of Administration, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, the Dean of Students, the Director of the Finance Office, the Director of the Office of Human Resources, two members of OPEP, the Special Assistant to the Chancellor for Administrative Affairs, and the Executive Assistant to the Chancellor. Other campus officials are invited to meetings as needed.

The CIP evaluates and recommends activities to be supported through funds from the operational budget. In doing this, it considers both institutional priorities and the academic, administrative, and support units' annual requests. Significantly, its decision-making is informed by criteria set forth in the planning and budget model and manuals, including the *Manual for Strategic Planning, Resource Allocation, and Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness*.

The CIP is an effective participatory/advisory group that facilitates communication and ensures assessment of progress toward planning goals. The CIP has promoted increased dialogue on funding and budgeting, improving on the previous system in which discussion was often limited to one meeting. Deans and directors are now more frequently accompanied by relevant support staff from their units when they meet with the CIP. In the past, dialogue and discussion related to funding requests tended to be more centralized. Finally, the CIP requires that the units requesting funding are accountable for reporting on all major projects and funding initiatives: units must report on progress and discuss how progress relates to their official planning documents.

For the last three years the campus has assigned an average of $12M per year to initiatives and projects aligned with strategic goals. This expenditure exceeds the amount of funding for

institutional renewal projected in 2007 by $4M. The increase followed the implementation of our second operational plan, which increased the number of projects of high institutional priority from 7 to 39. The plan, identified above as *Trazos*, boosted support for VU 2016 goals in areas including curricular innovation, infrastructure, and maintenance. It also supported the implementation of a revised security plan.

Improved Decision-Making

Three areas of planning that support improvements in decision-making have been strengthened in the last five years: leadership, communication, and institutional assessment.

Leadership

The responsibilities of campus leaders, particularly their roles in planning and assessment, have been clearly identified. This is the case, for example, in the development of annual work plans. In addition, the college deans and school directors now consistently discuss planning goals and their specific annual plans with their faculty members more frequently than before.

Another improvement concerns the information that deans and directors present to the CIP, which includes more specific references to needs and reflects a more nuanced understanding, on the part of deans and directors, of the campus's planning goals. The information that these officials are required to present assists in diagnosing needs, determining realistic courses of action, and establishing timeframes for the assessment and reporting of outcomes.

Communication

Improvements in communication have taken place since our 2011 Periodic Review Report for MSCHE. Some of these institutional improvements resulted from recommendations made by peer reviewers. At that time the institution was asked to continue to improve communication with respect to soliciting and considering campus input in decision-making.

Communication necessary to support the various stages of our planning process has expanded to more directly contribute to institutional renewal. Letters announcing and explaining each planning and budget-request cycle are issued by the Chancellor. Thereafter, the OPEP director follows up with written and electronic communication and face-to-face meetings. An annual meeting is coordinated in which administrators discuss the entire process, the forms to be used, and the data required in formulating their requests. Additional meetings and communications are coordinated to guide, support, and offer feedback on the design and implementation of academic and administrative unit plans. In addition, the CIP meets with each unit to discuss achievements, initiatives, and new requests. These meetings have contributed to a more informed and accurate evaluation of the allocation of fiscal resources as well as greater understanding of related processes across campus.

Institutional Assessment

Periodic assessment processes encourage data-informed decision-making in institutional planning and development and in resource allocation. OPEP receives assessment information from some 20 academic and administrative units in their annual work plans. These include proposed projects, strategies, and initiatives, as well as the indicators and assessment plans of their academic programs.

Other documents that are regularly reviewed include:

- Monthly achievement reports

- Progress reports assessing annual work plans
- Annual achievement reports
- Allocation of resource and budget process reports
- Assessment outcome reports on the planning and budget allocation cycle

As this list suggests, information on the progress made with respect to planning goals is continuously gathered and assessed. This information is discussed with the Chancellor and informs his dialogues with the deans and directors of colleges and schools.

Planning, Assessment, and Budget Allocation

The planning, assessment, and budget allocation cycle has improved in the last decade. In 2005, the MSCHE requested information about the "progress made in the implementation of a comprehensive institutional strategic plan, which links long-range planning to decision-making and budgeting processes." The OPEP has been instrumental in this linkage and in aligning annual cycles and long-term planning. It has designed and maintained a strict follow-up process on the uses of allocated resources using intermediate and internal processes or tasks. This process includes:

- Joint pre-planning meetings to coordinate the services to be provided by the units responsible for physical facilities (**OPDF** in Spanish), preventive and deferred maintenance (**OCIU** in Spanish), occupational safety (**OPASO** in Spanish), and technological infrastructure (**DTAA** in Spanish).
- Registering and updating fund-transfer actions related to projects contained in work plans to track encumbrances and avoid overspending.
- Communicating with academic and administrative units to discuss the expenditure of the budget allocated to work plans' initiatives/projects/strategies.
- Monitoring requests for reallocation of the units' project funds (without increasing the total amount awarded) for reasons such as a project costing less than the estimated amount.

These actions help to ensure that planning is linked to budgeting and the needs and projects of our campus units.

Campus administration has demonstrated transparency and a commitment to open communication with diverse constituents in regard to institutional priorities and budget allocation. This has been evident in the following recent activities: CIP meetings (FYs 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016), OPEP's budget presentation to the Administrative Board (Sept. 2015), the Chancellor's budget meeting with college deans and school directors (Feb. 2015), the preliminary budget distribution presentation to the UPR-RP Academic Senate (Feb. 2015), and the budget hearing session at Central Administration (Feb. 2015). Members of these groups and student leaders attended these meetings and received information about the budget and related processes.

2014 Planning Advisory Committee

In order to advance the planning process, the Chancellor, shortly after his appointment in 2014, created an eight-member planning advisory committee, referred to as the Think Tank for Strategic Planning. This committee included three planners, two specialists in industrial-organizational psychology, a director with vast experience as an institutional budget analyst, a

faculty member from the College of Social Sciences, and the coordinator of the Self-Study Steering Committee. The main purpose of the Think Tank was to discuss issues related to the next strategic plan. The committee presented its observations on the strengths and weaknesses of recent planning at the UPR-RP to the Chancellor in November of 2014.

Strengths of VU 2016

According to the committee, the design and implementation of our current strategic plan has been characterized by the following strengths:

- Its design includes input from several groups within the university community: an internal steering committee representing several campus units, a committee of deans, and an external committee consisting of off-campus advisors.
- Its goals and topics detail specific outcomes but allow for adjustments due to changes over time.
- The goals and objectives are measurable and quantifiable, allowing progress/ achievement to be measured and assessed.
- Assessment is integrated into each of the plan's goals.
- Standard formats have been established for work plans, progress reports, and annual performance reports in conjunction with the strategic plan.
- Throughout the life of the plan, data collection has been consistent and aligned with strategic planning, facilitating the assessment of results and institutional effectiveness.

Challenges of VU 2016

Still, VU 2016 has limitations as a planning document, and these should be addressed in the design of the next plan. Two limitations stood out to the "Think Tank" advisory committee:

- VU 2016 has nine broadly defined goals, and some of these have more than one component. These are broken down further into 61 strategic objectives and 63 strategic indicators. This approach to planning is comprehensive, but the result is overly complex. For example, the second operational plan, *Trazos*, included a total of 81 expected achievements. Given the large number of objectives, indicators, and achievements, it has been a challenge to be able to continuously monitor the achievement of our goals.
- New areas should be considered in the planning process. For example, campus security is not explicitly mentioned in the current plan. This is an area of concern given the perception that crime is an issue that needs ongoing attention. In addition, security is, and is likely to remain, an area of substantial cost. To not mention the topic explicitly can complicate effective planning and budget allocation in this area. For some, it might wrongly suggest that the university has not taken measures to attend to problems in this area.

Suggestions for Future Planning

The next plan should cover a shorter period, respond to present-day economic and financial realities, and address a more manageable number of objectives and indicators in a manner consonant with our current situation and the complexity of our institution.

The UPR-RP Strategic and Fiscal Planning Workgroup

The Chancellor considers the UPR-RP's MSCHE decennial review an opportunity to evaluate our performance as well as an instrument for institutional change. In his words, "Many variables

have to be considered as we envision the next years. Because the self-study process comes just before our next planning period, it offers a strategic opportunity to think about the future of the university in a more complex and integrated way." He has noted that conversations inspired by the self-study process ensure that any new directions taken in the next strategic plan will be based on solid, informed, and forward-looking decision-making.

At the end of AY 2014-15, the Chancellor began working with the UPR-RP Strategic and Fiscal Planning Workgroup. The workgroup includes the Dean of Academic Affairs and faculty members and specialists with highly relevant professional experiences, including representatives from the planning unit (OPEP). The group is approaching planning as a tool that can lessen the negative impact that projected budget cuts will have on the institution.

In addition, as recommended by the Chancellor, the group has considered recent issues in higher education, in particular shifts in approaches to planning that large public universities have embraced to ensure that they are prepared to responsibly carry out their missions. Planning decisions that promote institutional renewal and allow the UPR-RP to better serve Puerto Rican society are of utmost importance given the challenges posed by the fiscal crisis facing the Commonwealth government. Details about these challenges are presented in this chapter's discussion of Standard 3.

III. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

The current financial crisis in Puerto Rico will continue to directly impact the institution and how it pursues its goals during the next planning phase and should therefore be recognized as the context for considering this section's conclusions, recommendations, and next steps.

Conclusions

Improvement

In the past ten years, planning has been a central part of the UPR-RP's efforts to comply with its mission and achieve its goals. Past recommendations offered by MSCHE have been systematically addressed.

Data Collection

OPEP has collected a wealth of information for evaluating progress and outcomes assessment. While this process has at times proven onerous, the use of strategic indicators has assisted in documenting and gauging performance.

New Strategic Plans

Dialogues have already been entered for identifying the goals of the new plans, at both the campus and system levels. Those involved in these dialogues recognize the importance of taking into account the financial situation facing the Commonwealth government.

Recommendation

As emphasized by the Chancellor, the UPR-RP's new strategic plan will build on findings from this report, the 2016 Self Study.

Next Steps

Communication

Those directly involved in planning should continue to establish innovative means of communication between units and strive to identify more opportunities for resource consolidation.

Evaluation of VU 2016 as a Planning Tool

In developing the new campus plan, special attention should be paid to the achievements of VU 2016. The strengths and weaknesses of VU 2016 (outlined above) as a planning tool should be discussed.

STANDARD 3: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

The contributions that the UPR-RP makes to Puerto Rican society result from investment in course-based learning, research, and service. Ours is the institution with the widest variety of degree-granting programs in Puerto Rico and the island's largest student body. An average of 2,689 students complete our degrees annually. At the 2015 commencement ceremony, 114 doctorates were awarded, the largest number in the history of our institution. As creators of knowledge and new ideas, our graduates are important agents of social change, cultural and artistic production, and economic growth. Today their impact is felt in Puerto Rico and in communities in the U.S. and other parts of the world. A recipient of substantial external funding, including large and important research grants, the UPR-RP also stands out as a research center within the Caribbean region.

Our institution's success is bolstered by numerous undergraduate and graduate programs that are unique within the larger system, including Architecture, Law, Statistics, Planning, Cultural Management, Linguistics, Translation, Environmental Sciences, Information Sciences, and Exercise Sciences, to name just a few. Strong, active academic programs nurture the formation of skilled professionals and serve as the foundation for our research initiatives and intellectual production.

The resources needed for the institution to meet its goals and fulfill its mission come from several sources. As a unit within the UPR System, the greater part of the UPR-RP's funding is linked to total Commonwealth revenues as provided by Law 2 of January 20, 1966, as amended. A forward-looking piece of legislation at the time of its enactment, this law assigned the UPR System 9.6% of the average of total government revenues for the two preceding years. Law 2 embodied Puerto Rico's bold yet well-founded commitment to the idea that funding higher education should be considered an investment and one of the main engines of development. The purpose of the legislation was to guarantee a continuous flow of revenue free of partisan-political intervention.

Until recent years, the law provided the institution with the resources needed to meet virtually all its needs. Currently, funding based on the legislated formula plus other legislative appropriations represents some 61% of the UPR's total income. Unfortunately, the formula's structure means that in times of economic downturn the revenue stream diminishes. The decrease in the UPR System's major revenue stream in these times of economic difficulty is a significant challenge.

A brief summary of the overall conditions of the economy is offered below to provide the context necessary to better understand the resources available for implementing the UPR-RP's strategic plan.

Puerto Rico's Economic Outlook

Two well-known facts are of utmost importance for the UPR System today. First, Puerto Rico is experiencing its most severe economic recession in modern times. Second, the government is confronting very serious financial and economic difficulties that have affected its sources of revenue, its borrowing capacity, and investors' confidence in government obligations. The Puerto Rican economy has shown indicators of contraction since 2006, and in the years since then the problems have only deepened. As measured by the Gross Domestic Product, the real rate of economic growth averaged -1.5% during the period 2005–2014. The growth rate has remained negative since 2007. This contraction in the economy means rising unemployment, which averaged 13.3% over that period. Highest unemployment was experienced in the period 2010–2014, when the yearly average reached 15.2%. This contributed to a contraction in the island's economic activity and a consequent decrease in tax revenues.

Several sources of government revenues work as automatic fiscal stabilizers. For example, reductions in personal income bring with them reductions in both income and consumption tax revenues, which are further reduced when unemployment increases. These factors, and others, create complications for the government of Puerto Rico due to its structural dependence on deficit financing, which refers to the pattern of borrowing money to pay recurrent expenditures. The government's access to financial markets has been further weakened because of the rating agencies' continued downgrading of Puerto Rico's general obligations and other debt. It is against this backdrop that budget planning and projections for the UPR, and specifically for the UPR-RP, must be approached.

As we discuss below, the UPR-RP has responded to financial challenges by conducting its affairs in such a way as to guarantee the fulfillment of its mission, sustained academic quality, and the identification of new opportunities. In addition, the campus has responded in a responsible way to economic challenges. Even though uncertainty runs high and questions about the financial crisis linger, institutional improvements have been achieved and important goals met.

UPR System Finances

In 2007, fears related to indicators pointing to an upcoming financial crisis, as well as other related budgetary concerns, made headlines across the island, and they continue to do so today. Two years later, the Advisory Council for Economic and Fiscal Reconstruction was created at the executive level of the government of Puerto Rico. The Advisory Council's main approach to addressing financial challenges was to reduce government expenditures as part of the larger objective of reducing the government's role in the economy. In March of 2009, Law 7, the "Special Act to Declare a State of Fiscal Emergency and Establish a Comprehensive Fiscal Stabilization Plan to Salvage the Credit of Puerto Rico," was passed. This law aimed to address the fiscal crisis and boost economic development.

With 20% of all employment on the island generated by government at the time, political leaders viewed reducing the government workforce as the strategy that would have the greatest immediate impact. Workers with many years in their positions were dismissed in significant numbers. In addition, incentives for early retirement were introduced. Uncertainty about further

austerity measures related to employment, combined with problems with public pension plans, stimulated a dramatic wave of retirements.

In that climate of austerity and the governing party's ideology bent on reducing the size of government, the UPR System's financing formula was directly impacted. The fixed 9.6% formula was not reduced, but the base considered in calculating funding was eroded through the exclusion of revenues derived from certain taxes that were created and earmarked for special purposes. This is why significant reductions to the funding that the institution receives from the government of Puerto Rico have occurred in recent years.

The base considered in calculating funding was reinstated for FY 2013-14, but the severity of the Commonwealth government's financial situation made it impossible to continue to apply the 9.6% financing formula as in years prior to the emergence of widespread financial concerns. However, a decision was made to freeze government assignments to the UPR System, in lieu of the formula, at the same level allotted for FY 2013-14. The government of Puerto Rico's funding for the UPR System has been frozen for the four-year period from 2013-14 to 2016-17 at $833.9M annually.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

UPR Fiscal Situation 2005-06 to Present

The main source of income for the UPR System—61% of its total budget—currently consists of government appropriations stipulated in Law 2 of January 20, 1966. The UPR Consolidated Budget (CB) includes the General Fund, revenues from tuition and related fees, and other sources of income. Table 2.1 presents the Consolidated and Initial Budgets (IB) for both the UPR System and the UPR-RP for the period 2005-06 to 2015-16. As can be observed in its column 3, FY 2009-10 saw the beginning of a downward tendency in the UPR System's Initial Budget. Despite slight increases in 2012-13 and 2013-14, the UPR System's Initial Budget for 2015-16 is still below the 2007-08 level.

In relative terms, the UPR-RP has received, on average for the decade, 17% of the UPR System's Consolidated Budget, though this share declined from 18.1% in 2005-06 to 16.33% in 2015-16. It should be mentioned that appropriations for capital improvements have declined sharply due to the government's fiscal crisis, leading to a downgrading of the UPR System's bonds. In addition, the line of credit provided by the Government Development Bank to finance capital improvements was limited, and is now unavailable.

The UPR-RP's Initial Budget as a proportion of the UPR System's Initial Budget has averaged 25.2% annually, though with a downward tendency that began in 2009-10 when formula-based assignments fell by $106M at the System level. In 2014-15 there was an increase, but it is still below the 2005-06 level. FY 2014-15 is also the year in which the government of Puerto Rico's credit rating was sharply downgraded.

Table 2.1 presents the consolidated and initial budgets of the UPR System alongside those of the UPR-RP. The aforementioned change to the formula can be seen in FY 2010-11. Since that time there have been relatively minor fluctuations in budget allocation.

Table 2.1: Consolidated and Initial Budgets for UPR and UPR-RP (as of July of each FY)

FISCAL YEAR	UPR Consolidated Budget (CB) (in $M)	UPR Initial Budget (IB) (in $M)	UPR-RP IB (in $M)	% of UPR CB	% of UPR IB	% Change (based on prior year)		
						UPR CB	UPR IB	UPR-RP
2005-06	1,334.0	936.4	241.9	18.13	25.83	7.47	9.14	9.34
2006-07	1,426.6	989.1	264.6	18.55	26.75	6.94	5.63	9.41
2007-08	1,511.5	1,030.8	264.6	17.51	25.67	5.95	4.21	-0.01
2008-09	1,550.5	1,065.7	275.1	17.75	25.82	2.58	3.39	3.99
2009-10	1,533.4	1,040.6	275.1	17.94	26.44	-1.1	-2.36	-0.02
2010-11	1,438.7	935.0	235.8	16.39	25.22	-6.18	-10.15	-14.28
2011-12	1,437.1	919.1	238.2	16.58	25.92	-0.1	-1.7	1.03
2012-13	1,479.3	995.0	232.5	15.71	23.36	2.93	8.25	-2.43
2013-14	1,554.5	1,031.7	236.3	15.2	22.90	5.08	3.69	1.65
2014-15	1,503.7	1,013.1	243.6	16.2	24.05	-3.27	-1.8	3.11
2015-16	1,479.8	1,008.1	241.5	16.3	23.95	-1.59	-0.49	-0.88

Source: OPEP, October 2015

The budget process for FY 2015-16 took place within a particularly restrictive scenario:

a. Passage of Law 66 of June 17, 2014, which declared a state of fiscal emergency; Article 26 froze formula revenues at the 2013-14 level for a three-year period ending June 30, 2017;
b. Flat rates in terms of tuition and related student fees; in addition, no increase in revenue from these sources was projected;
c. Adjustments in funding due to reductions in revenue from payments of indirect costs, miscellaneous revenues, and other sources; and
d. Establishment of internal redistribution of funds at the campus level as the mechanism for financing institutional priorities.

Numerous precautionary measures (detailed in Appendix 2.3) were put into place at the time.

UPR-RP Budget Allocation

Budget allocation in the UPR System is a process that involves all of the 11 campuses. The Chancellor of each campus submits the initial budget request proposal to the President of the UPR and the Central Administration Budget Office. Once the proposals for the 11 units have been reviewed and agreed upon, the President submits a UPR budget proposal to the UPR Governing Board. Once the Governing Board approves each unit's proposal, the initial budget is assigned. At a later date, Central Administration assigns restricted-use transfers. The Budget Office of each campus prepares its final internal distribution and this document is submitted to the Administrative Board for approval.

Over the past decade the UPR-RP has been assigned between 23% and 25% of the UPR System's initial budget. In terms of budget allocations in the three main categories of personnel, operating expenses, and utilities, the category receiving the largest percentage of the budget is personnel, with an average of 83%. This amount includes salaries, fringe benefits, and related costs. Recently, faculty salaries have risen slightly and non-teaching personnel and maintenance workers, represented by labor organizations, have received moderate increases in their salaries and fringe benefits. The UPR's commitment to the health of its workforce translates into the provision of a generous medical insurance plan for all of its employees. The remaining 17% of the UPR-RP budget covers operating expenses and utilities. The amount spent on electricity and water has been subject to dramatic price increases in recent years.

UPR-RP Operating Budget Distribution

Appendix 2.4 shows the distribution of the UPR-RP's operating budget by categories established by NACUBO categories (the National Association of College and University Business Officers) for the period 2010-11 to 2014-15. These numbers include the initial budget allocated plus all transfers (recurrent and non-recurrent) that Central Administration made to the UPR-RP throughout the fiscal year. Data clearly show that throughout this five-year period funding for instruction has remained relatively stable at around 46%. The other NACUBO categories have displayed a similar stable pattern with slight variation.

Budget for FY 2015-16

The UPR-RP's initial budget for FY 2015-16 (beginning July 1, 2015) was $241.5M (see Table 2.1) On September 30, 2015 this budget increased to $244.5M. The increase included restricted-use transfers from UPR Central Administration designated for specific purposes: special project funds, grants and supplementary assistance for graduate students, economic support for travel and international projection, student technology fee funds, reimbursements to revolving accounts, and matching funds for research projects. The budget that includes these additions is known as the revised budget—that is, the revised budget is the original budget approved by the Governing Board as of July 1, the beginning of each fiscal year, plus the sum of the transfers received from Central Administration's Budget Office during the year. It is audited on June 30, at the close of each fiscal year.

In addition to the moneys it receives by law, the UPR-RP receives external financial resources linked to funded proposals (mainly from federal agencies), reimbursements for indirect costs, the Intramural Practice Plan, and other sources. These funds, which amount to an average of $77M annually, are used to motivate, support, and develop research. These funds, added to the revised budget, comprise the consolidated budget. Table 2.2 presents the consolidated budgets for FYs 2009-10 to 2014-15. The campus had no contracts with municipalities in FY 2012-13, as shown in the table.

External resources are significant in the areas of research and student financial aid. They permit the ongoing growth and diversification of the portfolio of financial resources that allow the UPR-RP to meet goals and objectives linked to the development of new academic programs, create and enrich opportunities for students, and remodel and update infrastructure. Most external funds are received in the area of student financial aid, which allows the UPR-RP to subsidize students' studies. Faculty research grants support the development of intellectual activity and production while also enriching the student experience.

Table 2.2: Consolidated Campus Budget (in $), with Funds by Income Sources, FY 2009-10 through FY 2014-15

FISCAL YEARS						
Description	**2009-10**	**2010-11**	**2011-12**	**2012-13**	**2013-14**	**2014-15**
General Funds Revised Budget	251,430,490	249,276,916	249,935,910	253,320,171	256,716,578	253,463,153
Auxiliary Enterprises	1,178,495	893,409	888,332	782,344	771,339	279,972
Administrative Costs Pell Grants	44,316,326	41,653,536	36,844,414	33,692,849	33,818,910	36,471,353
Federal Gov. Grants & Coop Agreements	19,453,975	22,409,049	26,241,183	20,032,806	16,906,534	14,951,657
Legislative Student Aid Programs	3,938,796	3,895,025	3,609,589	3,470,853	3,747,798	3,997,296
State Government Grants & Contracts	274,005	5,290,704	5,447,987	9,031,821	5,523,225	1,694,129
Municipal Gifts, Grants, & Contracts	12,236	19,995	10,000	0	28,283	4,700
Private Gifts, Grants, & Contracts	1,019,579	831,334	1,094,812	1,196,917	1,298,237	1,157,781
Student Financial Aid	859,005	771,454	457,345	674,143	857,455	829,948
Intermural Practice Plan & Other Services	861,788	2,488,563	591,284	449,973	659,353	579.222
Restricted Matching Funds	1,120,885	1,133,539	1,196,343	1,171,023	1,000,918	407,449
Restricted Indirect Costs	1,779,850	1,316,196	1,289,867	1,855,077	1,714,908	1,501,050
Restricted Endowment Income	44,375	410,696	368,483	9,186	6,100	13,674
Revolving Funds	3,477,141	2,393,639	2,504,015	2,224,479	1,826,967	2,082,659
Current Restricted Other Project Activities	569,558	388,392	634,277	858,399	818,079	671,760
Total External Funds	78,906,014	83,895,531	81,177,931	75,449,870	68,978,106	64,642,650
Consolidated Campus Budget	330,336,505	333,172,447	331,113,841	328,770,036	325,694,685	318,105,803

Source: OPEP, November 3, 2015

New Budget Cycle Model

The UPR-RP's annual budget proposal is aligned with the official strategic plan of the UPR System (Ten for the Decade) and VU 2016. As of FY 2011-12, the campus implemented a new budget-allocation model by which budget lines related to wages, fringe benefits, and other provisions for tenured and tenure-track teaching and non-teaching personnel, utilities and other basic expenses (water, electricity, phone, maintenance, security, and technology), and the daily operations of academic and administrative units are assigned. At the same time, the campus put in place an integrated system for planning, resource allocation, management, performance, and the assessment of progress in meeting the plan's goals and objectives.

The main reason for adopting this model was to develop a better understanding of the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of academic programs, support services, and administrative structures, in order to contribute to executive management's decision-making with respect to strategic actions and institutional priorities. This model was approved by the Administrative Board (see Appendix 2.5: UPR-RP Administrative Board Certification 39, 2011-12 for a description of the model, relevant forms, and evaluation criteria). In this way, budget assignment is linked to the planning and assessment process.

The budget cycle has been divided into four stages to encourage the alignment of the plans of colleges and schools to VU 2016 and the operational plan *Trazos*. For this process, departments individually work on their plans and then these plans become part of the college's plan. Budget allocation is then calibrated with the unit's annual work plan and overall development plan.

Funding for VU 2016

Operationally, budget allocation begins with the non-discretionary categories. Once these are funded, resources that have become available due to retirements or redistributions resulting from more efficient processes and allocations are used to finance special-priority projects and projects included in the colleges' and schools' work plans. These are projects that advance compliance with the campus's strategic plan, its goals, and related initiatives. They include:

- Deferred maintenance projects
- Creative and innovative educational experiences for students
- Resources for the development of new areas or lines of research
- Upgrading of infrastructure
- Matching funds for research
- Personnel training, extraordinary leaves for faculty and non-faculty, and student financial aid

Work Plan Projects and Initiatives

The process of allocating funds for projects begins with a call for projects that goes out to all the academic units and administrative offices attached to the Office of the Chancellor. Each is asked to submit a work plan including a summary of important achievements in regard to teaching, research, student services, community service, and management. In addition, goals and activities for the fiscal year must be identified, following the guidelines of the system strategic plan, Ten for the Decade, and the campus plan, VU 2016.

For projects that have their budget approved, the corresponding accounts are assigned and the units are informed in writing. Recognizing the valuable contributions that this planning and

budget cycle has made to the UPR-RP, the UPR Central Administration has used our process as a model to be implemented system-wide.

The allocation of funds has also been guided by adding budget estimates to both of the UPR-RP's operational plans: Project University 2011 (2006 to 2011) and *Trazos* (2011 to 2016). Both of these were organized under the umbrella of VU 2016. In addition, during the period under consideration in this self-study, the UPR-RP adopted a model to allocate funds to academic and administrative units' work plans. The institution considered only those requests that were fully justified and promised to further the institutional strategic plan. Especially important were those that addressed priorities such as accreditation processes and needs related to technology updates not covered by funds from the student technology fee.

FY 2014-15 ended with an operating budget of $253,463,153, without a deficit and with non-recurrent savings of more than $9M. These non-recurrent savings subsidized actions and priorities established in the campus strategic plan, as well as the 2011-14 operational plan. Table 2.3 presents the budget allocations that the UPR-RP has made in FY 2012-13 through FY 2014-15 by reassigning non-recurrent savings for the implementation of work plans and priority projects. Preliminary allocations for 2015-16 are also presented. In FY 2013-14 funds totaling approximately $5M were used to cover necessities in the areas of teaching and infrastructure (OCIU) projects. This explains the decrease in allocated funding that can be observed in the table for that year.

Table 2.3: UPR-RP Budget Allocation for Work Plans and Priority Projects

Fiscal Year	Work Plans	Priority Projects	Total
2012-13	$5,576,700	$11,648,042	$17,224,742
2013-14	$2,000,000	$5,574,535	$7,574,535
2014-15	$6,174,476	$5,511,506	$11,685,982
2015-16*	$3,235,202	$9,872,952	$13,108,154
Total	**$16,986,378**	**$32,607,035**	**$49,593,413**

***Information for 2015-16 reflects the preliminary budget allocation.**
Source: OPEP, December 2015

Budget Projection from FY 2016-17 Onward

Due to the current state of fiscal uncertainty faced by the government of Puerto Rico, it is difficult at this time to predict the budget allocation to the UPR-RP in the coming years with the usual precision. However, considering that Law 66 of 2014 froze the UPR's budget until FY 2016-17, the projected budget is expected to be very similar to that of FY 2015-16. Table 2.4 presents UPR-RP budget projections for FY 2016-17 through 2018-19.

Table 2.4: UPR-RP Budget Projections (in $), FY 2015-16 to FY 2018-19

Operating Costs	Current Year	Projected		
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Payroll				
Faculty Salaries	79,611,315	79,611,315	79,611,315	79,611,315
Non-teaching Staff Payroll	52,150,117	52,150,117	52,150,117	52,150,117
Other Payroll Payments	10,394,493	10,394,493	10,394,493	10,394,493
Employer Contributions and Fringe Benefits	56,216,916	56,216,916	56,216,916	56,216,916
Total Payroll Expenditures	**198,372,841**	**198,372,841**	**198,372,841**	**198,372,841**
Other Operating Costs				
Materials & Services	8,760,849	8,760,849	8,760,849	8,760,849
Maintenance of Physical Infrastructure	2,417,000	2,417,000	2,417,000	2,417,000
Public Services and Utilities	23,100,000	23,100,000	23,100,000	23,100,000
Information Resources (Libraries)	4,725,000	4,725,000	4,725,000	4,725,000
Travel & Accreditation	348,435	348,435	348,435	348,435
Grants, Financial Aid, and Student Stipends	3,183,001	3,183,001	3,183,001	3,183,001
Matching Funds	248,125	248,125	248,125	248,125
Other Miscellaneous Costs	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000
Total Operating Costs	**43,132,410**	**43,132,410**	**43,132,410**	**43,132,410**
Total	**$241,505,251**	**$241,505,251**	**$241,505,251**	**$241,505,251**

Source: OPEP, June 2015

Once the government of Puerto Rico determines the level of adjustment to the UPR System budget, the budget can be projected more precisely. At that time, projections will be adjusted to reflect reductions as well as any additional sources of funding that have been identified.

The government of Puerto Rico is currently initiating negotiations to restructure its debt. The Office of the Governor has proposed a fiscal adjustment plan that includes annual reductions of $50M in funding for the UPR System, which over four years would amount to a $200M reduction. Assuming that the UPR-RP continues to receive 24% of the UPR System's initial budget, the impact of the proposed reduction for our campus would be $12M a year, totaling $48M across four years.

The UPR System's leadership has established that it will make adjustments for these reductions and at the same time strive to:

- Keep enrollment steady and at current levels

- Maintain current academic offerings
- Continue to provide support for academic programs, including the support necessary to maintain program accreditations

If the necessary revenue is not secured, then a plan for redistributing the budget will have to be introduced in order to find a balance between securing needed funding and a reduced budget. in In December 2015 Central Administration released guidelines and instructions for implementing the institution's internal plan for addressing the budget.

The Future – A More Efficient University

With the goal of making operations increasingly efficient, Central Administration has advanced a system for continuous institutional assessment that is operative at the level of the System. Improvements target reducing redundancy and costs associated with bureaucracy. Workgroups will be formed on all campuses to assess operations and recommend ways to promote greater efficiency. The workgroups will also focus on identifying new sources of funding in order to address such institutional priorities as academia, research, and community services, particularly those areas that may experience cuts related to the financial situation now facing the government. Federal funding alternatives are currently being explored as a means of addressing the fiscal crisis.

Our Chancellor and his team of deans are already working to identify potential fiscal strategies that will secure the quality of our academic programs. Measures under consideration include adopting increasing student retention and graduation rates, strengthening research and external funding initiatives, evaluating graduate programs, revising academic programs to meet changes in demand, approving a distance-learning policy and guidelines, increasing international student recruitment and exchanges, and adopting evidence-based and performance-evaluation management.

Audited Financial Statements

Given that the UPR-RP is part of the UPR System, the campus does not have individual audited financial statements. Instead, the UPR Central Administration commissions the externally audited report for the system as a whole. The UPR-RP, like all of the other campuses within the system, works actively with the Finance Office in Central Administration to ensure that the institution submits its financial statements on time. A well-designed strategy involving system-wide efforts has been implemented to guarantee an efficient organizational structure. At the campus level, the UPR-RP Finance Office works directly with Central Administration, providing the information the external auditors require for their financial statements.

In May of 2015, the Board of Governors issued Certification 135, reorganizing the financial offices of the campuses within the UPR System so they are more directly linked to the Finance Office in Central Administration. The director of Finance is now known as the UPR System Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The director of the campus Finance Office reports directly to both our Chancellor and the CFO.

Changes in Computerized Financial Processes

Since 2009, in an effort to improve efficiency, the UPR has implemented the General Ledger, Accounts Payable, and Purchasing modules of the Enterprise Resource Planning System (ER

Oracle e-Business). In 2015, this database was upgraded to Release 12. The UPR-RP has also taken other actions to improve efficiency in this area, among them:

- Instituting timelines for fiscal year closings;
- Identifying the human, financial, and technological resources and facilities necessary for operations;
- Preparing organized financial documentation for the auditing process;
- Including campus finance directors in Finance Office meetings at UPR Central Administration; and
- Holding follow-up meetings with the administrative units.

Consequently, the timely closing of FY 2012-13 and subsequent years and the timely issuing of financial statements with their corresponding now stand out as a significant accomplishments for the UPR. These achievements provide evidence of a clear commitment to the ideas, protocols, and institutional policies that the MSCHE offers in its description of Standard 3: Institutional Resources.

Employee Roster

Each year, the institution reviews the General Summary of Personnel Statistics. Data for the first semester of AY 2015-16 indicate some 2,157 regular employees, as shown in Appendix 2.6 (1,413 non-teaching staff and 744 tenured or tenure-track faculty members). This is a ratio of 1.9 to 1.

In the last seven fiscal years, the UPR-RP has lost 1,301 employees to retirement, resignation, and demise. Precautionary cost-saving measures prevent immediate personnel recruitment to replace these employees. The Governing Board, to this effect, has stated that only the UPR President can authorize the recruitment of tenured and tenure-track faculty and non-teaching staff.

The tasks of non-teaching staff have been redistributed to compensate for the decline in the number of employees. These employees are remunerated through differential payments, additional compensation, and/or the reclassification of positions. This approach avoids extra fringe benefits and employer contributions. Savings resulting from this strategy have been an important source of funding for the financing of priority projects, including academic experiences for students, research infrastructure, seed money for new research lines or areas, and matching funds for special projects.

Recruitment

With regard to teaching personnel, one of the UPR-RP's main priorities is to guarantee students high-quality offerings on a continuous basis. During the last four fiscal years (2011-12 to 2014-15), the Office of the President has authorized hiring for 57 tenure-track positions for the UPR-RP, on an exceptional basis. For the 2015-16 budget, the President authorized the recruitment of 25 additional positions. This reflects efforts to ensure first-rate academic experiences for our students, as discussed in Chapter 4. The DAA identified the following criteria for the recruitment of new faculty: program needs, consistency with the program development plan, contribution to national needs, contribution to institutional objectives, and uniqueness of the program.

In order to further support academic offerings, 364 adjunct faculty members were hired for the first semester of AY 2015-16. Of these, 207 were full-time and 157 part-time. The number of full-time adjuncts has risen in recent years.

With respect to non-teaching staff, for 2013-14 and 2014-15 the UPR-RP was authorized to recruit 96 new employees to strengthen the following units: the Office of the Registrar, the Financial Aid Office, the Finance Office, the Academic and Administrative Technology Division, and the Office for the Maintenance of University Facilities. For the FY 2015-16, the campus identified budgetary funds to cover roughly 103 new administrative positions. One-third of these positions are directly related to student service units and academic departments. They include counselors, laboratory technicians, assistant librarians, administrative personnel, and staff for the Office of the Registrar and the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.

Technological Resources

In 2004-05, having identified the need to strengthen revenues for a major revamping of the UPR's technological network and integration of all phases of its operations, the Board of Trustees issued Certification 70, instituting a technology fee to be paid by all students. The distribution of funds to each campus is calculated on a student-population per-capita basis. Central Administration transfers the corresponding amount twice during the fiscal year. For FYs 2011-12 through 2013-14, the UPR-RP received a total of $2,134,156. A campus committee was formed to evaluate all requests for technological improvements during the year and to determine which requests to finance. The guidelines used for assigning these funds clearly state that students must be served by the acquired systems, equipment, or services.

Initiatives by the Division of Academic and Administrative Technologies (DTAA) and the Library System are financed out of the UPR-RP budget. In the period from 2013-14 to 2014-15, over $1M was assigned to improve communication systems and other priority projects in the colleges. The Library System received $291,000 for the acquisition of e-books, journals, and databases. For FY 2014-15, the UPR-RP received funds from the student technology fee totaling $711,100. These funds were used for recent campus-level improvements detailed in Chapter 3, including the expansion of wireless services. In the first semester of FY 2015-16, funding based on the student technology fee totaled $383,450.

Physical Facilities

The UPR-RP grounds include 162 buildings, almost six million square feet of construction, and 256 acres of land. The UPR-RP, as the oldest campus in the UPR System, has many buildings of historical significance constructed more than eighty years ago. These structures constitute a valuable part of Puerto Rico's cultural heritage. Today many of our buildings honor the legacies of prestigious architects and architectural paradigms.

These historic buildings create unique challenges that have required special attention and investment through the years. Maintaining historic structures is complicated by the fact that many used construction materials later identified as hazardous to humans—asbestos and lead, for example. Interventions in historic buildings require special protocols, some of which are costly, in order to guarantee the safety and integrity of the work. To maintain these structures, significant amounts of money and the effort of many offices are required.

Capital Improvements

In March of 2009, the UPR-RP was assigned $65.5M for its capital improvement plan. These funds financed the following projects: the Felipe Janer Building (still under construction, it will provide faculty offices and other spaces for the College of Humanities); Department of Chemistry laboratories; Phase I of General Studies Building; and the new Jaime Benítez Rexach Building (which provides classrooms, administrative spaces, and faculty offices). In 2010, the University Center, which includes the Student Center, was remodeled and reconfigured. Now revitalized, it serves as a space for students and for other offices and activities. A federal grant recently financed the construction of a learning commons in the General Library.

The UPR-RP has managed "sick building" conditions through the concerted efforts of the following offices: the Office of the Dean of Administration, the Office for the Preservation of University Facilities, the Office for Environmental Protection and Occupational Health, and the Office of Planning and Physical Development.

Recent Projects

The most significant of recent projects took place in August of 2013. This emergency intervention addressed problems involving asbestos in the Domingo Marrero Navarro Building in the College of General Studies. The cost associated with removal came to $1,017,062. This project was financed with internal funds. Fortunately, the logistics for this intervention allowed the students to complete their semester, as courses that had been meeting in the building were relocated to temporary spaces. The College of Education's library faced a similar situation in the same period, and $411,801 was assigned in 2014 to complete the process of removing asbestos.

Current Situation

The UPR's capital improvements program has been extremely limited due to the government's financial crisis, which has had the effect of devaluing UPR bonds and barring access to the municipal bond markets. Likewise, the Government Development Bank (**GDB**) currently offers no lines of credit. This is significant, given that bonds and GDB lines of credit were the financing mechanisms that the UPR used for ongoing investment in capital projects. Currently a few new projects at the UPR System level are being financed with funds diverted from the Operating Budget.

The UPR-RP has some capital improvement projects currently in development, most of which are dependent on internal financing from savings and redistribution. Most of these projects are administered by the Office of Physical Development and Infrastructure, the system-level unit in Central Administration to which the UPR-RP transfers the funds. Among our current projects are the Felipe Janer Building; the Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art (design phase); the University and Student Center; the former Registrar's Office (design phase); and a few smaller repairs in auditoriums and other spaces. No large projects are currently planned due to the UPR's inability to go to the bond market.

External Funds

The DEGI's Pre- and Post-Awards Division provides administrative assistance for identifying external funds and offers faculty members support in writing proposals to financing agencies and foundations at both the insular and federal levels. This unit fosters the development and growth of intellectual production through research projects, creative work, and other initiatives. The distribution of external funds, by NACUBO categories, is shown in Appendix 2.7.

In order to maintain a balance between institutional needs and the support needed for subsidized projects, the UPR-RP uses a percentage of the indirect costs from research grants to cover expenses associated with those projects. At the UPR-RP, 25% of the total indirect costs can be allocated to the dean of the college where the project is based and 25% to the principal researcher. In 2002, to stimulate research, the Chancellor, under the provisions established by Circular Letter 27, 2000-01, instituted an incentive policy that increases the researcher's salary by, in some instances, up to 100% of the base salary.

Appendix 2.7 indicates that external funds in the period 2009-10 to 2014-15 trended downward, from a peak in 2010-11. Despite this tendency, support for research averaged $17M per year.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Strategic Goals

Budgeting, planning, and resource allocation have been based on the establishment of strategic goals and related priorities. This has allowed the campus to maintain its academic offerings and the quality of its educational programs and student services. As a result, the UPR-RP has reaffirmed its commitment to the core aims and principles embodied in its mission.

Greater Administrative Efficiency

Over the past decade, the UPR-RP has devoted substantial energy and analysis to financial planning and to increasing administrative efficiency. This has led to the use of limited resources in more responsible and cost-effective ways. While these efforts are ongoing, they provide a foundation for the institution's ability to respond to the current financial crisis.

Next Steps

Given the present fiscal limitations of the UPR System, its high dependence on income resulting from a formula based on the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico's annual revenues, and the fragile state of the economy of Puerto Rico, we believe that the UPR-RP should:

- Adapt strategies for increasing revenue and revenue diversity, proposing and implementing new policies and practices through official channels;
- Continue to support research and boost external funding; and
- Establish a policy and practices that support the reorganization and improvement of fund-raising. The policy should expand the donor base, foster a culture of giving among alumni/ae and other donors, and significantly increase external funding.
- Conclude the faculty recruitment process as proposed.

STANDARD 7: INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

During the past decade the UPR-RP has carefully addressed the 2005 MSCHE self-study recommendations to move toward the concept of "institutional effectiveness and assessment." Specifically, the campus was asked to document progress in the implementation of a written plan for the assessment of institutional effectiveness, and it has done so. An improved and comprehensive set of assessment processes have informed decision-making and assisted the

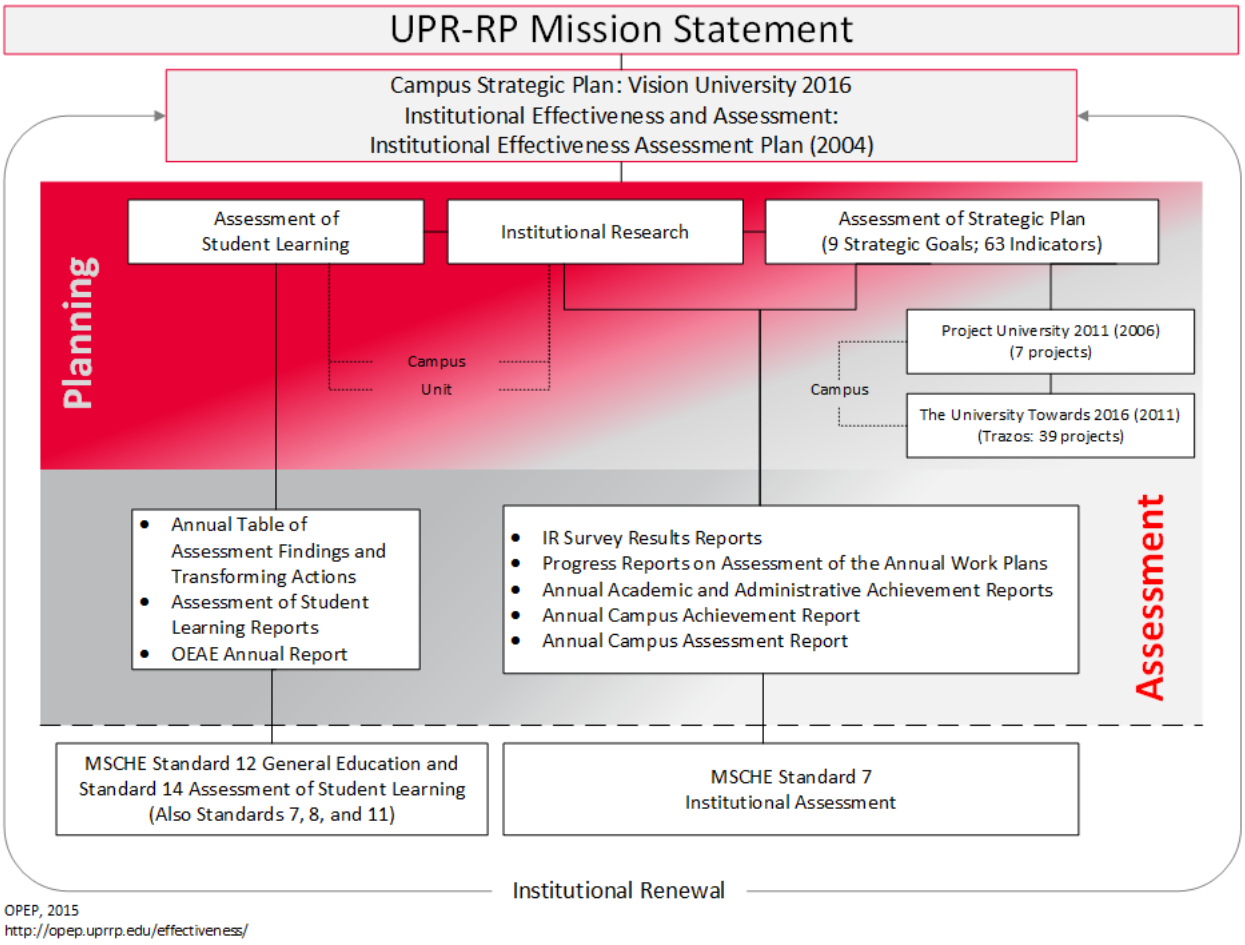
institution in systematically pursuing our goals. The people, policies, and administrative mechanisms behind these processes work together to make information available to various constituencies and to disseminate findings concerning the institution's performance. Our official assessment processes reinforce the continuation of best practices and assist in identifying areas in which strategic intervention is needed. They also document progress toward meeting the goals stated in our strategic plan, VU 2016.

The campus planning process and its relationship to institutional assessment and renewal is presented in Figure 2.1. Institutional assessment takes place at the campus level and the unit level (colleges, schools, non-academic offices such as the Office of the Dean of Studies and the Office of the Dean of Administration). Institutional assessment, which is linked to planning, is based on data in three main areas: (1) student learning outcomes, (2) institutional research, and (3) institutional effectiveness, which takes into consideration strategic indicators established in planning documents based on VU 2016 and includes assessments of administrative processes and progress toward meeting strategic goals.

The Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting (**OPEP** in Spanish) coordinates our overall institutional assessment process, working at both the campus and unit level. The units include the four overseen by our executive deans (Academic Affairs, Graduate Studies and Research, Students, and Administration) as well as our eight colleges, three schools, the library system, and various service offices. OPEP, which responds directly to the Office of the Chancellor, was created to ensure that the analysis of information facilitates the decision-making processes, in particular those processes related to the distribution and use of our budget. As the name of the office suggests, its structure facilitates close communication between officials working in the areas of planning and budgeting.

Assessment of the quality of students' educational experiences is essential to the assessment of our overall performance. As a result of the self-study process, meetings between OPEP and the Office for the Evaluation of Student Learning (**OEAE** in Spanish) have recently taken place.

Figure 2.1: UPR-RP Planning and Institutional Assessment



OPEP, 2015
http://opep.uprrp.edu/effectiveness/

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Assessment of Student Learning

The OEAE coordinates the assessment of student learning at the campus level and offers guidance for complementary processes in our colleges and schools. It has facilitated the appointment of more than 50 assessment coordinators and faculty members who guide annual assessment processes in the units where they are based (colleges, schools, graduate programs, and, in some cases, departments).

The UPR-RP has been engaged in a systematic process of student-learning assessment since approval of the Student Learning Evaluation Plan in April of 2006 and creation of the OEAE in 2007. Since that time the OEAE has prepared progress reports and analyses of assessment findings and transformative actions that faculty members have proposed for strengthening teaching and student learning outcomes. As discussed in Chapter 5, these results have been shared with the campus community and over the last year OEAE has increased the number of analyses available online.

The OPEP and OEAE share assessment information gathered through graduating-student surveys, rubrics, and related strategies. The discussions that contributed to the preparation of this report suggested that the dialogue between these offices should be more direct and consistent. The interaction between the OPEP and the OEAE that has taken place has been productive. It will continue and, we hope, become stronger.

Institutional Research

Our Institutional Research Unit (**IR**), which is a part of OPEP, provides members of the university community with data for decision-making as well as institutional assessment. This unit also provides external constituents with data. As noted in one of our policy documents in this area (Board of Trustees Certification 108, 1998-99), institutional research establishes a foundation for effective and ongoing institutional assessment.

The IR has continuously collected data and information about the campus's performance. This information has been transformed into reports and analyses that support institutional planning, academic management, and budgetary decisions. The IR prepares and makes available general and historical data about student admissions, enrollment, credit hours, and the number of degrees awarded. Many academic programs use data from this office for their professional accreditation. This unit also provides information for reports that the Chancellor prepares for governance bodies such as the Academic Senate and the Administrative Board. The DAA relies on the IRO for data used in the analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of our academic programs.

While important work in the area of institutional research has clearly been completed, limitations still exist. Since 2010, for example, research that relies on student surveys and focus group sessions has not been entirely satisfactory. This is significant given that student feedback provides data important to the campus assessment plan. In the past few years OPEP has strengthened its efforts in this area, but two main challenges have limited the collection of student-generated data.

- Low response rates: In a series of telephone and online surveys (e.g., Senior Exit 2011, Student Satisfaction Inventory 2013) developed locally and by external organizations and administered between 2010 and 2013, there was a low response and participation rate (under 12%). This was a direct consequence of the strained institutional climate after the 2010-11 student strikes and the interruption in institutional research on students.
- Reduction in staff: In recent years, the staff assigned to institutional research has decreased by more than half. Limitation on recruitment in this area is due to cost-control measures established by the Board of Trustees and the President. Recent hiring has taken place in priority areas that current regulations define as materially affecting the quality and continuity of academic offerings (Appendix 2.8: Office of the President Circular R-0809-14: Rules and Precautionary Measures on Institutional Finance). The fact that IR personnel do not have direct contact with students has meant that employees in this area who have retired or transferred to other units have not been replaced.

Accomplishments

Our IR unit has helped the institution move in a positive direction and continued the development and provision of new data that have strengthened institutional assessment. The following achievements deserve special mention:

- Completion of analyses that have contributed to planning, in particular the design and monitoring of VU 2016, which is used for institutional assessment.
- Compliance with all Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (**IPEDS**) data-collection cycles: For the period 2005–2015, the IPEDS were submitted in a timely manner and in compliance with internal schedules and external requirements.
- Reactivation of student surveys: Important student surveys have recently been conducted, including Senior Exit 2014 and the National Survey of Student Engagement 2015.

Institutional Data Management

Dashboards

Technological investment has benefited the UPR-RP by making available new and better resources for achieving its goals. Some of these are used for disseminating the results of institutional assessment. For example, online dashboards that track progress in terms of strategic indicators were created in 2009. These are used to share information and promote discussion about institutional effectiveness and assessment processes and results. In 2010, a similar set of resources, the Priority Projects Online Dashboards, were created. These dashboards, which are currently being updated, provide useful visuals that assist users in tracking the institution's progress toward meeting strategic goals. They also clearly relate this progress to specific priority projects. Use of the dashboards complements traditional methods of dissemination such as emails, website postings, and the like.

Software Platforms

Technological improvements have recently been prioritized in order to maximize the use of data and information related to institutional assessment. For example, between August and December of 2014, software platforms were updated to more robust and capable versions. In addition, new servers with increased storage capacity and processing power were installed. These improvements made possible migration of the database management system from Oracle 8i to Oracle 11g. In addition, the Oracle Application Server was updated from version 9 to 10 g.

In order to further benefit from these improvements, it is important to continue to provide campus leadership (Deans, Associate Deans of Academic Affairs) with training on the use of data in decision-making. Workshops and training sessions in this area are crucial following implementation of improvements and when new deans are appointed.

SAGA and FACTUM

The Managerial, Academic, and Administrative Support System (**SAGA** in Spanish) and FACTUM are instrumental in generating useful institutional statistics in a timely manner. SAGA is a data warehouse for information about students and human resources (with an emphasis on faculty). It integrates data spanning AYs 1993–2015 extracted from the campus's Student Information System (SIS) and Human Resources System (HRS). OPEP has assigned 232 SAGA user accounts. These are used by 132 campus administrators (deans, associate deans, directors and coordinators); 49 administrative officials and clerical assistants; 16 unit Student Affairs deans, officials, and academic counselors; 19 unit Academic Affairs associate deans and coordinators; and 16 personnel working in the areas of research, program accreditation, curricular revision, and proposal design.

FACTUM is a web-based system for gathering data on faculty credentials, achievements, publications, creative work, service activities, professional improvement, external funds proposals, research activity, and thesis advising. This system generates information for annual campus achievement reports, assessment reports on strategic indicators, and other documents.

Because of recent improvements related to technology, SAGA and FACTUM are now more stable and have a greater service capacity and improved performance. These improvements addressed some of the concerns expressed by users, such as improved response time and system stability. Additional improvements to these systems are needed. Many professors do not use FACTUM; some indicate the need to develop a friendlier format. Another challenge is that directors and others in administrative positions do not use FACTUM. Their use of FACTUM to generate monthly reports (rather than asking faculty members to send reports by email) is one strategy for increasing faculty use of the system. It is important that these systems be continually updated and improved when necessary so they can contribute to decision-making processes at the program and campus level.

Student Surveys

The UPR-RP administers various student surveys to support the assessment process. Surveys aid in gathering baseline data, identifying areas for improvement, and tracking progress. The UPR-RP relies on results from the Freshmen Profile Questionnaire, Senior Exit Surveys, and four standard instruments used by many institutions of higher education. These instruments provide distinct types of information about students' educational experiences, opinions, and the challenges they have faced during their time at the university. Recent findings are summarized in Appendix 2.9; they are also online.

Surveys allow the impressions of both undergraduate and graduate students to inform our assessment process. Recent survey results demonstrate that our campus has succeeded in enhancing students' personal experiences and developing key skill areas defined in the UPR-RP Mission and our Graduating Student Profile. The UPR-RP has taken close note of areas in which students' responses fell short of institutional expectations. Lower satisfaction was reported in areas related to administrative processes and infrastructure. Student survey results have also led the administration to increase budget allocations to projects and initiatives that promise to strengthen student-faculty interaction and those that enrich educational experiences. Among the projects launched in these areas are student conferences and literary competitions for first-year students in the College of General Studies and student research and a faculty mentorship program organized by our Title V program Initiatives for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity (**iINAS** in Spanish).

Campus Strategic Plan Assessment

The UPR-RP's Plan for the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness (see Appendix 2.10: Plan for the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness, **PAEI** in Spanish) was approved by the Administrative Board on August 20, 2004. PAEI is a baseline document that pinpoints the priority goals of our mission statement and key areas in our strategic plan. This plan conceptualizes the effectiveness-assessment processes of planning at the campus and unit levels. Performance is tracked in terms of indicators, institutional research, annual reports, and development plans. Assessment at the unit level focuses on the effectiveness of our major academic and research units and the internal units providing them support and services. It includes those responsible for administrative processes and physical facilities.

Since 2011-12, PAEI has been enhanced by an integrated model of planning, resource allocation, management, and outcomes assessment which aims to provide a better understanding of the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of our academic programs, support services, and administrative structures. A sequence of five main actions guide our current processes:

- Formulation of goals and objectives: All academic, administrative, and support units prepare three- to five-year development plans that are aligned with the campus mission, the unit's mission statement, and the institutional strategic plan.
- Allocation of institutional and supplementary resources: Funds and resources are assigned for daily operations, technological infrastructure, work plan initiatives, and the institution's priority projects. Work plan initiatives and priority projects respond to the UPR-RP's Mission and are closely related to the strategic plan.
- Dates for progress and completion: Specific timetables are developed and used to review activities, projects, and changes.
- Assessment of results and achievements: Evaluation and monitoring are used to reinforce the importance of annual plans, recognize achievements, and arrive at solutions that will lead to the achievement of goals. Dissemination of information about achievements, results, and work that still needs to be done ensures that units will connect their roles with broader campus-level goals.
- Data-driven decision-making: Reliable and significant data are used to arrive at smart and practical decisions.

These five actions assist campus leadership and OPEP personnel in identifying how specific units can better contribute to overall campus performance. This sequence reinforces accountability with respect to spending and the completion of activities.

The Institutional Assessment Cycle

Our campus's planning-budgeting-assessment cycle is defined each year. Over a period of 12 months there are five formal meetings between OPEP and the academic and non-academic units. These meetings are opportunities to re-emphasize goals and answer questions about institutional guidelines and policies. They also structure the timetable for planning, budget allocation, and assessment. Six established points that structure the institutional assessment cycle are shown in Appendix 2.11: Steps in the Institutional Assessment Cycle.

Annual Work Plans

Annual work plans support the strategic goals of our ten-year plan and encourage compliance with our mission. Each annual work plan clearly defines the projects through which each unit will carry out the goals and objectives proposed in its long-term development plans. Annual plans include an integrated assessment element that identifies the success indicators and performance metrics that the unit and OPEP will use in assessing annual outcomes, ensuring that the outcomes of projects and initiatives that receive funding are systematically assessed.

Progress Reports

Shortly before the end of the fiscal year, each unit submits a progress report to OPEP on the unit's achievements and progress on the projects specified in the annual work plan. OPEP prepares a campus-level report that documents overall progress. The report, which shows how the budget has been used, has several uses. It facilitates the identification of strategies for addressing challenges, including those that may arise in the next fiscal year (e.g., duplication of

requests, the lack of alignment between projects and strategic goals). In addition, the Chancellor uses it in the annual report he presents to the Academic Senate.

Institutional Effectiveness Assessment and VU 2016

One of our most important sets of tools for evaluating institutional effectiveness is the set of goals and indicators that form part of the strategic plan VU 2016. As described below, the OPEP has consistently monitored the indicators established in the plan and the campus's progress toward achieving its nine strategic goals.

Budget Allocations

VU 2016 has provided significant guidance for decision-making related to budget allocations. In fact, between 2012-13 and 2014-15 alone, more than $26M was assigned to advance the plan. This was done by providing support for projects and initiatives developed by our academic and administrative units. These projects, all of which were assessed according to the processes described above, directly support the goals of VU 2016 and contribute to fulfillment of our institutional mission, as shown in Table 2.5.

As suggested by the number of strategic indicators, our main priorities are in the area of research, creation, and scholarship and academic programs. These are the areas to which the greatest funding is allocated. The large number of initiatives and projects in the area of physical installations and natural spaces relates to the fact that our institution has several aging buildings and physical installations that are in constant need of maintenance, a topic addressed above in our discussion of institutional resources.

Table 2.5: Budget Allocations for Work Plan Initiatives and Priority Projects Aligned with UPR-RP Mission and VU 2016 Strategic Goals (2006-2015)

VU 2016's 9 Strategic Goals Aligned with Elements of UPR-RP Mission			Strategic Goal	Number of Initiatives and Projects	Funding for Work Plans & Priority Projects
1	Research, creation, and scholarship	2, 3, 4, 5	10	81	$3,386,591
2	Academic and service programs	1, 2, 3	9	49	$871,913
3	Faculty	4	5	19	$468,400
4	Student affairs	2, 3	8	55	$577,543
5	Internationalization	4	6	29	$326,203
6	Management practices and processes	Support for UPR-RP Mission Elements 1-5	6	23	$2,363,444
7	Information and communication technology		8	51	$2,351,716
8	Physical installations and natural spaces		5	114	$15,808,904
9	Alumni/ae and community involvement		6	24	$380,200
	TOTAL		**63**	**445**	**$26,534,914**

Source: OPEP, July 2015

Performance under VU 2016

Evaluating Performance

VU 2016 was created through a participatory process that have made. Members from the campus community indicate that the document became more complex when numerous recommendations were added prior to its approval. This led to a large number of projects and initiatives rather than a document in which a few key projects and initiatives were strategically tiered or grouped. These were established a decade ago for the future evaluation of the university's performance between 2006 and 2016.

In the years that have followed, assessing institutional activities and progress toward meeting strategic goals has been difficult precisely because of the number of goals and indicators established ten years ago. Nevertheless, OPEP staff have completed the required assessment exercises required annually for VU 2016, including monitoring 9 strategic goals, 63 indicators, the 7 projects of the first operational plan, plus the other 39 projects of the second operational plan.

Campus-Level Performance

The extent to which the UPR-RP has achieved its strategic goals can be evaluated given that VU expires in less than a calendar year. Strategic Goal 9, which deals with the institution's relationship with its alumni/ae and the community, has unquestionably been met. The institution's commitment to the various sectors of the community and the island as a whole is evidenced by the intra- and extracurricular activities associated with academic programs, the DSA's work plan, the Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, the UPR-RP Theater, and Radio Universidad. Achievement of this goal reflects commitment to the cornerstones of the institutional mission: a "sense of social awareness and responsibility," a commitment "to the ideals and values of Puerto Rican society," "participation in the life of the community as well as service to that community," the development of "innovative, relevant programs of community service," and the formulation "of solutions to. . . problems, and to the improvement of the quality of life."

The UPR-RP also shows progress toward the strategic goals associated with internationalization (Goal 5), students (Goal 4), and management (Goal 6). All colleges, schools, and offices of deans have completed projects that advance these goals. Our students and faculty have represented the institution in academic activities from Argentina to Zambia. Furthermore, advancements have taken place in institutional assessment. Deans and directors have approved and taken over key parts of the process. Special attention has been given to training personnel in the management of the campus's administrative components; examples can be found in work completed by the Human Resources Office, the Center for Academic Excellence, and the Office of the Chancellor. One such effort is the Project for Certification in Communication and Information Technologies (**PACTIC** in Spanish) in the College of Business Administration. Central Administration has adopted and used our institutional assessment model for the UPR System.

Through institutional surveys, our students have expressed satisfaction with the academic excellence of the instruction and have described the faculty as extremely knowledgeable. They have also indicated that the UPR-RP has greatly contributed to their development in research,

creative work, and other key skill areas. Compared to 2005, there have also been significant improvements in the areas of assessment of student learning and professional accreditation. The large number of academic programs and services that have been accredited by their relevant agencies shows that programs have demonstrated excellence and high quality as measured by the standards established by their respective disciplines and professions. Achievements in this area have contributed to stronger learning outcomes and inspired transformative actions that have enriched opportunities for successful learning and teaching. These findings are linked to the strategic goals of academic programs (Goal 2), faculty (Goal 3), and research (Goal 1).

The most challenging strategic goals are those relating to technology (Goal 7) and facilities (Goal 8). These two areas have been allocated $17M from 2012 to 2015, but they still require diligence. The UPR-RP has undertaken major infrastructure projects such as asbestos identification and removal, implementation of the Security Plan, and transferring administrative systems from the Alpha server to Integrity, but the perception remains that additional progress needs to be made. These areas should have a central place in the UPR-RP's next strategic plan.

In 2.12: Assessment of VU 2016 Goals we offer a snapshot of assessment findings for each of the plan's nine strategic goals. An overview of the indicators used in assessment and the allocation of funds is included for each goal.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Integrated Assessment

The integration of institutional assessment, planning, and allocation of funds has provided the UPR-RP with benefits. Data on academic programs and services are used to guide institutional compliance with the campus mission, advance the goals of priority projects, and ensure compliance with standards considered in institutional accreditation.

Student Data

Students' opinions have been included in institutional assessment. The data obtained in recent years have assisted campus leaders in understanding the various stages in students' educational experiences. Information collected through surveys complements that obtained by the units responsible for institutional assessment and the assessment of student learning outcomes.

Next Steps

Sharing Information

Information related to institutional assessment (in particular, information about the unit's progress in contributing to the achievement of institutional goals) should be presented at least annually in faculty meetings and in other contexts. This can increase the visibility of planning and assessment and encourage useful types of engagement and dialogue.

Office of Strategic Planning and Budget (OPEP)

Evaluate the current organization of OPEP in order to address specific areas that need to be strengthened.

Cultivating Transformative Actions

Campus leadership should ensure that the findings of institutional research—for example, from the Student Satisfaction Inventory—are shared with units that provide student services. This would allow them to address any problems through transformative actions that they develop and implement. The transformative actions they devise should be shared with the unit responsible for institutional assessment.

Electronic System for Assessment Data

The UPR-RP should continue to develop a streamlined electronic system for keeping records of the assessment data collected over time to advance institutional improvement and better inform the community of the work done in this area.

Technology and Facilities

Given challenges recognized through the initial evaluation of performance under VU 2016, improvements that are needed in the areas of technology and facilities should be given special attention in establishing the assessment component of the UPR-RP's new strategic plan.

CHAPTER 3: LINKING LEADERSHIP AND DIALOGUE

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance – The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to ensure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

Standard 5: Administration – The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.

STANDARD 4: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

I. INTRODUCTION

The Law of the University of Puerto Rico (Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966, as amended) establishes the institution's governance structure at both the UPR System and campus levels. The law assigns specific policy-development and decision-making roles and responsibilities to particular officers and bodies within the institution. It institutionalizes the principle of shared governance and provides for the participation of faculty and students at all levels of governance.

As is fully evidenced below, the UPR System, on the authority granted it by law, has enacted both general regulations applicable to academic, research, and service activities common to all campuses and specific regulations, policies, norms, and procedures for particular cases and situations. At the campus level, the Chancellor, the Academic Senate, and other administrative units (such as the colleges and schools that make up the UPR-RP) may, within their respective spheres of authority, define policies, norms, and procedures to fulfill their responsibilities and ensure performance consistent with the campus mission.

The UPR-RP's system of statutes, regulations, policies, and norms is a mature one. Throughout its years of growth and development, the UPR-RP community has been able to define, establish, and fine-tune a system of governance with clearly defined roles for those responsible for policy development and decision-making. Within this system, representatives of diverse constituencies in the community play meaningful roles.

The UPR System

The University of Puerto Rico System is composed of 11 campuses distributed throughout Puerto Rico. Each campus operates with a fair degree of academic and administrative autonomy within the parameters set forth in the University Law, institutional regulations, and Governing Board certifications.

The UPR-RP is the oldest, largest, and most complex campus within the system in terms of academic programs (undergraduate, graduate, and professional), administration, human resources, buildings, grounds, and other facilities.

The Governing Board

The Governing Board is the governing body of the University of Puerto Rico System. Since 2013, it has consisted of 13 members: eight private citizens appointed by the governor of Puerto Rico with the advice and consent of the Commonwealth Senate; the Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico as an *ex officio* member; and four members of the university community, designated by their peers on the University Board. Two of these last four are tenured professors within the UPR System and two are full-time students; one student represents undergraduate programs and one, graduate programs.

As they begin their terms on the Governing Board, members are provided with information about their rights and responsibilities and given access to the electronic agendas of the Board and its respective committees. All members have the same access and are provided with the same opportunities to learn about the body's role and its ongoing projects.

The Governing Board is chaired by one of its members, elected each year by the body. The Executive Committee is composed of the Chair, the Vice Chair, and the Secretary, all likewise elected. The Executive Secretary, an employee of the Board, is responsible for supervising and coordinating the Board's administrative labors.

The Governing Board is an active body with standing committees that aid in fulfilling its responsibilities and ensuring the proper use and ongoing development of institutional resources. Committee members are appointed annually with the consent of the full Board. At present, the Board has six standing committees: Academics, Research, and Student Affairs; Finances and the Retirement System; Audits; Institutional Development; Appeals, Laws, and Regulations; and Infrastructure and Technology. Several ad-hoc committees have been created for specific activities and topics of interest to the Board.

A standing invitation to Board meetings is issued to the President of the University, who has no vote. The Board functions pursuant to bylaws of its own creation, including provisions regarding the ethical responsibilities of its members. Members of the Governing Board, as is the case with all UPR employees, are subject to the Puerto Rico Government Ethics Act of 2011.

The decisions of the Board are recorded in certified resolutions and are numbered and archived permanently in its offices, both on paper and digitally. Once the resolution or certification is issued, notice is given to the university community in a general electronic notification (via the *Cartero Junta de Gobierno*), and a copy is posted on a searchable site that allows faculty, staff, students, alumni/ae, and members of the general public to easily search and retrieve information.

Many Governing Board documents, including certifications and UPR System regulations, are easily accessed on the Board's public website. This archive is regularly updated with new Board-issued certifications. Chancellors, deans, faculty members, and other parties turn to them for answers to questions about daily governance and desired institutional improvements.

The Governing Board publishes an annual calendar of its regular meetings, which, as required by Law No. 159 of 2013, amended by Law No. 25 of 2014, are streamed over the Internet, ensuring increased openness and transparency in governance. Recordings of broadcast meetings are archived and can easily be retrieved and viewed by faculty, staff, students, alumni/ae, and members of the general public.

In addition, the Board requests commentaries and recommendations from the university community and the general public regarding proposed regulations and documents that have been submitted for its review. All members of the university community, as well as the general public, can visit the office of the Governing Board during regular working hours. As noted under the contact information on its website, members of the Governing Board can also be contacted by phone, fax, and email.

Scope of the Governing Board's Responsibilities

By law, the Governing Board represents the public interest in the institution, and is charged with protecting the UPR from partisan political interests or any other interest that might undermine university autonomy, and from anti-intellectual trends that may infringe upon academic freedom, critical thinking and discussion, and the full development of our students. Its general focus and duties involve formulating directives pertaining to the direction and development of the institution, examining and approving the general operational regulations proposed by the university's legislative and administrative bodies pursuant to University Law, and supervising the institution's general workings. Twenty-four specific duties are established by the Law of the University of Puerto Rico and also set forth in the Governing Board's internal regulations.

The UPR President

The President of the University of Puerto Rico, who is appointed by the Governing Board after consultation with the university community and holds office at the discretion of the Board, is the chief executive officer of the entire public university system. Our current President, Dr. Uroyoán Walker Ramos, was appointed in November of 2013. As President, he represents the UPR System at public functions, in legislative hearings, etc. Each year the President addresses both chambers of the Commonwealth legislature, offering a report detailing achievements, challenges, and a budget proposal for the next fiscal year. The President is an *ex officio* member of all the UPR System academic senates and administrative boards. In collaboration with the University Board, he coordinates and supervises the university's work.

By law the President has a wide range of duties. Two are especially important: chairing the University Board and overseeing the UPR System budgetary and development plans. In consultation with the University Board, the President prepares the university's comprehensive development plan and each month reports to the University Board and the Governing Board on the most important achievements and any areas of concern related to the plan. The development plan and any revisions to it are submitted to the Governing Board for consideration. This will be the case with the current planning document that completes its ten-year cycle in 2016.

The University Central Administration includes the Office of the President and three vice presidencies (Academic Affairs, Students, and Research and Technology; see Appendix 3.1: UPR System Organizational Chart). Pursuant to the self-study process, the UPR-RP coordinates four general areas with Central Administration: leadership and governance, planning, budget, and finance. Aside from these areas the campus has a substantial degree of responsibility and autonomy in areas related to faculty, educational offerings, assessment of student learning, general education, and student admission, retention, and support.

The University Board

The University Board consists of 38 members: the President of the UPR System, as chair; the chancellors of the 11 campuses; the UPR System's Director of Finance; three additional officials

appointed by the President and approved by the Governing Board; one professor elected by each academic senate from among its members (*ex officio* senate members are ineligible); and one student representative from each institutional unit, elected annually. The inclusion of academic senators and students on the University Board facilitates and enriches direct communication between the Board and the constituencies it represents.

The University Board's main responsibilities are to ensure that the University System is in step with its overall planning and to advise the UPR President in coordinating the operation of the various institutional units in the areas of academics, administration, and finances. In fulfilling these functions, the University Board and the President, each in its sphere of authority, take those initiatives for development and coordination that circumstances may require, with due deference to the powers vested in the institutional units with respect to their semi-autonomous status within the System. The Board's responsibilities also include consideration of the development plan submitted by the President. It makes recommendations it deems necessary, and these are considered by the Governing Board. The University Board also considers the overall budget proposal for the University System as framed by the President, which is eventually submitted to the Governing Board.

As evidenced by the diverse membership of this body, planning related to development and budget is not a purely top-down process, but rather one in which input and dialogue from the campuses and their diverse constituencies inform the agenda and decision-making processes of the UPR President and those with whom he works closely.

The Board publishes its certifications on its website. As of April 2015, some 123 full-text certifications, detailing activity for FY 2011-12 through 2013-14, were posted.

Governance at the Campus Level

The UPR-RP has a long, well-established tradition of participatory decision-making. All members of the campus community have ample opportunity for broad participation in the campus's internal policy- and decision-making processes at all levels of administration and academic activity and services. The constituencies on our campus share the ingrained belief that diverse participation—indeed, the participation of all constituencies: students, faculty, staff, and administrators—is important in order to successfully move the institution toward achievement of its strategic goals and objectives, consistent with our mission.

The UPR-RP is a state-supported institution of higher education licensed by the Puerto Rico Council on Education. Its basic organizational structure is a fairly standard one, similar to that of most major research universities. Changes that have taken place involve new appointments rather than affecting the structure itself, with the exception of a recent change to the Board of Trustees, which is now the "Governing Board," as we discuss below, in Section II. For information on governance and the frequent replacement of high-ranking officials, see below, Section II, "Discussion and Findings: Leadership at the System Level."

The paragraphs that follow discuss the current governance structure of the UPR-RP. Qualifications of the senior academic and administrative leadership are discussed below, in the section on Standard 5, which focuses on administration.

Chancellor

The Chancellor is, by law, the chief executive officer of the UPR-RP. The current Chancellor is Dr. Carlos Severino Valdez, former dean of the College of Social Sciences. He was appointed by

the Governing Board upon the recommendation of the UPR President, who, as stipulated by university regulations, consulted with the UPR-RP Academic Senate and university community. Our Chancellor, like his equivalents in the System, serves at the discretion of the Governing Board.

Our Chancellor exercises administrative and academic authority within the UPR-RP pursuant to the provisions of the Law of the University of Puerto Rico and university regulations. For a list of the Chancellor's duties and general responsibilities, see Appendix 3.2.

Administrative Board

The UPR-RP Administrative Board consists of the Chancellor; the four Executive Deans (Academic Affairs, Graduate Studies and Research, Student Affairs, and Administration); the college deans; two senators elected from among the non-*ex officio* members of the Academic Senate; and a student elected annually by his or her peers.

Chaired by the Chancellor, the Administrative Board is charged with significant governance responsibilities. Two of these should be underscored: assisting in the preparation of the budget that the Chancellor submits to Central Administration, and granting tenure and promotions as recommended by faculty and non-teaching personnel.

To perform many of its functions, especially those related to the evaluation and implementation of projects associated with campus projects and planning and its advice to the Chancellor, the Administrative Board uses data based on indicators of institutional effectiveness provided by the Office of Strategic Planning and Budget (OPEP), as well as forecasts made by that office. The Administrative Board's certifications and its calendar attest to the important contributions that it makes in the area of institutional improvement.

Academic Senate

The UPR-RP Academic Senate serves as the academic community's official forum for the discussion of general issues relating to the proper management and operation of the campus and the System, including matters related to the campus's general workings, its academic affairs, and other matters over which the Senate has jurisdiction. Chaired by the Chancellor, the Academic Senate is the linchpin of the UPR-RP's system of shared governance.

Membership in the UPR-RP Academic Senate is diverse, consisting of faculty and student representatives from each of the colleges and schools on campus. At present, the UPR-RP Academic Senate has 67 members, including 12 student senators elected by their peers. The deans of Academic Affairs, Administration, and Student Affairs, college deans, and the Director of the Library System are all *ex-officio* members. The President of the Student Council also serves *ex-officio*. The Student Ombudsman participates as an invited permanent member. In addition, a parliamentarian serves as advisor on issues of procedure and related matters. Orientations are held for all new academic senators, as established in the body's internal regulations. Our academic senators are respected campus leaders who willingly serve in a position that entails many responsibilities and takes up a great deal of time and energy.

The Academic Senate is a robust and active body that meets monthly throughout the academic year. The findings and certifications that result from the Senate's work are disseminated widely and may be readily accessed on its website. Its annual reports from the last decade are also available on the website. At its meetings, common concerns and possible solutions are debated and discussed. This body strives to facilitate teaching, enable and encourage research, and

expedite administrative services. Through its standing committees, the Academic Senate works on a wide range of academic-support and student issues. The body's certifications and its work in the area of regulations and University law evidence the substantial role it plays in advising related to the budget, the creation of academic programs, and other issues pertinent to policy development.

General Student Council (**GSC**)

Student participation is important for governance at the UPR-RP. The University Law articulates the rights and responsibilities of students:

> As collaborators in the University's mission of culture and service, students are members of the academic community. They shall therefore enjoy the right to participate effectively in the life of that community and shall have all the duties of moral and intellectual responsibility that this naturally entails. (Article 10, 18 PR Laws Ann, §609)

The GSC is the students' main representative body on our campus. It consists of a president, elected student senators, student representatives to the Administrative Board and the University Board, as established in the General Student Regulations. Each college and school annually elects one or more student representatives to serve on the General Student Council. Eleven students serve on the GSC's Executive Council (see also Appendix 3.3: General Student Council Members 2015-16). A total of approximately 53 additional students who serve as representatives to the GSC are elected across campus.

Students actively participate in institutional life and promote the interests of the institution. The ongoing involvement of the GSC in campus governance responds to the first component of the UPR-RP Mission, which calls for "an appreciation for and cultivation of ethical and aesthetic values, involvement in campus governance, and a sense of social awareness and responsibility." The *Internal Regulations of the UPR-RP Student Council* state the rights and responsibilities of students and establish the structure of the council, the organization of meetings, and election and voting procedures.

The GSC serves the student population by enacting resolutions concerning issues relating to academic policy, student rights, and student welfare. For the GSC to responsibly enact these resolutions, reliable information must be provided to student representatives. Student representatives feel that the flow of information from the administration to the students should be improved. They hold that the administration's withholding of information may in some instances prevent student representatives from fully exercising the duties and responsibilities they are granted by law and internal regulations.

Issues related to academic policy, as for example academic offerings and disbursement and distribution of the budget, are some of the GSC's main concerns. In meetings held in conjunction with the self-study process, GSC representatives suggested that academic offerings and student services have been directly affected recently due to faculty retirements and reduced tenure-track hiring. In addition, for over a year the GSC has demanded a comprehensive restructuring of the university at all levels to promote efficient, non-redundant, and cost-effective management and to improve our financial stability and resources and thereby increase institutional effectiveness.

Colleges and Academic Departments

Self-governance processes at both the college and department level are informed by direct faculty participation. Deans of colleges and directors of schools are appointed by the Chancellor,

generally after extensive consultation with the college or school through unit-elected advisory committees. Likewise, after a consultation process channeled usually through a department- or unit-elected "search committee," deans submit a recommendation or list of candidates for department director to the Chancellor for official appointment. Generally, this process is initiated by the personnel committee at the department level.

Standing committees are maintained at the department level. Generally these include a personnel advisory committee, a curriculum committee, and, where relevant, a graduate committee. Departments may also create ad-hoc committees charged with specific tasks such as reaccreditation or assessment. The standing committees have an equivalent at the college level. In most cases, college-level committees include a representative from each department; that is, a college's curriculum committee is likely to be made up of members from each department-level curriculum committee.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Leadership at the System Level

The UPR's leadership—from the level of the Governing Board to that of the Chancellor, and even the deans—is not insulated from Puerto Rico's partisan political structure and processes. Changes in the party in power in the Commonwealth government, which can happen as frequently as every four years, often result in changes in the UPR's leadership and governance that directly affect the work of the institution. The appointment of a new UPR President typically leads to the replacement of chancellors, executive deans, college deans, and other high-level administrative officers throughout the UPR System. Oftentimes it is apparent that the specialized knowledge held by those in the administrative structure is lost. Efforts should be made to modify this pattern of behavior, and to ensure accountability, including justifying the dismissal of every person in an administrative position.

The changes at the highest level of the UPR-RP's administrative leadership are indicative that our political culture has not reached the level of maturity necessary to recognize that the University, if it is to be able to reach the level of excellence that is indispensable for the thorough fulfillment of its mission, must be free from partisan political intervention. Unfortunately, the University is too often the target of increasingly politicized views concerning the role that the institution should play in our society. Not infrequently, opinions are expressed characterizing the UPR as just another government agency, and hence part of "the spoils of war." Moreover, while in some contexts "university reform" refers to increased autonomy, in other instances it is a veiled threat to gut its public funding. In 2013, concerns about these issues, as well as others regarding the size and composition of the Board of Trustees, led to passage of an amendment to the University of Puerto Rico Law (Law No. 13 of April 30, 2013).

Changes to the composition and structure of the Governing Board were several, including its new name. Several requirements for membership were introduced. For example, one member must have extensive knowledge and experience in the field of finance, another must be a resident of Puerto Rico who has participated with distinction in social and community leadership, and five other members (at least three of whom must be UPR alumni/ae) are required to have distinguished themselves in an artistic, scientific, or professional field. An additional member should have links to Puerto Rican communities outside the island. The amendments increased by one the number of student members and extended the term of service of faculty-elected members. The new Governing Board includes the Secretary of Education as an *ex-officio*

member, in order to facilitate the development of a broad policy that promotes access to high-quality public education from pre-kindergarten to graduate study.

The reduction in the Governing Board's size to 13 members (from its former size of 17 when it was called the "Board of Trustees") aimed to make it more manageable and effective. The term of service was extended in order to make the board more independent and less subject to the political changes that periodically occur in government administration. After an initial staggering of terms, all eight members appointed by the Governor will serve for nine years, while student members will serve for one year. Faculty members serve for up to three years and are subject to reelection by their peers on the University Board.

Participation by students and professors and their voting weight have been strengthened since 2013, consistent with the principle of shared governance, and the new qualifications for membership make the body more representative of our pluralistic society while ensuring that members possess the expertise necessary to contribute meaningfully to the Board's work.

It is too early to tell whether all changes to the law will prove to be equally successful. Changes brought about at the polls have generally entailed alterations in the governance of the University, with attendant discontinuities in administration, planning, academic development, and related endeavors. This situation is a constant source of concern to our community.

Leadership at the Campus Level

As a public research-oriented comprehensive doctoral institution, the UPR-RP has assembled a strong and cohesive leadership team consisting of acknowledged leaders of this community who are committed to the institution's shared governance structure. These individuals are charged with supporting and promoting academic and intellectual freedom, and serve as models for our students, who are society's future leaders. Campus leaders keep their constituents abreast of university affairs, including challenges that the institution faces and efforts it makes to attain its goals. They are committed to observing the highest ethical standards, and to an institutional culture of collaboration, transparency, and innovation.

Campus governance structures have remained firmly in place over the last decade and have assisted the institution in addressing its problems. During this period, individuals occupying high-level administrative positions, the UPR-RP Administrative Board, and the UPR-RP Academic Senate have provided the institution with important leadership. In recent years this continuity has helped the UPR-RP community recover from a period of turmoil during 2010-11. Ongoing leadership has guided reflections on what can be learned from the serious events that took place at that time, including two student strikes, the closure of campus, the imposition of a controversial $800 annual fee on students, police violence, and reprehensible physical confrontation involving campus leadership.

Our situation today is dramatically different from that of 2010-11. A shift toward a healthier ambience became apparent shortly after the restructuring of the Governing Board in 2013. Today dialogue is frequent and open and the climate is congenial. Moreover, all groups on campus work together toward common goals. Key to improving the general atmosphere were decisions made by the Acting Chancellor in May of 2013, improving communication with the various constituencies on campus, meeting frequently with academic senators, professors, non-teaching staff, and students to move the institution forward.

Dialogue and communication have continued under our current Chancellor, who has demonstrated a clear understanding of the roles and duties spelled out by law and policy. He has visited the various colleges and schools on campus and met with elected student leaders and non-teaching staff. In these and other instances, he has demonstrated a willingness to engage in dialogue on such key issues as campus security, new tenure-track positions, and much-needed improvements to buildings and infrastructure. Many members of the campus community have expressed satisfaction with the current leadership. Deans and directors made similar comments in discussion forums organized during the preparation of this report. They also stated that necessary procedures and processes related to governance have been established, clearly described, and adequately documented.

Student Representation and Input

As noted above, our system of governance and institutional culture ensures that students are represented and have the opportunity to actively participate in decision-making. Student participation is protected and guaranteed in organizational and institutional procedures at all levels. Our policies in this area have been strengthened in recent years to ensure direct and democratic participation.

Written Policies and Governing Documents

Members of our community who participated in the self-study process have been able to attest that the structures and procedures described in written documents are followed on a daily basis. The various bodies have an accurate and informed understanding of their responsibilities. Officials interviewed about governance (e.g., deans, directors, academic senators) pointed to written documents (e.g., *Internal Regulations of the Governing Board of the UPR*, *The General Regulations of the UPR*) as useful resources for clarifying roles and responsibilities.

There is ample evidence that policies, rules, and regulations are adequately disseminated. These written resources contribute to a well-defined system of governance, as they provide concise and thorough descriptions of job responsibilities and roles. New certifications, rules, regulations, and policy documents are regularly distributed via email and posted on relevant websites in a timely manner. In addition, the campus website has been dramatically revamped and updated to emphasize and provide information about academic and extracurricular activities, policy changes, and university-based initiatives involving the larger community.

Communication and Transparency

Effective, timely communication is essential to our system of self-governance. Open channels of communication support an atmosphere of trust and dialogue and keep the many units within the institution informed. They also allow the institution to identify and respond to its challenges. The following are examples of institutional improvements in the area of communication:

- The Chancellor, Dean of Academic Affairs, and Dean of Student Affairs take part in regularly scheduled meetings with the UPR President and his staff. This communication focuses on issues relevant to our campus.
- In 2013 the Governing Board instituted a procedure for informing the general public and UPR employees of the decisions made in its meetings. New certifications are promptly posted on the Governing Board's website and email notifications are sent to all employees.

- UPR-RP budget and finance office directors regularly meet with staff at the UPR System level to coordinate and implement applicable procedures.
- Also relevant to communication, the Governing Board created standing committees (Finances and Retirement; Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Affairs; and Audits) to maintain recent achievements in institutional effectiveness at the same time they seek new areas of improvement. Committee members have made site visits to our campus to study and respond to campus needs.

These improvements encourage the widespread participation of faculty, non-teaching staff, and students in our system of self-governance and in campus life more generally. They suggest that administrators recognize the need to effectively convey official information. In addition, they signal that the administration values input and that it has mechanisms in place that allow it to respond to the concerns of its various constituents.

The increased openness that comes with better communication promotes collective understanding of and identification with the institution's priorities and challenges and facilitates the appropriate and timely handling of disagreements, controversies, and conflicts that may threaten institutional integrity. The active participation of students, faculty, and staff in campus government and campus-based activities and organizations is essential for fulfillment of our mission. In the 2009 monitoring report (2010), Standard Four: Leadership and Governance was flagged by the accrediting agency as needing attention. We believe substantial improvements have been made.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Established Roles

The various bodies that make up the UPR-RP's system of governance have clearly defined and complementary roles. The individuals who serve within these bodies are aware of their responsibilities and how these relate to the needs of the institution.

Appropriate Leadership

Our Governing Board consists of a diverse group of members who play an active role in the life of the institution. It makes decisions in the areas of policy, resource development and distribution, and academic affairs that guide the UPR-RP in ways that are productive and forward-looking as well as compatible with the campus mission.

Communication

The Governing Board has made noteworthy progress in promoting transparency and open communication with the various constituencies that it serves directly as well as the public at large. Members are accessible and members of our academic community are informed in a timely and responsible manner of the decisions that it makes.

Next Steps

Self-Assessment

The UPR-RP's decision-making bodies, such as the Academic Senate and the Adminstrative Board, should initiate self-assessment to promote awareness of accomplishments and increase effectiveness.

Changes of Administration

The UPR President, the Governing Board, and our Chancellor should engage in dialogue to address the potential negative impact of the frequent changes within the leadership of the UPR-RP and the UPR System.

STANDARD 5: ADMINISTRATION

I. INTRODUCTION

The UPR-RP has in place an administrative structure that has nurtured the growth of our academic and research programs and made our campus one of the most comprehensive and sought-after institutions of higher education in Puerto Rico. Many of the improvements in the area of administration can be attributed to the leadership and foresight demonstrated by campus administrators. At the same time, high quality administrative services are dependent upon the expertise and dedication of non-teaching staff.

Some of the recent challenges to improvements in the area of administration relate to the high turnover in campus leadership in recent years resulting from the UPR's lack of insulation from partisan politics. A clear set of bylaws for selecting administrators and definitions of their roles are in place and provide crucial guidance in transitions, yet the selection and appointment process can extend over an entire year. In the meantime, those who hold interim positions do their best to make decisions in the institution's best interest. Frequent transitions pose challenges even when there is significant communication across administrations. Leadership style and the vision of what needs to be done and how it should be done often differ from one administrator to another. Moreover, interruptions can negatively affect initiatives and projects, including those related to improvements in technology, infrastructure, and services.

Despite what can seem like a steady sequence of attempts to move the agenda in different directions, what holds true is the institution's equilibrium. Regardless of the political party in power, administrators, faculty, and non-teaching staff are united by a firm commitment to academic achievement and, more generally, public education. Such dedication to preserve gains and aspire to academic offerings characterized by excellence is essential to effectively confronting other challenges, including budget reductions and a high retirement rate**.**

Our administrative structure and services support student learning, scholarly research, and contributions to society and provide effective support to academic initiatives. For instance, they are important resources for faculty members who have established research initiatives, exchanges, and collaborations with institutions abroad. Today these connect the UPR-RP to Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Spain, France, Taiwan, Chile, Argentina, and Peru as well as the continental U.S.

The Administrative System

The UPR-RP is firmly committed to the continual strengthening of its administrative structure and processes. As seen in the organizational chart in Appendix 3.1, the UPR-RP administrative structure is a three-tier system. The first tier includes the Chancellor and the advisory bodies that work directly with the Chancellor's Office. In the second tier are the offices of four executive deans: Academic Affairs, Graduate Studies and Research, Administration, and Students. These offices are responsible for administrative processes basic to our daily operations.

The third administrative tier includes our largest organizational units: six colleges, two schools, and our library system. These units are directly responsible for the curricular offerings of our programs, and for the advancement of student learning and success. Colleges and schools are led by deans and directors, respectively.

The Chancellor

Dr. Carlos E. Severino Valdez has directed the institution and exercised administrative and academic authority since his appointment by the Governing Board on June 28, 2014. The Chancellor holds a master's degree and doctorate in Regional and Urban Geography from Humboldt University in Berlin, and earned his BA in Social Sciences with a sub-specialization in Economics from the UPR-RP.

Dr. Severino Valdez is an established researcher. He has published more than a dozen academic and professional books and articles, several of which suggest solutions to the geopolitical problems that Puerto Rico faces. He has served as the Special Commissioner for the Sustainable Development of Vieques and Culebra.

Numerous administrative posts at various levels prepared Dr. Severino Valdez for his work as Chancellor. He served as both associate dean and acting dean of the College of Social Sciences. Prior to these positions he chaired the Department of Geography for six years. These positions provided Dr. Severino with important experience in campus governance, institutional policies, and administrative operations. The academic and administrative project that Dr. Severino Valdez proposed during the process leading to his appointment reflects the knowledge he acquired in university administration. In his words, "The essential project is to regain hope in our University, which is the best public service that Puerto Rico has. The University must be preserved, improved, and it must be an institution befitting Puerto Rico and the world."

Our Executive Deans

The Chancellor, in compliance with institutional bylaws, nominated four executive deans as the main members of his administration (see Appendix 3.4: *Curriculum Vitae* of Executive Deans). This process took place in late 2014 and early 2015. The Academic Senate reviewed and discussed the candidates' qualifications before favorably recommending their appointments. All were confirmed by the Governing Board. As Appendix 3.5 shows, each executive dean holds a doctorate and possesses 15 or more years of service at the UPR-RP.

<u>Dean of Academic Affairs</u>

Dr. Palmira N. Ríos holds a PhD in Sociology from Yale University. She is a faculty member of the Graduate School of Public Administration, which she chaired from 2002 to 2014. Dr. Ríos served as a member of the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (formerly NASPAA). She is also a member of the Executive Council of the Inter American Network of Public Administration Education**.**

The DAA is responsible for undergraduate academic programs. In addition to supervising curriculum and instruction, it coordinates the evaluation and accreditation of academic programs and oversees faculty hiring, evaluation, tenure, promotion, and professional development. This office also supervises the library system, the Registrar's Office, and the offices of admissions, student learning assessment, and academic excellence.

Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

Dr. Pedro Juan Rodríguez Esquerdo holds a PhD in Mathematics from the University of California-Santa Barbara and a JD (*magna cum laude*) from Syracuse University (with certificates in Law and Technology Management and Law and Market Economics). He did postdoctoral research at the U.S. Census Bureau's Statistical Research Division. The DEGI is responsible for promoting and coordinating graduate studies and research. This unit, in collaboration with the Advisory Council of Graduate Studies and Research, prepares and implements the assessment plans of our graduate programs and research centers.

Dean of Student Affairs

Dr. Gloria Díaz Urbina holds a BA in Physical Education and an MA in Special Education, both from the UPR-RP, and a PhD in Exercise and Sports Science from the University of Utah. Prior to her appointment, she served as Associate Dean of Administration for two years and in the DSA for two and a half years. The unit Dr. Díaz Urbina supervises is responsible for providing direct services to the student body. In addition, the Dean of Students serves as a mediator in conflicts involving students. This unit strives to streamline student services and ensure that they are relevant and of high quality.

Dean of Administration

Dr. Grisel Meléndez Ramos holds a BA and MA in Business Administration with a major in Finance and an EdD in Education, all from the UPR-RP. In 2012 she earned a postdoctoral degree in Management and Marketing from the University of Gainesville. The most important functions of the Office of the Dean of Administration relate to providing administrative services in an ethical and efficient manner and ensuring that the UPR-RP complies with laws, regulations, policies, and established procedures. Dr. Meléndez Ramos coordinates training activities for the campus's college-level assistant and associate Deans of Administrative Affairs and maintains ties with the campus's two labor organizations.

College and School Leadership

The UPR-RP leadership includes a group of deans and directors who are charged with the academic and administrative direction of the campus's major units (see Appendix 3.6: Profiles of Deans and Directors). They were nominated by the Chancellor in consultation with the members of their units and confirmed by the Governing Board. College deans and school directors are in charge of improving quality and ensuring efficiency as they and those under their supervision deal with everyday issues related to student registration and recruitment, course offerings, faculty performance, curricular reviews, accreditation, and the submission of monthly reports.

Non-Teaching Staff

Our campus has a qualified and committed non-teaching staff, which in AY 2014-15 totaled approximately 1,500 full-time employees. The campus Human Resources Office ensures compliance with the rules and regulations related to employee orientation and training, and evaluation. It also deals with extensions of the probationary period, leaves, and credit for previous experience in similar positions. These regulations are clearly set forth in *Supplementary Rules and Work Conditions for Non-Teaching Staff*.

The evaluation processes for non-teaching personnel are established by the *UPR General Bylaws*, Chapter VIII, Article 80. Non-teaching personnel are evaluated twice: halfway through the one-year probationary period and just before tenure is granted. The employee's immediate

supervisor conducts these evaluations. For non-teaching staff, the probationary period lasts no less than four months and no longer than 12 months. Employees are granted tenure after a positive performance evaluation and certification by the Administrative Board. There is no further formal evaluation procedure established for non-teaching staff.

UPR-RP administrators have confirmed the institution's commitment to non-teaching union and non-union staff by ensuring that these employees work in a fair, safe, and participatory environment. The Chancellor has clearly expressed his commitment to "stimulating diverse and democratic discussions in order to provide appropriate solutions to the problems and challenges in Puerto Rico." He seeks to prioritize "an open environment and permanent dialogue among diverse members of the university community with regard to the continued development of important values." Non-teaching staff participate as a matter of course in these discussions.

Non-teaching staff, both those that provide administrative support and those performing maintenance services, are organized in labor associations that negotiate with the University. The collective bargaining process is coordinated by the President's office.

Administrative Services and Resources

A large number of administrative units on campus provide support for our leadership, faculty, non-teaching staff, and students. Appendix 3.7 provides an overview of three of the most important of these: OPEP, Office of Internal Auditors (OIA in Spanish), and the Division of Academic and Administrative Technologies (DTAA in Spanish). It identifies examples of achievements, and current issues, and in some cases points to possible improvements.

Technology

The UPR-RP community is not satisfied with the services provided by the institution in the area of technology, as indicated in the evaluation of VU 2016 goals provided in Chapter 2. It is felt that the process of incorporating new technology is too slow, for both administrative and academic support. The institution still relies on some obsolescent technology, both hardware and software. This situation affects teaching processes and research and is inconsistent with the institutional mission. The UPR-RP needs to significantly improve this area of its operations to bring technology up to 21st-century standards. Currently many administrative units create their own informal information systems that serve their particular information needs. This presents challenges to the centralization of data. Appendix 3.8 includes specific comments made by users about particular information systems; these comments should be considered in future efforts to advance improvements in this area.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

<u>Administrative Improvements</u>

Improvements in administrative structure and services are ongoing. Our systems of self-governance and our general organizational structure promote a collective understanding of priorities and a proactive approach to confronting challenges. Senior leadership recognizes that these improvements are key to increased institutional efficiency, innovative problem-solving, and cost-cutting.

Changes in Leadership

Frequent changes in senior leadership are a challenge to greater achievement in this area. Given that the last two years have seen significant turnover at this level, ongoing discussion of strategies and ways to improve transition processes is necessary. As indicated in the discussion of Standard 4, frequent changes in leadership can negatively affect administration. The Dean of Administration has drafted a brief manual that might serve as a starting point for identifying issues that need to be addressed.

Auditing

Internal and external audits are performed on a regular basis to evaluate the campus's financial and administrative compliance with laws, guidelines, regulations, and procedures. Our systematic and sustained adherence to compliance practices in this area demonstrates that the institution has strengthened its administrative structures and services.

Next Steps

Evaluation of Non-Teaching Staff

Given the paucity of evaluation of non-teaching staff, additional evaluation could be useful for identifying problems and areas of training that are needed. New practices related to evaluation are useful in setting new goals related to professional development and increased institutional effectiveness.

Technology

Even in times of limited resources, adequate funds should be provided to continue the modernization of our technological systems. Technological initiatives should be rigorously designed and implemented, and subsequently closely monitored, to ensure that they provide adequate support to the institution's academic and administrative structure.

Data Collection, Management, and Analysis

Efforts should be made to improve our system of systematically gathering and analyzing data so it can be used in decision-making by administrators. The following areas should be considered:

- Raising awareness among personnel about recording data in official information systems and the importance of consistency, thoroughness, and precision in the data recorded.
- Performing more frequent data purges of administrative systems.
- Promoting a culture of information self-service.
- Periodically assessing the effectiveness of administrative structures and services and sharing results of periodic assessment with the community.

CHAPTER 4: A TRADITION OF SCHOLARSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Standard 6: Integrity – 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.

Standard 10: Faculty – The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings – The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

STANDARD 6: INTEGRITY

Integrity and its relationship to academic freedom and the general campus environment are concerns at all levels of the institution. At the campus level, the Chancellor, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Academic Senate, and the Administrative Board are responsible for managing internal affairs. They ensure that intellectual freedom and freedom of expression are guiding principles in the daily life of the institution, not only for faculty (including adjunct and visiting professors), but also for students and non-teaching staff.

An essential aspect of institutional integrity mandated by the UPR-RP is respect for diversity. The campus has the highest percentage of female students among comparable institutions, as well as programs that foster the inclusion of first-generation students and students from the public school system. It also has a policy for recruiting students with functional diversity and providing them with technological learning assistance and other support services. A UPR-wide policy that expanded access to students with disabilities or functional diversity, which is described in Governing Board Certification 111 2014-15, was recently implemented. The UPR was the first public institution on the island to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender orientation and sexual identity. Our campus, home to the Program in Women's and Gender Studies, leads in advocacy for inclusiveness and diversity.

The UPR-RP's strategic plan, University Vision 2016, was implemented in accordance with ethical policies and standards described in two documents: the *General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico* (hereafter the *UPR General Regulations*) and the *University of Puerto Rico General Student Regulations* (*UPR General Student Regulations)*. These documents apply to our entire public tertiary-education system. Matters relating to integrity not addressed in these institutional publications are addressed by the Governing Board or the UPR System President.

This chapter addresses various instances of the UPR-RP's compliance with the standard of integrity.

Academic Freedom

The first article of the *UPR General Regulations* stipulates that all administrative and academic operations within the UPR System must uphold the principle of campus autonomy and respect

the academic freedom of faculty members. Academic freedom is defined as the right of every faculty member to objectively and honestly teach the material in his or her area(s) and to do so in the pursuit of truth. The second article makes another important declaration related to academic freedom, guaranteeing faculty members that they shall be able to carry out research honestly and without restrictions on their findings or professional opinions.

Respect for Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Policy

The UPR-RP is firmly committed to the ethical and consistent treatment of its diverse constituencies. The institution's anti-discrimination statement, established by institutional policy (Board of Trustees Certification 58, 2004-05), prohibits all discrimination in education, employment, and the provision of services, making specific references to discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, place of birth, age, social origin and class, ancestry, marital status, religious and political ideology, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic origin, veteran status, and physical handicap. This policy extends to all activities carried out by the units within the UPR System.

Ethics Law

The Office of Government Ethics is perhaps the most visible of the units that address ethics within the system of higher education in Puerto Rico. The Office of Human Resources is charged with enforcing the Government Ethics Law, which requires that public employees take 20 contact-hours of ethics workshops, lectures, seminars, or other such activities annually. Workshops and lectures take place on campus several times a semester; UPR employees can also fulfill ethics requirements through supervised alternatives that link awareness about ethics to academic topics, film screenings, or discussion groups.

Student Rights

Students' rights and obligations are established in the *UPR General Student Regulations*, as amended on July 28, 2011. Several of its articles (e.g., 2.3, 2.4, 2.7) establish that students are protected from and not to be subjected to discrimination, sexual harassment, or verbal, physical, or psychological abuse. Regulations make clear that students have the right to actively take part in university life and, in the case of certain functional needs, have access to "reasonable accommodation." The regulations also guarantee respect for student beliefs and the right to express them.

Hiring, Promotion, and Tenure

Recruitment, hiring, promotion, and tenure practices for both faculty and non-teaching staff are governed by certifications and the *UPR General Regulations.* (See below, "Standard 10: Faculty" for a detailed discussion of hiring procedures and ethics).

Personnel Committees and the Administrative Board

Personnel committees at the departmental and college levels offer orientations to ensure that faculty members understand policies and evaluation documents for promotion and tenure and how the documents will be used. As mandated by Board of Trustees Certification 32, 2005-06, several bodies work together to organize training workshops for personnel committee members on various issues, including questions of ethics.

Once candidates for promotion and tenure are evaluated at the department and college levels, recommendations are forwarded to the Administrative Board. Fairness and impartial practices

are ensured by the Board's adherence to its internal regulations. Its procedures and policies are explained clearly on its website. Decisions may be appealed at various stages within the process of applying for promotion and tenure.

Office of Human Resources

The Office of Human Resources facilitates communication related to promotions, tenure, the negotiation processes, collective bargaining, and promotion or tenure decision appeals for non-teaching staff. It also educates and counsels employees in the areas of labor laws and fringe benefits.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Course-Related Matters

Course Availability

One way by which the UPR-RP has demonstrated integrity is by improving course availability. In that course catalogs and promotional materials make quasi-contractual offerings to students (see discussion of catalogs below), and in that the campus has a commitment to ensuring that students progress in their studies and graduate in a timely manner, it is important that courses be available as students need them. (See especially the discussion of problems faced by PECA students, below, in Chapter 5, Standard 13: "Basic Skills" and "Next Steps.") Progress has been made in ensuring that courses required for graduation and courses less frequently offered are more readily available. Now college deans can request that the DAA keep open those courses that have a high percentage of graduating seniors even if enrollment is below the desired minimum. Colleges create waiting lists for high-demand courses and then use them to petition the DAA that the requested high-demand course or a course-section be added. It should be noted, however, that minimum enrollment numbers can be especially challenging to achieve at the graduate level, even though the minimum number of students is usually lower than for undergraduate courses.

Grades

A substantial number of student grievances involve disputes over grades and/or grading criteria. The *UPR General Student Regulations* (Article 2.11) state that students have the right to a "fair and objective" evaluation. Article 2.12 states that students can review their evaluations in cases when the evaluations seem "not [to] respond to established or agreed-upon criteria." Academic Senate Certification 14, 1984-85 counsels that students unsatisfied with the course grade given them should discuss the matter with their professor. To facilitate informed responses to student inquiries about grades, professors are asked to keep students' records, including all the materials that were evaluated, for at least one semester after a course is completed.

If disagreement concerning grades persists after dialogue with a professor, then the student has the right to request, by the end of the next semester at the latest, that the department chair review the grade. The three parties will then, jointly, determine the best course of action for resolving the matter fairly and in a timely manner. Cases not resolved at the departmental level can be taken to the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the college level. In some cases, the DAA and the Student Ombudsman (see below) may be enlisted to help resolve these issues.

Resources to Help Students Solve Problems

Students have numerous options available for solving problems and addressing grievances. These are described in the *UPR General Regulations*, student handbooks, and many certifications. Some of the services that can assist students in solving problems are provided by the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, the Office of the Student Ombudsman, and the Office for Students with Disabilities. (See Chapter 6's discussion of Standard 11 for a detailed discussion of student services and grievance procedures).

Office of the Dean of Student Affairs

The DSA oversees the Office for Students with Disabilities, which provides services for students who require what the relevant laws call "reasonable accommodation," including adjustments that allow students with disabilities to take part in courses and campus life to the same extent as other students. This unit, in addition to ensuring compliance with laws governing the rights of students with special needs, also assists students when they believe that appropriate reasonable accommodation has not been made. The Student Affairs Offices in the various colleges inform students about applicable protocols and assist students in resolving their problems. A substantial number of problems never become formal grievances, as students can address them in these offices as well as at the departmental level.

Office of the Student Ombudsman

A description of the purpose of the Office of the Student Ombudsman is available on the webpage, as are the data showing how its services were used between 2011 and 2014 and examples of situations in which it can assist: review of grades, academic dishonesty, university administrative processes (e.g., housing, transcripts, financial aid, and library services), conflict resolution, violence and physical security, sexual harassment, and discrimination. A yearly report by the Ombudsman and meetings with the Chancellor help monitor and address these issues.

René Vargas was named Ombudsman in 2015. "We have taken a proactive role in promoting a culture of compliance with university regulations and policies," Vargas said recently, "requesting information from decision-makers, writing reports, meeting with key campus constituencies, and launching campaigns on students' rights and duties, harassment, discrimination, and gender violence."

The UPR-RP's commitment to fairly and effectively addressing student grievances is shown by its ongoing support for this unit and its standing policy of providing the Ombudsman with information and administrative personnel who can assist in resolving problems.

Classroom Ethics

All faculty members engaged in teaching are required to distribute a syllabus during the first week of classes. All syllabi include learning objectives that have been reviewed and approved at multiple levels (department, college or school, and Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs). Faculty members are also required to discuss academic honesty, how evaluation will take place, and the policy of reasonable accommodation. Institutional regulations require that professors acknowledge diverse perspectives and points of view in their discipline(s), including theoretical perspectives. In some colleges course-evaluation forms allow students to comment on whether diverse perspectives formed a part of the course. Students also evaluate the faculty members who teach them in terms of the respect demonstrated toward students.

Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activities

Circular Letter 17, 1989-90 establishes institutional policy on academic and scientific integrity. This document seeks to make faculty aware of the importance of ethical practices in scholarship and research. In addition to describing best practices, it identifies four instances of academic and scientific fraud: plagiarism, falsification of data, false attribution, and deception and dishonest conduct. The UPR-RP also maintains a policy ensuring that students who contribute to research or related projects will be formally recognized for that contribution. This is established by Article 2.14 of the *UPR Student Regulations*.

DEGI: Integrity in Research

Ensuring compliance with institutional, federal, and state rules and guidelines for ethical research is one of the responsibilities of the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. Officials in this unit have reviewed all regulations, procedures, and forms related to this matter, and are prepared to advise faculty and students.

Animal Care and Use

The UPR-RP supports the use of animal alternatives in research, but enforces regulations and best practices. The campus Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) ensures compliance with the Animal Welfare Act and the Public Health Service. The UPR-RP is registered with the United States Department of Agriculture under registration number 94-R-0103, as required by the AWA. Our campus also has an Animal Welfare Assurance number (A3258-01) with the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare, as required by PHS policy.

CIPSHI: Human Subjects

Effective policies and procedures in research involving human subjects are clear in the five-year report for DEGI that was prepared by our institutional review board, the Institutional Committee for the Protection of Human Beings in Research (**CIPSHI** in Spanish). This report, which details the committee's work for the period 2009–2013, provides information on recent applications for research involving human subjects that have been submitted (by both faculty and graduate and undergraduate students) (see Appendix 4.1: Human Subjects Applications by Academic Year). Researchers seeking approval take an online course from the University of Miami's Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative in conjunction with their application.

Administrative Practices

Intellectual Property

Policy related to intellectual property such as copyright and its protections is mandated by the Puerto Rico Council on Education (Certifications 93–140, Institutional Policy on Copyright), which urges each UPR unit to create an Intellectual Property Committee. Our Intellectual Property Committee offers orientations and other services with respect to author's rights, trademarks, patents, inventions, and institutional rules and policies. Orientation on copyright law is provided by numerous other offices, as well: the Center for Academic Excellence, DEGI, and the Library System Copyright Committee. Each year, the campus offers a number of workshops, lectures, seminars, and conferences to educate the academic community on the impact of intellectual-property law in academic, research, and administrative work.

Privacy

In compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, most notably the Buckley amendment, the UPR-RP maintains privacy policies and mechanisms to ensure that

academic records are secure and protected. A campus webpage promotes awareness of these issues through an interactive presentation of hypothetical cases in which the Buckley amendment influences how the institution responds to requests for access to student information by officials and agencies. A summary of the laws and regulations that apply in this area is distributed to incoming and transfer students during student orientations, as mandated by the Chancellor's office in Circular Letter 78-5 (1977). The Office of the Registrar and other units that deal with confidential student records have measures in place to limit access.

Disciplinary Board

The UPR-RP Disciplinary Board addresses only specific types of cases involving students; in general these are cases not severe enough to result in suspension or expulsion, as established in the *General Student Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico*. The Disciplinary Board must make recommendations to the Chancellor within thirty days of receiving cases.

Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest

The institution also educates and monitors the entire university community on ethical issues involving possible conflicts of interests in academic activities such as research, recruitment, faculty evaluation of various kinds, and staffing. The Office of the President sets institutional policy on the identification and management of conflicts of interest in research.

Dissemination of Information

General Policies

All campus-level documents related to our rules and regulations are available to the community. The Governing Board, Administrative Board, and Academic Senate maintain websites on which their regulations and certifications can be accessed via keyword searches. In the interest of transparency and open communication, Academic Senate meetings are (with some exceptions) open to the public, and they are also recorded so that audio recordings can later be consulted by interested parties.

The UPR-RP website includes a page linking to certain insular and federal laws and regulations. Here, students, faculty, non-teaching staff, and the public in general can find statements of university policy regarding eligibility for financial aid, published certifications, and use of social security numbers. Information in most of the aforementioned areas tends to be widely circulated and also available in brochures and documents that employees and students receive in orientations.

MSCHE Reports and Communications

Reports to MSCHE are available to the campus community and the wider public on the DAA webpage. That office also maintains a collection of these materials in hard-copy format. A separate webpage for this self-study was launched in 2014.

The DAA maintains close communications with MSCHE. It contacts MSCHE to report on administrative changes. It monitors information published by the accreditation agency, including the UPR-RP's institutional profile, and is also responsible for communication between the institution and the Puerto Rico Council on Education.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Ethical Standards and Academic Freedom

Ethical standards figure prominently in the institution's policies and practices. These enrich our academic endeavors, promote trust between colleagues and campus constituencies, and guide and inform the teaching-learning process. Policies at the UPR System level play an important role in providing support for academic and intellectual freedom, as do campus-level regulations and protocols.

Next Steps

Ethics Hours Requirements

The UPR-RP should continue to explore making the annual ethics requirements increasingly relevant and practical. For example, modules for distinct constituencies—employees interested in research, employees who work with first-year students, employees interested in discussing academic freedom—might be developed.

Assessment and Outcomes Information

Information about assessments of student-learning outcomes and other aspects of educational development and professional preparation should be centralized and posted on our website for access by the public. It should include graduation, retention, certification, and licensing exam pass rates, and other outcomes as appropriate to the programs offered.

STANDARD 10: FACULTY

I. INTRODUCTION

A qualified and committed faculty is one of the UPR-RP's main strengths in pursuing its mission. Our faculty members are experts in their fields of knowledge who continue to advance undergraduate and graduate teaching and mentoring, academic research initiatives, innovative curriculum development, institutional service, and civic and community outreach. Faculty members often represent the institution in its engagements with Puerto Rican society. Achievements over the last decade have boosted the institution's local and international prestige. Continuing our long-standing tradition of academic freedom and making contributions in numerous disciplines, our faculty members create new knowledge and responsible public service as an ethical imperative.

General Profile

Our faculty is distinguished by its solid academic credentials, professional expertise, and international experience. Many of our professors have earned degrees from the world's most prestigious universities, public and private institutions in the U.S., Latin America, and Europe. In the last decade, the percentage of faculty members with doctoral degrees and relevant discipline-based research has increased in response to initiatives to strengthen institutional development. This demonstrates perhaps most saliently how the institution has grown from a historically teaching-focused institution to one focused on competitive research integrated with undergraduate and graduate-level teaching.

As of September 2015, the UPR-RP has a total of 1,234 faculty members (Table 4.1). While a total of 1,138 (92%) faculty posts are dedicated primarily to teaching, faculty members also include researchers, librarians, counselors, social workers, and psychologists. Currently 120 faculty members serve in various administrative positions (as dean, assistant dean, department and program chair, etc.). Faculty members in administrative positions provide key leadership and service. Most continue to teach at least one class per semester on an *ad honorem* basis, in compliance with policies that aim to reduce costs.

Table 4.1: Number of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty

Type of Appointment	Number	%
Tenured and Tenure-track	744	60
Temporary	20	2
Special Appointment	6	0.5
Adjunct	340	28
Substitute	4	0.3
Executive Administration	120	10
Total Faculty	**1,234**	**100%**

Source: OPEP, September 2015

As shown in Table 4.2, of our full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty, over 70% of the total faculty obtained their highest degree outside Puerto Rico, including 11% in Europe, 3.6% in Latin America, and 55% in the U.S. This diversity enriches the exchange of ideas on campus and the experiences of our students. International faculty members and collaborative projects help fulfill the mission of the university by producing innovative, relevant research that takes into account the institution's Caribbean and Latin American context as well as the broader international community.

Table 4.2: Number of Full-Time Faculty with Highest Degree Outside Puerto Rico

Country	Number	%
Asia	4	0.50
Europe	87	11
Latin America	29	3.6
Other countries	8	1
USA	436	55
Total	**564**	**71.1**

Source: OPEP, AY 2014-15

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Recruitment

The UPR-RP recruits talented and competitive faculty through a rigorous policy-regulated process. Faculty are sought out who demonstrate a strong commitment to the profession and an ethical imperative to combine first-rate scholarship with our mission as a public institution.

Specific criteria for faculty recruitment are set forth in the UPR General Regulations (Article 43, sections V and VII) and are further defined in numerous circular letters and certifications. The doctoral degree or the terminal degree in the discipline is required for tenure-track and tenured hiring. Personnel committees at the department or program and college levels further define recruitment criteria according to their needs and the campus development plan (see Dean of Academic Affairs Circular Letter 1, 1994-95; Dean of Academic Affairs Circular Letter 9, 2003-04). The recruitment process is initiated upon the President's authorization to hire. Announcements are then published in newspapers, pertinent academic journals and relevant online resources, and professional publications. The unit Personnel Committee then screens and interviews candidates and transmits its preferences to the unit's dean or director, who then informs the DAA for its approval. Hiring is completed with a contractual letter (further explained below) defining expectations for the faculty member's performance and academic output in the period preceding review for tenure.

Recent Hiring

Tenure-Track Lines

Over the four-year period 2011-15, the UPR President authorized the hiring of 57 tenure-track positions at the UPR-RP. Of these, 24 came in FY 2012-13 and 33 in FY 2014-15. These positions were authorized for 10 different units, as shown in Appendix 4.2. In recent years, decisions concerning which areas to recruit for have taken into consideration faculty retirements, area demand, and the relevance of a new position to a university committed to all the major disciplines and to new interdisciplinary ventures. Positions in areas where faculty are needed for required courses have been prioritized.

For the 2015-16 budget, hiring for 25 tenure-track positions has been authorized by UPR Central Administration. Careful multi-layered coordination (i.e., at the levels of department, college, and Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs) is necessary to ensure that these new faculty members are placed in the areas of most urgent need while long-term goals are also considered.

Retiring Faculty

Another issue to be considered in the allotment of tenure lines is the large number of pending retirements. As indicated in Table 4.3 (see columns F & G), 36% of our tenured and tenure-track teaching faculty have more than 25 years of service. These professors are likely to retire in the near future. Even higher percentages of faculty with 25 or more years are found in Law (58%), Communication (56%), Planning (38%), and Education (40%).

Table 4.3: Number of Tenured and Tenure-Track Teaching Faculty by Years of Service and College or School

A: 5 years or less; B: 5–10 years; C: 10–15 years; D: 15–20 years; E: 20–25 years; F: 25–30 years; G: 30+ years

Unit	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total
Office of Dean of Academic Affairs					1			1
EGCTI	2	1	1		2		1	7
School of Communication*		1	3	3		4	5	16
Graduate School of Planning*	1	1	1	1			3	8
School of Architecture	1	4		5		2	2	15
School of Law*	1	5	3			4	10	24
College of Business Administration	3	3	10	11	11	4	13	57
College of Natural Sciences	11	18	17	15	17	19	19	114
College of Social Sciences	11	7	13	15	14	26	14	96
College of Education*	5	7	13	18	24	23	18	102
College of General Studies	1	12	15	27	40	30	17	139
College of Humanities	9	6	23	14	14	18	16	106
Total	**45** **7%**	**65** **9%**	**99** **14%**	**104** **15%**	**123** **18%**	**130** **19%**	**118** **17%**	**684**

*** Units with a higher than average number of faculty with 25 or more years of service**
Source: OPEP, October 2015

Adjuncts

Like most institutions of higher education in Puerto Rico and the U.S., our faculty includes adjunct professors and instructors. Our adjunct professors are qualified faculty, with a minimum of MA/MS and often PhD degrees and academic publications in their disciplines, and their appointments are vetted and approved at the level of the department, college or school, and the Dean of Academic Affairs. Adjuncts, like their tenure-track colleagues, are subject to peer evaluation and student evaluation. Full-time adjuncts receive health benefits and significantly higher compensation than their part-time counterparts. Numerous groups and bodies—among them the UPR-RP Academic Senate, the Puerto Rican Association of University Professors (**APPU** in Spanish), and student groups—have expressed concern about the labor conditions, remuneration, and overall lack of job security for adjuncts.

In AY 2014-15 adjuncts numbered about 274, full-time and part-time. Full-time adjuncts teach 12 credits or more per semester, while part-timers teach fewer than 12 credits. In October 2015 (AY 2015-16), our faculty included 183 full-time and 157 part-time adjuncts, 28% of the total faculty. Comparing these numbers with figures from previous years shows a general decrease from about 40%, in part due to recent budgetary constraints. According to federal data, the distribution is almost the opposite in the continental U.S., with full-time tenure-track professors only 20.35% of total faculty, down from 45% in 1975. This means that nearly 80% of the teaching faculty in stateside institutions are now adjuncts.

Though some adjuncts, such as those whose careers are in professions outside academia, prefer the flexibility, for the majority this is widely recognized as a crisis in higher education. This growing practice in higher education has also been recognized as a threat to academic freedom.

The UPR-RP remains relatively strong in academic freedom, one of the bulwarks for intellectual innovation and engaged public service, but future increases in adjunct hiring could adversely affect these areas.

Fair Employment Practices

Contractual Letters

Since productive faculty and academic planning play a crucial role in our ability to achieve our mission, in 2004 the UPR-RP began to require contractual letters for new tenure-track faculty. These letters generally specify a minimum number of publications, the general teaching duties, and expected contributions in the area of service that the faculty member is expected to fulfill during the probationary period. Initially these letters were not standardized and concerns were expressed, especially with respect to clarity of terminology and differences between one letter and another. In response, guidelines and models were developed to ensure consistency and clarity (Administrative Board Certification 17, 2012-13). Currently, contractual letters, signed by the newly-hired professor and the college dean with the approval of the Dean of Academic Affairs, establish clear institutional expectations regarding scholarly production (research or creative activity) and teaching performance in the five-year period prior to consideration for tenure. Contractual letters also state the support to be provided for junior faculty (e.g., release time, research assistance, and travel funds for attending conferences).

Most tenure-track faculty who meet the requirements specified in this letter by the fifth year of uninterrupted service, and who have obtained favorable evaluations, are recommended for tenure. (See Dean of Academic Affairs Circular Letter 3, 2003-04 and Academic Senate Certification 38, 2012-13, New Policy for all Graduate Programs).

International Hiring

Tenure-track recruitments of international faculty have been streamlined by a comprehensive policy instituted a decade ago and revised in 2012. This policy clarified the role played by the campus in procedures for securing permanent-resident status for foreign professors. The recruitment policy for faculty in tenure-track positions and the sponsorship of permanent resident status for non-immigrant foreigners were amended to include category EB2, which requires demonstration that the candidate is ideal for the job and was selected competitively and according to all relevant regulations.

Recent Promotions

Due to budget shortfalls, several cohorts of professors had their promotions postponed, in some cases for several years. This happened even though these faculty members completed all of the necessary requirements and were recommended. Certifications issued by the Governing Board regulated the process to ensure that their promotions were awarded once the needed funds were available. Fortunately, this process has concluded (we have no waiting lists), and the campus is currently up to date on promotions.

Formal Education

In 1997, the UPR-RP Administrative Board (in Certification 110, 1997-98) endorsed a policy requiring all tenure-track faculty to hold a doctoral degree or the recognized terminal degree in the discipline. This requirement was later extended to all campuses in the UPR System (Board of Trustees Certification 145, 2005-06). Almost 10 years later, the number of faculty members with doctorates has increased. A self-study in 2003-04 showed that 73.3% of the faculty had

doctorates; by 2010, some 81% of tenure-track and tenured faculty held doctoral degrees, an increase of 5% over 2006. As of October 2015, some 84% of tenure-track and tenured faculty held doctoral degrees.

Integration of New Faculty

The institution works to ensure that new professors are integrated into scholarly and academic activities. All new adjunct and tenure-track hires are required by Administrative Board Certification 101, 2000-01 to attend various orientation seminars on issues related to research, teaching, service, and other institutional priorities. They also must attend a minimum of four workshops sponsored by the Center for Academic Excellence or other units during their probationary period.

Academic Load

The academic load at the UPR-RP is the equivalent of 12 credit-hours per week. Credit-hours may include teaching, research, thesis/dissertation supervision, supervision of practicums, institutional service such as administrative positions, and special institutional committee work.

Practices and policies related to the distribution of academic load vary throughout the campus and in comparison to other UPR campuses. The Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs has worked on instituting a more uniform set of criteria, as evidenced by Governing Board Certification 105, 2014-15. The UPR-RP Academic Senate has objected to the definition of academic load as presented in this certification, arguing that in a complex educational institution, practices do not have to be defined in the same way on all campuses. In addition, professors raise questions about the reduction of credit hours for time-consuming tasks such as the supervision of future teachers and other types of professional training. Meanwhile, until final decisions are reached, each college is following past practice, under the supervision of the Dean of Academic Affairs.

Faculty Responsibilities

General Guidelines and Regulations

The institution disseminates the standards and procedures related to faculty functions; these include the UPR General Regulations (Articles 64 and 65) and the Professor's Manual. The General Regulations list the responsibilities of faculty members and establish guidelines for academic load. The Professor's Manual addresses topics such as general faculty duties, responsibilities of faculty holding administrative positions, rights regarding students and the institution, and guidelines for relations with students in the classroom.

Curriculum Development

Faculty members design, maintain, and update the UPR-RP curriculum through curriculum committees active in all of our colleges and schools. They review, assess, update, and evaluate courses and programs on an ongoing basis. They also propose new courses and programs, which are reviewed and endorsed at the levels of the department and college or school. New programs are reviewed and approved by the Academic Senate and the Administrative Board.

Research and Creative Work

Significant efforts have been made to guarantee first-rate research, scholarship, and creative work at our institution. As indicated by the UPR-RP Mission Statement and our strategic plan,

research and creative work are institutional priorities. In Academic Senate Certification 152, 2000-01, both were recognized as essential to the institution's vision of higher education.

Diverse research productivity is a hallmark of our faculty profile. Faculty members contribute to their disciplines on a regular basis in the form of peer-reviewed articles and chapters in books, authored and edited books, edited journal issues, academic presentations at local and international conferences, and creative work. In addition, the UPR-RP publishes numerous academic journals that are edited by faculty members. Most are peer-reviewed and several have been internationally recognized for their scholarship.

The institution stands out as the island's leader in the area of creative work as well. In addition to making international contributions in their respective fields, faculty members in Fine Arts, Drama, Music, Art History, and related areas play a pivotal role in the arts in Puerto Rico. Our faculty includes numerous recognized novelists, poets, and essayists. Their work is essential to the ongoing professional development of Puerto Rico's artists, actors, dancers, musicians, writers, and poets.

Our faculty members regularly take part in international research projects, academic conferences, and professional meetings outside Puerto Rico. Between 2009 and 2014, some 936 faculty members traveled to more than 25 countries under campus sponsorship. Over 10% (119) of these instances of travel were part of collaborative agreements with institutions abroad.

Service

"Service" is one of the main areas reviewed for promotion and tenure. Service can be classified into two general categories: service within the campus and community service. Service within the institution often takes the form of participation in committees, the Academic Senate, curriculum committees, etc., and the organization of events and activities. Community service usually takes the form of work to enhance the social, economic, and educational conditions of Puerto Rican society. In this area, faculty members participate actively in a wide range of projects, such as providing free legal services to those who cannot afford legal representation, advising communities in the construction and design of housing and other structures, teaching at jails and prisons, mentoring young people in collaborative projects with public schools, and so on.

Support for Research and Creative Work

Course Release-Time

Course release is granted in support of faculty research activity. Applications require a detailed research proposal, and a progress report is required at the end of each semester. In some colleges and schools the number of course releases is influenced by retirements and student demand for courses; to be more specific, faculty sometimes find it more difficult to be awarded a release in situations of high enrollment or in situations when colleagues have retired, leaving the program tightly or under-staffed.

Graduate Programs

An ambitious and comprehensive campus-wide policy regulating all graduate programs, Academic Senate Certification 38, 2012-13, was adopted in 2015. Among the new requirements is that professors teaching at the graduate level must present peer-reviewed publications in their respective fields every three to five years. Changes are also required in the normal course load: 6 credit-hours of teaching and six credit-hours of research per semester. These regulations have

been difficult to implement across all colleges, departments, and disciplines, although progress has been made. So far, the College of Humanities has implemented this provision, while it has been a longtime practice of the College of Natural Sciences. Other colleges have not implemented it, since it has budgetary and course assignment implications. Certification 38 does not address the need to systematically provide course release to professors who teach at the undergraduate level and are also expected to publish research.

Funding for Research and Improving Teaching

The UPR-RP operates the Institutional Fund for Research (**FIPI** in Spanish), which provides funding for professors who are initiating research projects. Over the last six years, FIPI has funded more than 50 research projects.

Significant economic incentives are available for faculty in specific colleges. For instance, for newly hired faculty in the College of Natural Sciences, seed-funding upwards of $150,000 have been made available. The Center for Sponsored Programs and Entrepreneurial Initiatives provides all faculty members with access to support services that assist them in planning, applying for, and managing external grants. Faculty members also have access to funding from the Chancellor's office and the DAA through the Fund to Improve Teaching (often used for traveling to and participating in conferences and colloquia); a fund for visiting professors; and funds targeting particular colleges. These funding sources have been for the most part consistent, but they have not been as plentiful in recent years. Many faculty members subsidize professional travel out of their own pockets.

Additional Financial Support

While faculty in every college on our campus once enjoyed the promise of regularly granted, albeit competitive, year-long sabbaticals, no sabbaticals have been awarded since the AY 2009-10, due to the financial crisis. An effort was made in 2014, and all submitted proposals were evaluated and ranked by individual colleges and schools and by the Dean of Academic Affairs, but the necessary funding proved unavailable.

Sabbaticals are an area of concern among faculty. Many professors believe that they need to be re-instituted in order for the university to continue to grow as a research institution. Some colleges, such as the College of Humanities, have awarded "mini-sabbaticals," leaves of one semester, on a very limited basis. Many professors would appreciate alternative options being made available in the near future, even if these do not involve leaves of a full academic year.

International Collaboration and Dialogue

Our internationalization efforts include both bringing international scholars to campus and increasing faculty participation in international projects. Accomplishments toward this end have been notable. Between 2005 and 2009, the UPR-RP hosted 478 visiting scholars from more than 30 countries worldwide, including the U.S.; and from 2009 to 2014, the campus hosted 471. Also between 2009 and 2014, 206 professors visited our campus through standing agreements with other institutions, representing some 30% of total visiting professors during that period. Achievements in this area contribute to the vibrancy of intellectual activity and cultural events on campus while promoting engagements with new colleagues and communities.

Additional campus programs support UPR-RP faculty members taking part in international collaborations and visiting professors involved in projects on campus. Among these is the Visiting Professors Fund, a fund allowing programs, colleges, and schools to host visiting

professors. While some visitors have come as research collaborators, others have given academic talks, assisted in professional training, and led seminars. These efforts could be strengthened by simplifying the paperwork required for processing these visits and ensuring that honoraria are promptly processed.

All UPR System campuses depend on Central Administration to aid their internationalization processes by signing international agreements. By law, the President of the University is the only officer authorized to enter into specific agreements with international bodies. Administrative processes requiring timely communication between Central Administration and the UPR-RP should be improved.

Professional Development and Support

The campus offers various activities and programs aimed at faculty professional development and support, which in turn affects successful promotion and retention. These include graduate research assistants, research forums and conferences, financial aid for faculty completing doctorates, technological assistance and computer-use workshops, and support for publication of research. Some of these (e.g., travel funds and research assistants) have been affected by recent budget reductions, but funding is granted whenever possible.

Teaching Improvement Program

The Teaching Improvement Program, which is for faculty presentations at international academic events, is administered and funded by the Office of the DAA, DEGI, and individual colleges seeking to promote the mobility of local and foreign professors/researchers. Between 2005 and 2009, some 749 UPR-RP faculty members benefited from this program.

The Center for Academic Excellence (**CEA**)

The CEA conducts a series of activities that include workshops called Didactic Fridays in which training and orientation is provided in such areas as proposal-writing, learning assessment, and the incorporation of technology into the classroom. This unit organizes other activities as well, and as statistics in Table 4.4 show, they are well-attended by faculty.

Table 4.4: CEA Activities and Participation, 2010-15

Academic Year	Number of Activities	Number of Participants
2010-11	87	1,175
2011-12	94	1,308
2012-13	145	1,425
2013-14	76	1,420
2014-15	119	2,446

Source: CEA, October 2015

Faculty Resource Network

A paid membership with the Faculty Resource Network at New York University has continued, with ample participation from faculty. Faculty members take part in specialized summer seminars and winter sessions.

Faculty Evaluation

Peer-Review Process

Evaluation of teaching personnel is a peer-review process that applies to tenure-track and adjunct faculty (UPR General Regulations Articles 45 and 46, and principles set forth in various certifications). Evaluation seeks to measure faculty performance in terms of the goals defined by the UPR-RP Mission, the strategic plan, and individual programs (in the contractual letters mentioned above).

Based on department personnel-committee evaluations, the college personnel committee makes recommendations to the dean on promotions, tenure, and, when available, sabbaticals. Administrative Board Certification 88, 2005-06 states that to obtain tenure or promotion, a candidate must be evaluated in four areas: teaching, research or creation, dissemination or publications, and service. For both tenure and the first promotion, fulfillment of the contractual letter is required.

Student Evaluations

Student evaluation of professors is mandated by faculty-evaluation guidelines contained in Academic Senate Certification 141, 2013-14. All units have developed instruments based on the evaluation form included in the aforementioned certification and have established a process used by students to evaluate their courses and professors each semester. Questions on professors' effectiveness in the classroom are included as part of the evaluation of professors for promotion and tenure; however, the complete results of student evaluations are not submitted. Recently the Academic Senate approved criteria that set standards for student evaluations, including online public dissemination of results.

Post-Tenure Review

The institution's system of post-tenure review is under development. A recent significant step forward in this process was Academic Senate Certification 113, 2014-15. This policy document, which applies to all faculty members (regardless of rank, years of service, or area of teaching), seeks to establish uniformity across evaluation practices. One of its key provisions (Section D) states that evaluation shall be continuous and extend beyond tenure and attainment of the highest available rank. Four general areas of evaluation are established: quality of teaching; research, creative work, and dissemination of scholarship; professional recognition; and dedication to university service. In addition, the certification requires that personnel committees review and update their evaluation instruments and procedures.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Faculty Functions and Responsibilities

Faculty functions and duties are clearly and usefully defined in the Professor's Manual and the *UPR General Regulations* and are discussed at mandatory orientations for new hires. Faculty responsibilities are outlined in detail in official policy documents. These documents establish standards to be met in the areas of teaching, productivity, and institutional service.

Recruitment, Promotion, and Tenure

Recruitment, promotion, and tenure procedures are clearly defined and published, and are based on the principle of competitive merit. Specific requirements are outlined in contractual letters for all new hires.

Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

The UPR-RP provides a diverse range of support and incentives for intellectual creation and faculty development. Among these are teaching-load reductions, research assistants, internal funds, support for external funds, leaves, seminars, training workshops, and a variety of professional publications. Research commitments are clearly defined and have multiple venues of support and dissemination, including teaching and research-oriented community work.

Internationalization

The UPR-RP has demonstrated commitment to the internationalization of faculty and the campus in a variety of ways and with notable achievement and has made plans to meet the challenge of strengthening this strategic goal in times of fiscal constraint.

Next Steps

Recruitment and Hiring

Campus leadership should continue to develop and update its recruitment plans to ensure that the UPR-RP has a qualified faculty. This will have to be done in the context of pending retirements and projected budgets.

Release Time and Sabbaticals

Certification 38 provides ample release time for faculty teaching at the graduate level. Planning and budgetary considerations should continue to make release time a priority, and sabbaticals, at least on a semester basis, should be implemented as the budget allows. Both will allow the campus to remain competitive in faculty recruitment and retention.

Working Across Programs, Colleges, and Schools

Uniform campus-wide mechanisms should be instituted for the support and retention of faculty members who consider it important to their intellectual life and research to teach in more than one department, college, or school. Faculty interested in doing so should be able to do so. Such cooperation is crucial to both the cultivation of interdisciplinary perspectives and meeting the needs of our academic programs. This cooperation can assist the institution in grappling with the fiscal reality of fewer tenure track positions, taking into account changes in disciplines, and increasing faculty members' job satisfaction.

Teaching Awards

Yearly teaching awards could be instituted at the level of college or school, where they do not currently exist, and at the campus level. Teaching awards could be weighed in assessing promotions. (They could be based on input from students and can be coordinated with Student Council groups for each college and school.)

STANDARD 11: EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

I. INTRODUCTION

The UPR-RP has enriched and strengthened its academic offerings during the past decade, as suggested by its current classification by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as an institution of "high research activity" and our commitment to the "integrated vision of knowledge" expressed in our mission. Several developments attest to the vitality of our academic offerings and the work done to ensure that these offerings are improved over time. Among these are implementation of the restructured bachelor's degree (Academic Senate Certification 46, 2005-06), establishment of a system for the assessment of student learning (2007), approval of new regulations for graduate studies (Certification 38, 2012-13), evaluation of undergraduate and graduate programs, and accreditation of almost all programs and services eligible for accreditation (2004-14).

The UPR-RP currently offers 70 undergraduate programs and 62 graduate programs. Among these are 10 different undergraduate degrees in Business Administration, 1 in Environmental Design, 8 in Science, and 26 in various disciplines in the Humanities, General Studies, Communication, and the Social Sciences. The College of Education offers 25 undergraduate degrees: 23 in Arts and 2 in Science. All academic programs have mission, vision, and objective statements written in harmony with those of the campus. These are updated according to the needs of programs and the periodic revision processes described below.

At the graduate level, there are 10 general master's degree designations (in Arts, Sciences, Business Administration, Education, Architecture, Rehabilitation and Counseling, Social Work, Information Sciences and Technology, Urban Planning, and Law), each with a variety of specializations, for a total of 37 different degrees conferred. Twelve PhD programs operate across the Humanities, Business Administration, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, and 3 EdDs are offered in the College of Education. In addition, there are 4 post-MA certificates and 6 post-BA certificates in the Humanities and Information Sciences and Technology; most are designed as continuing education or as a means of attracting potential students to our graduate programs.

Many students enroll on this campus because of its extensive and competitive academic offerings. Here they have the opportunity to pursue majors that are not available at any other institution of higher education on the island.

Course Catalogs

UPR-RP course catalogs are available electronically on the Registrar's webpage. Course catalogs are periodically reviewed and approved by the Puerto Rican Council on Education, which licenses the institution at the system level and authorizes publication of the catalog. Our undergraduate catalog, which was updated in June of 2015, contains course descriptions as well as other pertinent information, such as a list of degrees awarded by the campus, academic requirements, institutional policies, and evaluation and complaint procedures. Students access much of the catalog information through a number of forums, including departmental and program webpages, flyers, promotional materials, and semester course offerings posted on bulletin boards.

Restructured Bachelor's Degree

For over a decade the campus engaged in a process of reflection and dialogue regarding the needs and priorities of the curriculum, especially that of the bachelor's degree programs and general education requirements.

After the approval of the restructured bachelor's degree in 2006 (Academic Senate Certification 46, 2005-06), the Academic Senate certified that all of the 70 active undergraduate programs had completed curricular revisions to address the student profile. Some of the programs complied with the changes through a system of minor modifications; others made significant changes. Most bachelor's degrees now require around 120 credits, ensuring that students who maintain steady progress in their coursework can comfortably complete their degree within the established four or five-year degree period. This effort demonstrates major progress toward the implementation of a new undergraduate curriculum, as recommended by MSCHE in its feedback to the UPR-RP self-study report of 2005.

Specific changes to the General Education component are discussed in Chapter 5.

Creation of a Graduating Student Profile

Our Graduating Student Profile, stated in terms of student learning outcomes, was created and has guided all of our educational offerings. As explained in Chapter 5, below, it consists of 11 points of personal, social, and intellectual development that undergraduate students should have mastered by the time of their graduation from the institution.

Extracurricular and Co-Curricular Activities

Our curricular offerings are strengthened with an ample co-curricular program of internationally prestigious lecturers, activities, and workshops held throughout the year at the campus level and in all colleges and schools. The calendar of activities is posted on the UPR-RP website or on individual colleges' websites. Our extracurricular activities include opportunities for independent learning and research—at both the undergraduate and graduate levels—as well as study-abroad programs, student organizations, sports, and other activities. The "universal hour," a weekly ninety-minute period (Wednesdays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:50 p.m.) during which no classes or academic commitments may be scheduled, is reserved for extra and co-curricular activities.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Transcending the Boundaries of Specialization

The restructuring of the BA prioritized the need to make requirements and offerings in colleges and schools more flexible, so that students would be able to acquire a solid foundation in their area(s) of specialization while combining different areas of study for interdisciplinary training. Today, students have the option of moving between colleges and departments, creating course combinations that meet their academic needs and goals and reflect their interests. For instance, they may combine Chemistry with Art, or Mathematics with Music, or Physics with Literature. The course combinations available to students introduce them to interdisciplinary questions and multiple approaches to knowledge.

Academic Programs: Creation and Evaluation

At the system level, the UPR Board of Trustees approved Certification 80, 2005-06, Guidelines for the Establishment of New Academic Programs in the University of Puerto Rico, for preparing

and managing new academic programs. From that time forward, all departments or schools have been required to follow these guidelines when preparing and submitting new program proposals. Proposals must include a strategy for achieving accreditation.

To meet the high academic standards set in its mission, the UPR-RP has established processes for the creation and evaluation of its educational programs. The DAA has the responsibility of planning, orchestrating, and managing these activities at the undergraduate level. The DEGI is responsible for promoting and coordinating graduate studies and research. Both offices are charged with overseeing curriculum revision and self-assessment in our academic programs.

The DEGI promotes excellence in research and creation through the continuous assessment of research centers while coordinating and supervising periodic evaluations of graduate programs in order to ensure accreditation. These efforts are part of the institution's overall commitment to increase research productivity and creative work and to develop an institutional culture of assessment and evaluation.

Bachelor's Degrees

At the undergraduate level, emphasis has been placed on self-assessment rather than on the creation of new programs. In this context, the UPR approved a set of regulations for the periodic review of all academic programs, in order to assess the effectiveness of most curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular experiences. Thus, Board of Trustees Certification 43, 2006-07 establishes that programs must be evaluated every five years. It also requires that programs that are periodically assessed by outside accrediting agencies align their evaluation process with both institutional objectives and accreditation requirements.

All undergraduate programs have completed self-assessments that have allowed them to identify strengths and weaknesses, define or redefine goals, design suitable academic offerings, and address any problems and shortcomings they identify. This process has resulted in the creation and promotion of curricular sequences that students may take in order earn second degrees or complete double majors, minors, and professional certifications, as mandated by Board of Trustees Certification 69, 2013-14.

BA Evaluation Process

The DAA designed an evaluation form on which undergraduate programs summarize their progress reports and examine data on program effectiveness based on enrollment, admissions, retention and graduation rates, infrastructure, human and financial resources, their mission, goals, and objectives, the Graduating Student Profile, and the program's relevance. Programs to be accredited submit copies of the self-study reports presented to their accreditation agencies and the evaluation reports that the agencies have sent back to them.

We have so far completed the first (2008-09) and second (2009-10) evaluation cycles. When the second evaluation cycle ended, a total of 74% of the programs slated for evaluation had been evaluated. Since then, most undergraduate programs have concluded some type of self-assessment process.

During AY 2014-15, the DAA compiled summaries of the findings contained in each report it had received, including information on strengths, limitations, challenges, and recommendations for addressing areas of shortcomings the programs themselves had identified. In addition, elements shared by several programs across the campus were identified. The third evaluation cycle is about to begin.

Graduate Studies

At the graduate level, several programs have been created within the last six years, such as the master's and doctoral degrees in Environmental Sciences (MS, 2009; PhD, 2010). Other programs recently approved by the Academic Senate and awaiting approval by the Office of the President or the Puerto Rico Council on Education are the graduate programs in Management and Development of Cooperatives (MA, 2013, Urban Studies; MA, PhD, 2014; Academic Senate Certification 53, 2014-15), and Accounting (MACC, 2014). An online MLS program in Information Sciences and Technology is pending discussion in the Graduate Studies and Research Council (2015) before submission to the Academic Senate.

The DEGI oversees the creation and evaluation of all graduate programs in response to the university's goals and strategic plan. The graduate-level Academic Program Creation Flowchart provides a guide to the approval process. To expedite its evaluation of new programs, the DEGI has also created a set of guidelines, the *Guide for the Evaluation of Proposals to Establish Graduate Programs*, by which all new programs and proposals are evaluated. These guidelines comply with Certification 80 requirements as well as those of the MSCHE, the Academic Senate, and Certification 38, Academic Policy for Graduate Studies at the UPR-RP, 2012-13. Once a proposal is approved by the university, the Puerto Rico Council on Education, and the MSCHE, each new program submits to the DEGI Office of Academic Affairs an annual report on its implementation until the program's first class has graduated. Incorporating feedback from the DEGI, the program submits the final document to the DEGI, which in turn submits it to the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs of the UPR System.

The DEGI is preparing a proposal to revise some Certification 38 stipulations, including the unimplemented new grade scale (with a maximum of 4.3), the requirement that 30-credit master's degree programs contain 9 credit-hours of freely chosen electives, and the evaluation of graduate faculty.

Program Evaluation

Graduate program evaluation processes are also governed by Certification 43, and in cases where changes are substantial, the institutional policies and procedures established in Certification 80 are followed. In this context, the DEGI designed and implemented the Graduate Program Evaluation Plan and the Graduate Student Learning Assessment Plan. The objective is to provide graduate programs with a gauge by which to identify strengths, recognize areas requiring attention, and develop strategies leading to stronger performance.

Between 2004 and 2009, all of the UPR-RP's graduate programs successfully completed their program evaluation as required. The most recent cycle began in August of 2015 and is following the requirements set forth by Academic Senate Certification 38, which presents guidelines for updating offerings and requirements and a structure for evaluating colleges that offer graduate courses, while taking into account the international context, the "extremely important changes taking place in graduate education," projections of the number, profile, and needs of potential graduate students, alternative areas of study and degree levels, and other ways in which these programs might be offered in the future, "including accelerated and distance programs."

The implementation of Certification 38, effective for graduate students admitted as of January 2013 (and meant to improve graduate program time-to-degree, retention, and graduation rates) has already brought about curricular revisions and proposals for curricular changes from a number of graduate programs. These revisions include changes in curricular sequences and

graduate courses and the creation of joint and double degree programs offered with institutions on and off the island. Graduate Committees have also addressed issues regarding specific programs' mission and goals, curricula and requirements, admissions, enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.

Information Management

The UPR-RP profile has evolved over the past decade, a result of initiatives to improve and update our services and academic programs. Our programs have completed a thorough evaluation process, and relevant concepts, such as learning outcomes assessment, are firmly rooted in our institutional practices. This has helped us to amass a large amount of qualitative and quantitative data that can be used to identify the strengths and needs of each program and the areas that should be reexamined as part of the curriculum revisions that all programs are required to complete every five years.

As suggested in Chapter 2's discussion of Institutional Assessment, in order to facilitate effective decision-making, this information should be systematically analyzed and disseminated. Currently, OPEP provides data about each academic program, usually in response to requests. The institution should develop a comprehensive and centralized data management process in the DAA and DEGI so that program data are closely monitored and yearly evaluation reports guaranteed. Annual review will help pinpoint both effective programs and those that require immediate attention. This would be a responsible way to demonstrate the effective use of public resources while also ensuring that students have access to programs that are continuously renewed and updated.

Accreditation of Services

In maintaining overall institutional quality and competitiveness, the UPR-RP promotes the evaluation and accreditation of all eligible services. These efforts enhance compliance with our mission statement, which calls upon the university community to develop innovative programs in, among other areas, community service and continuing education. Accreditation of services has promoted a better understanding of international standards and practices and approaches to improving institutional performance.

Accreditation has taken place in specific areas important to the UPR-RP's endeavors, including museum and library services and preschool education. Our Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art, was accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. It holds one of the most complete collections of archaeological artifacts from the Caribbean in the Antilles and is the only accredited museum in a Caribbean institution of higher education. In the case of library services, the Association of Colleges and Research Libraries carried out a specialized evaluation based on its inventory of best practices. Extensive evaluations were completed for all campus unit libraries, and they were certified by the association. This initiative has led to motivated professional cooperation that has, in turn, enriched the contributions that our services make to student support and our undergraduate and graduate programs. Three centers that serve preschool children have also been accredited, for example the National Association for the Education of Young Children accredited the Center for Preschool Development.

Our strategic plan's emphasis on research is the context for campus efforts to ensure the dissemination of scholarship. Campus journals are now registered in the Regional Cooperative Online Information System for Scholarly Journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal (LATINDEX). Founded in 1995, LATINDEX is an online regional cooperative

network that offers members the opportunity to disseminate the product of research across the region and throughout the Hispanophone culture. Inclusion requires compliance with scholarly standards and editorial practices. The UPR-RP has 26 journals registered in the catalog and 36 in its directory. This initiative has given research at the UPR-RP a higher level of visibility and international exposure.

Assessment of Student Learning

Program creation and evaluation at the UPR-RP is carried out in the context of our mission and shaped by the assessment of student learning. Aware of the need to assess what and how students are learning in order to guarantee the quality of our programs and educational offerings, the Academic Senate endorsed the *Student Learning Evaluation Plan* (Certification 68, 2005-06), and entrusted the DAA with its implementation. In turn, the DAA created the Office for the Evaluation of Student Learning (OEAE), institutionalized by the Chancellor through Circular Letter 1, 2014-15. This office supervises student assessment for both the undergraduate and graduate levels. As discussed in the next chapter, the design and implementation of the Student Learning Evaluation Plan demonstrates that the UPR-RP recognizes that monitoring and improving teaching and student-learning outcomes are key to strengthening the institutional culture of continuous evaluation of all our educational offerings.

Regular Courses and Alternative Educational Options

Regular Courses

Undergraduate and graduate courses are framed within the philosophy and objectives of the academic programs under which they are created. Generally, these are organized in areas of study that conclude in specific academic degrees conferred by the university. Courses offered in the UPR System are assigned course-codes within a uniform coding system that allows them to be identified on any campus according to the academic program to which they belong, their subject, level, and sequence. This coding system serves to speed up processes such as coordinated intercampus transfers, equivalencies, validations, and substitutions.

Governing Board guidelines (Certification 112, 2014-15) stress the importance of using various instructional strategies in teaching and learning: from lecture and class discussion to laboratories, clinical or practical instruction, supervised research projects, and computer-assisted instruction. Course objectives must be expressed in terms of “learning outcomes” that can be measured and assessed, thus providing the basis for complying with the requirements for the assessment of student learning. The course syllabus serves as a guide to inform students not just of the course content, but of its objectives and methodology as well, and is required for registering and codifying all courses in the UPR.

Innovations in Academic Offerings

Because the UPR-RP offers students a broad spectrum of academic alternatives, it has made available the options of a second degree, double majors, and minors. The priority given to innovations in curricular sequences, joint degrees, and program creation proposals keeps the university at the cutting edge, so that its future graduates may be competitive in their professional endeavors.

For example, several joint programs have been approved and are now operating at the graduate level (JD/Business Administration, JD/Public Administration, JD/MD). In addition, certificate programs are offered as continued education (English, Linguistics, Translation, Library

Sciences). The recent proposal for the first BYM (simultaneous bachelor's and master's degrees) submitted jointly by the College of General Studies and the Graduate School of Planning, is yet another example of curricular proposals that include joint degrees.

The Intercollege and Interdisciplinary Gender and Women's Studies Program, created in 1999-2000 (Board of Trustees Certification 123), is among the curricular sequences transcending departmental boundaries available to students. Also, in AYs 2007-08, the Interdisciplinary Studies Program (**PREI** in Spanish) inaugurated a new track in Creative Writing. A more recent interdisciplinary venture approved by the Academic Senate establishes a collaboration between the UPR-RP College of Humanities and the Medical Sciences Campus. This minor in Medical Humanities and Health has been highly praised as an important initiative, recognized in its inception by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant award.

Internationalization of Educational Offerings

To illustrate its commitment to internationalization and the diversification of educational offerings, the UPR-RP has incorporated international subjects and experiences into the curriculum. For instance, in 2010 the DAA and the College of Humanities approved a Joint Proposal for an International Experience Curricular Sequence (Academic Senate Certification 49, 2009-10), which is open for all programs seeking to both expand their offerings in international subjects and promote international experiences for their students. Also related to our internationalization initiatives, the College of Education has been invited to take part in important collaborative projects such as one on teaching practices with the Bethlehem Area School District, Pennsylvania, and another with Ecuador's Ministry of Education for teacher training in high schools, focusing on distance education and hybrid instruction.

The campus is a member of three important consortia that link institutions of higher education around the world in order to facilitate undergraduate student exchanges. Also in place are some 26 specific collaboration agreements with institutions in the United States, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The following are just some examples of academic and professional opportunities available to students and faculty:

- The School of Architecture has agreements with the Polytechnic University of Madrid, the University of Palermo, and the IE School of Architecture and Design in Segovia.
- For the past eight years the College of Education has managed the "Africa and the Caribbean Speak" project, which began as an academic collaboration between our faculty and faculty members from several African countries including Mozambique, Benin, Senegal, and Togo.
- The School of Law offers study opportunities in Spain, Belgium, Argentina, Chile, Canada, and the U.S. These include a dual degree program with the University of Barcelona School of Law, which offers students the opportunity to simultaneously obtain their *Licenciatura en Derecho* and the Juris Doctor from the UPR.
- The School of Law and the University of Antwerp have established a dual JD program and an International European Legal Studies Program certificate.

The DEGI's 2015-16 work plan allocated funds and resources to increase the internationalization of academic offerings and to promote study abroad at the graduate level. The initiatives include annual international conferences on campus and consortia with universities in the Dominican Republic, Panama, Argentina, Ecuador, Columbia, Costa Rica, Spain, and Belgium.

Learning Resources and Information Technology

The UPR-RP Library System

Recognizing the importance of developing competencies in research, the use of diverse informational resources and technologies, the active acquisition of informational literacy, and the integration of research skills across the curriculum, the UPR-RP Library System (**LS**) has worked in close collaboration with campus units in order to establish services and acquire the resources and staff that support these goals. The central unit in the UPR-RP Library System, the José M. Lázaro Library, holds the most complete lending and periodical collections in Puerto Rico and some of the most valuable research collections in the Caribbean, including the Puerto Rican Collection, the Caribbean Studies Regional Library, the Rare Books Collection (Josefina del Toro Fulladosa), and the Zenobia and Juan Ramón Jiménez Collections. The UPR Digital Collections is an online repository of images and texts related to the history and culture of Puerto Rico. Importantly, the LS houses the Library Services Unit for the Handicapped, which aims to meet the information needs of the handicapped population and provide access to bibliographical and assistive-technological resources. Other LS units are located in the colleges of Business Administration, Education, General Studies, Humanities, and in the schools of Public Affairs, Communication, Planning, and Social Work. These are staffed by professional librarians, and those with temporary contracts hold at least a master's in Library Sciences or Information Sciences from institutions accredited by the American Library Association.

The LS provides formal and informal instructional resources so that users may be trained in access and research methodologies. The Library Instruction Program coordinates instructional activities, most in response to faculty members' requests for course-specific support. Subscriptions to approximately a hundred databases support academic instruction and research.

The LS has identified three principal areas that need more immediate institutional support and resources: services and operational hours; budget allocations for print materials; and staffing, as there is a shortage of librarians and qualified personnel to attend to the needs of users.

The UPR-RP hosts three independent specialized libraries:

- School of Law: The UPR Law Library is committed to providing faculty, students, and professionals of the legal community with the finest legal resources and service, as well as the highest level of support for scholarship and access to information. Its collection consists of more than 480,000 volumes and microform equivalents, over 2,500 serial publications, and numerous automated legal research systems, with especially strong holdings in the areas of foreign, comparative, and international law. The reserve section has an excellent collection of legal journals, law reviews, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and decisions of administrative organs, all available in a variety of formats. In addition to a comprehensive Puerto Rico legal collection, the library also owns important documents from the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and the United States. Finally, the library collection has been developed in tune with the curriculum, which places emphasis on the island's special nature as a mixed jurisdiction of civil and common law.
- School of Architecture: The Santiago Iglesias, Jr. Library is the largest and oldest library in Puerto Rico to specialize in architecture. Since opening in 1966, it has been instrumental in the school's creative and research projects. Aside from visual resources and numerous publications on architectural design, the library holds materials on subjects such as the theory and history of architecture, urbanism, planning, fine arts, sustainable

architecture, and historical preservation. The library's holdings include 34,662 titles, 40,624 volumes, and specialized databases (e.g., Archivision, Building Green, Art and Architecture, and the Avery Index). Many professionals use the library to prepare for professional licensing exams in architecture.

- College of Natural Sciences: Center for Information and Technology. Born out of the need to centralize and expand library access in the Natural Sciences, this unit integrates library and information services (databases, print and digital materials, individualized assistance with research projects for faculty and students, and poster/conference preparation) with such infrastructure and technological support as intelligent classrooms, computer rooms, and specialized software.

Information Literacy

The Project to Integrate Information Skills into the Curriculum (**PICIC** in Spanish) is an initiative that has strengthened practices related to information literacy. Between 2008 and 2013, the colleges of Business Administration, Education, and General Studies took part in the project, which was designed to improve teaching, the assessment of student learning, and technology at the undergraduate level.

Research

Ethics in Research

All research projects in an academic setting, whether underwritten by external or institutional funds, are subject to regulations appropriate to the nature of the research. As explained above in the discussion of Integrity, the DEGI is charged with ensuring that all applicable federal and institutional laws, rules, regulations, and policies governing research on humans, animals, biological agents, radioactive material, and chemical agents are closely followed.

Research at the Undergraduate Level

Among the key guidelines for undergraduate education established in Academic Senate Certification 46, 2005-06 is the stipulation that "research and creation must be incorporated throughout the bachelor's degree as an integral part of the student's academic experience. Colleges and schools [should] structure research and creation experiences that they deem pertinent for students. They [should] also familiarize students with the technology needed to access information available in book and document repositories, websites, and databases."

With the restructuring of the bachelor's degree, programs revised their curricula to include extra- and co-curricular offerings on the development of research skills. The UPR-RP libraries, for instance, now offer students workshops in effective writing and communication. There are many project-based courses in which students solve problems through research and present posters. The Honors Program includes a research proposal and paper as part of its curriculum. The program also counsels students on applying for prestigious scholarships (e.g., Fulbright, Ford, Mellon Mays) to pursue graduate studies and broaden their research. Labs such as the recently inaugurated Environmental Anthropology Lab engage undergraduate and graduate students in interdisciplinary research. Finally, undergraduate programs in several disciplines have taken steps to promote student involvement in research and creative projects, such as the Undergraduate Research Incentives in the College of Social Sciences.

The Research Initiatives and Creative Activities Program (iINAS), a Title V project, promotes an undergraduate culture that puts research and creative activities at the center of academic life,

stimulating learning through intellectual production. The mission of the program is to expand opportunities for research and creative projects for both faculty and undergraduates in the five academic colleges of our institution. iINAS has provided training, opportunities, and mentoring to undergraduate students for research projects, as evident in its annual reports. Between 2010 and 2015 a total of 7,321 individuals participated in the program's initiatives and activities.

Each semester iINAS holds at least four workshops, on subjects related to creation, research, and academic success in any discipline. The program also coordinates an Undergraduate Research and Creation Summit that offers activities such as discussion panels, poster presentations, art exhibitions, literature readings, and workshops. So far, three of these conferences have been held, with over 200 participants. Another example of students' commitment to academic, intellectual, and creative production, and of faculty-student collaboration, is the online student journal *Ingenios*. Next year, upon completing its cycle of federal funding, iINAS will establish the Undergraduate Learning Commons and Interdisciplinary Research Center in the College of Natural Sciences.

Initiatives such as iINAS have generated increased participation in research and creative work among our undergraduates. Recent graduates have been recognized for their overall performance and research potential. They include two Fulbright Scholars, one National Science Foundation Scholar, one Truman Scholar, and two U.S. Chemical Society Scholars. In 2015, for the first time, five of our undergraduate students received Mellon Mays scholarships.

Research at the Graduate Level

Through the Program for Formative Academic Experiences (**PEAF** in Spanish), the DEGI supports graduate students with research assistantships. Under this program, graduate students receive economic incentives via a stipend and tuition waiver (Board of Trustees Certification 50, 2011-12) so they can study full-time and conclude their studies successfully in the shortest possible time. These system-wide graduate student incentives are managed at the UPR-RP via the procedures set forth in Board of Trustees Certification 140, 1999-00.

Examples of research projects include several in the Natural Sciences:

- The Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement (RISE) program, aimed at improving skills and stimulating competition among students in biomedical research (in 2015, the program received an allocation of $7M from the National Institutes of Health for a new cycle through 2020);
- The Minority Access to Research Careers program, which receives a yearly allocation of more than $890,000 for students to pursue graduate studies in biomedicine (181 students have already received PhD or MD-PhD degrees; 89 PhD/MD-PhD students are currently pursuing degrees throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico).

Our American Chemical Society chapter is among those that have received the most awards in the U.S.

In the College of Education, the Reading and Research Alliances community service project, aimed at promoting reading among children, provides students with research experiences in Guatemala. Finally, the XPLORAH project, conceived in collaboration with Maastricht University in the Netherlands, is the first and only system in the Caribbean and Central America to use advanced imaging technology to make numerical and graphic projections of the long-term impact of infrastructure projects and urban development.

A Culture of Institutional Assessment, Evaluation, and Creation

In 2005 the institutional planning document, *Ten for the Decade*, proposed to develop a culture of institutional assessment, evaluation, and creation. The objective was for the institution to "obtain and maintain professional accreditation in all programs of study in which such accreditation is granted." Several programs have recently been accredited for the first time. For instance, in 2010 Public Administration was accredited by NASPAA (2010). It is the only accredited program in this field in Latin America and the Caribbean. The College of Business Administration is the first of any public university in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Spain to be accredited by the AACSB, a status it earned in 2013. In 2010 its BBA in Information Systems became the only program in Latin America and the Caribbean to be accredited by both the AACSB and ABET. The BA in Office Systems Administration was accredited by the ACBSP in 2009. Additionally, the School of Communication was accredited by the ACEJMC in 2012, another first in Puerto Rico. The Graduate School of Counseling and Rehabilitation achieved the highest accreditation available in the field of professional counseling, that of the CRE, in 2013.

Other graduate programs have a long tradition of accreditation; for example, the Master's in Planning (MPl), which has maintained academic and professional accreditation by the U.S. Planning Accreditation Board since 1978. This is the only program of its kind in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, with Mexico and Canada being the only other two countries outside the continental U.S. with an MPl. The Graduate School of Information Technology and Sciences has been accredited by the American Library Association since 1989, making the UPR-RP the only institution in Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, and Latin America with this accreditation. The School of Law has been accredited by the American Bar Association and the Association of American Law Schools since the 1950s. Finally, the College of Education was the first of its kind to be voluntarily accredited by the NCATE in 1964. This affiliation has promoted high standards that have contributed to the professional formation of bilingual graduates who are frequently recruited to work in Hispanic communities in the U.S.

The DAA centralizes accreditation initiatives on campus, which in recent years have seen noticeable improvements. All eligible programs have completed the curricular revision for accreditation with the exception of the PhD program in Clinical Psychology and three undergraduate programs in Humanities (Music, Drama, and Art), which are currently working on the process.

Distance Learning Education

The UPR-RP understands that distance education has the potential to enrich academic experiences and broaden student access to education without the geographic, social, economic, and scheduling restrictions that can make university studies difficult or impossible. A preliminary report to serve as the foundation for the development of a distance-education policy was completed as (Academic Senate Certification 125, 2014-15). On December 17, 2015 the Academic Senate approved the regulations for distance learning education as Certification 49, 2015-16. The DAA is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Transfer Students

The Transfers section of the UPR-RP course catalog describes the specific guidelines for admitting students transferring from other institutions. Students who were originally admitted to

the campus but opted for enrollment in other institutions outside the UPR system may be admitted as transfers, as may students who always attended other accredited institutions outside the UPR System and wish to enroll at the UPR-RP in mid-degree. The process is as follows:

- Each transfer candidate must submit an application to the Office of Admissions with two official copies of his/her academic history.
- The Office of Admissions determines the candidate's eligibility and will then refer the applicant to the college dean or school director, who will do a preliminary evaluation of credit equivalency while also taking into consideration the college or school's enrollment capacity and the student's GPA.
- Applicants who, having enrolled in the UPR-RP as first-year students, enroll in other universities and later apply for transfer to the campus will be admitted under the conditions stipulated for readmission.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Renewal and Relevance

The bachelor's degree was restructured to incorporate an interdisciplinary approach to education. In terms of program changes, there has been more revision than creation, as emphasis has been placed on improvement through evaluating and assessing undergraduate programs. At the graduate level, several new programs were approved and existing graduate programs are subject to rigorous self-study. The renewal of educational offerings is evident in additional areas:

- Regular and elective courses, second degrees, double majors, minors, and certificates are widely available, as are some joint degrees.
- Research is frequently conducted at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels by students in multiple contexts, such as special projects, programs, specialized centers, and the Honors Program. Standards and protocols are followed with respect to research ethics.
- Initiatives to strengthen internationalization are evident in educational offerings, research, and related projects.

Library Services

Diverse library services and collections enhance curricular offerings, with qualified professionals active in various initiatives and specialized collections in the main library and a number of units across the campus.

Accreditation

The institution's educational offerings have been strengthened through the accreditation of more than 95% of the programs and services eligible for accreditation. Accreditation has been pursued to enrich the educational experiences of students.

Next Steps

Academic Planning

The DAA should consider reinstating a unit dedicated to academic planning.

Updates to Collections

Since 2012, budget allocations for the acquisition of print materials (books and journals) have been reduced while online subscriptions have increased. Efforts to update important collections should be sustained as our campus budget permits.

Extended Library Hours

The campus should be provided with the resources and planning tools that allow for the Lázaro Library's operating hours to be extended. Students have repeatedly made this request, and the Chancellor's academic plan expresses support for this initiative.

Distance Learning Education

The UPR-RP should move rapidly to implement its distance learning education policy as an instrument to expand and diversify its academic offerings.

CHAPTER 5: FOUNDATIONS FOR POSITIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Standard 12: General Education – 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.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning – 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.

STANDARD 12: GENERAL EDUCATION

I. INTRODUCTION

General Education Competencies

General Education (**GE**) at the UPR-RP provides the foundation for students' intellectual growth and personal and professional development. Students' learning in this area focuses on the acquisition of competencies that are essential to their academic, intellectual, and professional lives. These competencies, which are detailed in our Graduating Student Profile, (see Appendix 5.1) are:

- Oral and written communication in Spanish and English
- Information and technological literacy
- Scientific reasoning and research
- Critical thinking
- Social responsibility
- Mathematical & logical thinking or quantitative analysis
- Integration of knowledge
- Leadership and teamwork
- Aesthetic and ethical sensibility
- Intellectual curiosity
- Creative work and research
- Disposition for life-long learning
- Appreciation for the ideals and values of Puerto Rican society

These competencies are aligned with those identified in the descriptions of General Education provided by MSCHE and the competencies of our Graduating Student Profile, as shown in Appendix 5.2 (Comparison of General Education Competencies Used in Accreditation and Assessment). In addition, as shown below in the section on Standard 14, competency areas that MSCHE identifies as central to GE—oral and written communication, critical analysis and reasoning, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and technological competency—are all addressed in our assessment initiatives.

Coursework and other activities have been designed to enable our students to acquire essential knowledge, strengthen their cognitive abilities, and better understand values and ethics. Teaching and learning in these areas is contextualized by a philosophy of education that encourages faculty and support personnel to reflect on both the foundations and processes of knowledge production. This philosophical orientation, which holds that competencies in GE should be developed and strategically reinforced throughout the undergraduate student's career, has its roots in our College of General Studies (hereafter, the **CGS**). The CGS has historically been the unit responsible for General Education at the UPR-RP. Since 2007 other colleges and schools have also offered courses in this area.

GE competencies complement learning in the other two areas in which students complete coursework: the major and electives. Students take a minimum of 60 and 18 credits in these areas, respectively.

General Education Requirements

Since August of 2007, all incoming undergraduate students have been required to take a minimum of 42 credits in GE—12 credit-hours more than the minimum stipulated by MSCHE. For the purpose of this discussion, we have grouped our coursework requirements in GE into two categories: Group A and Group B.

Table 5.1: Distribution of Requirements in General Education

Group A Requirements	Credits
Spanish	6
English	6
Natural Sciences	6
Social Sciences	6
Humanities	6
Group B Requirements	
Literature (Spanish, English, or other language)	6
Mathematical & logical thinking or quantitative reasoning	3
Arts	3
Total	**42**

Source: UPR-RP Undergraduate Course Catalog, April 2015

Group A requirements consist of "core" or "threshold" courses given within the CGS. These nurture the competencies mentioned above and provide a solid foundation of knowledge for subsequent specialization. At the same time, they inspire students' interest in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to knowledge formation. Group B requirements consist of courses given by other colleges and schools as well as the CGS. This two-tiered model allows students to complete a common core and to select additional courses on the basis of their individual needs, goals, and interests.

Students choose from robust selections of courses in meeting Group B requirements. For example, there are over 90 courses to choose from to fulfill the literature requirement, 84% are

taught in the College of Humanities. An analysis completed by Humanities in the first semester of 2015-16 shows that over half (61%) of the sections given in its English, Hispanic Studies, and Comparative Literature departments are taken by students in fulfillment of their GE literature requirement. Approximately a dozen courses fulfill the requirement in the area of mathematical reasoning and/or quantitative analysis. These are distributed across the colleges of Business Administration, General Studies, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. In the case of the arts requirement, students choose from over 30 courses distributed across the CGS, the School of Architecture, and the College of Humanities.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

"New" Bachelor's Degree

Background

Our current undergraduate curriculum reflects gains resulting from many years of discussion about the philosophy and goals that should guide General Education. The restructuring of this component was a campus-wide process that brought together CGS faculty and their counterparts in other colleges and schools. Many people took part in this discussion and, as with other important participatory experiences, efforts to make the best decisions were characterized by disagreements, negotiation, and, finally, a consensus. A significant milestone in this discussion was the approval of Academic Senate Certification 46, 2005-06, which established the platform for the "new" bachelor's degree.

Main Objectives

Certification 46 presented specific guidelines and parameters for colleges and schools in revising the requirements for their undergraduate degrees. It defined coursework in General Education as the foundational component of all undergraduate learning. The certification also put in place a set of clear statements that define and guide student learning, classroom teaching, course design, assessment activities, and institutional priorities. In addition, it linked definitions of competencies to a unified assessment plan. Finally, the new bachelor's degree ensured a consistent number of minimum total credits (120) for most of our programs.

Curricular Improvements

Three main improvements took place in conjunction with the restructuring of the degree. First, areas for improvement identified in the previous curriculum were addressed by adding new requirements that were deemed essential. For example, requirements in literature, mathematical and logical thinking or quantitative analysis, and the arts were added to the GE component. Second, requirements that were evaluated as having too many credits were reduced. This resulted in a smaller number of credits in Humanities and the Natural Sciences, where the reduction was from 12 to 6 credits. Third, to ensure that students are properly prepared for academic work in their chosen areas of study, some GE courses were tailored for particular populations (see "Aligned Courses" below).

Course Design

Certification 46 also led to the review and revision of the general and specific objectives found on the syllabi of GE courses. For example, a general objective for information competencies was added to all syllabi in 2011. Statements regarding assessment practices are included in all new

courses and program sequences and will soon be included in all other courses. The efficacy of these changes has been corroborated by recent assessment projects.

Consistency across GE courses was ensured by the use of a rubric that was developed for revising and creating courses (Appendix 5.3) and the careful evaluation of course proposals and syllabi. The rubric identifies essential requirements that courses must meet in order to be approved. This has made approval of courses faster and easier, with fewer delays in proposal revisions, and assisted in maintaining curricular unity across offerings in the area of GE.

Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies

The Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies (**CDLC**) was established to support student learning, in particular the acquisition of GE competencies. Graduate students work in the CDLC as tutors who provide students with assistance in areas such as writing, critical thinking, and effective communication. Students can visit tutors individually or in pairs, and tutors sometimes visit classes. Certification 46 establishes that the CDLC should receive the support it needs to provide student services to all colleges and schools on campus. While this unit has received substantial support in parts of the period under review, support has not been consistent. For example, the number of tutors has changed dramatically across the semesters, affecting the quality of services as well as the unit's hours of operation.

Enhanced Learning Experiences

Opportunities in the CGS

The restructuring of the bachelor's degree led to a substantial increase in the number of courses the CGS offers. An analysis conducted for this self-study found that the UPR-RP catalog listed 47 three-credit courses in the CGS for the period 2003-06 and that the design of CGS courses intensified considerably in 2007 (see Appendix 5.5: Changes in CGS General Education Offerings). Listings of current offerings show that as of second semester of AY 2014-15, the CGS offered more than 100 GE courses. This offering includes 89 courses and some course variants that students choose from to fulfill their core of GE requirements (Group A requirements from Table 5.1).

Opportunities Across Campus

Course offerings in various colleges and schools have also significantly enhanced GE. Through the creation of more than 90 new courses that fulfill Group B requirements, opportunities for student learning have expanded (see Appendix 5.4: Group B Courses). The thematic diversity of new courses and the attention they give to questions and insights generated by interdisciplinary perspectives reflect the campus's pedagogical approach to GE. For example, a cross-listed course, "Business and Puerto Rican and Hispanic Literature," is offered by the colleges of Humanities and Business Administration, further evidence of the breadth of offerings.

"Aligned" Courses

The needs and goals of particular groups of students have been addressed by offering GE courses aligned with specific academic programs. These include Humanities courses for students from the School of Architecture, Social Science courses for students from the School of Communications, Spanish courses for students in the Bilingual Initiative Program, English courses for Natural Science students, and Physical Science courses for students majoring in Elementary Education and Special Education. Physical Science courses have also been designed

for students studying to be nutritionists and dieticians. In addition, within the CGS, technology-focused courses have been developed in English, Biological Sciences, and Physical Sciences.

Cultivating Key Competencies

The institution has taken special measures to ensure that all students meet a minimum level of competency in the key areas of effective communication and scientific research and reasoning. Of special concern here are students who may enter with weaknesses or deficiencies in these areas. Two initiatives are of particular importance: language laboratories and science laboratories.

Language Laboratories

Non-credit language laboratories have been developed to promote effective oral and written communication in Spanish and English. These courses, given in the CGS, are obligatory for students who enter the university with weaknesses in either of these languages and are therefore assigned to the intensive level. Annual evaluation is based on exam results that are used to place students and diagnostic exercises that are given the first day of class. The work that students do in labs prepares them for and reinforces the material they cover in their three-credit course. The idea is that simultaneous participation in the language laboratory and the for-credit course allows them to move toward the same level of language competency as students who upon entry into the university are placed in courses at a higher level. Follow-up second year English courses targeting these students are being created.

Science Laboratories

A lab component also exists to promote competency in scientific reasoning and research and quantitative analysis. This two-hour non-credit lab complements courses offered by the CGS departments of Biological Sciences and Physical Sciences and is a requirement for all non-science majors, to help ensure that all students acquire the necessary levels of competencies in laboratory work and scientific thinking.

Diversity and Ethics

Pedagogical Philosophy

GE nurtures a respect for diversity that includes different ways of knowing, thinking, and learning and teaches students to recognize and accept plurality and difference. Learning in this area is framed by a vision of the university as a space in which critical thinking and differences of opinion are necessary, respected, and welcome. GE at the UPR-RP emphasizes values such as equality, respect for human dignity, and the importance of seeking a better quality of life for all.

Diversity and Ethics in Student Learning

GE courses promote respect for diversity and prepare students and faculty in developing responsible, relevant, and informed modes of praxis. For example, required courses in Humanities, Spanish, and Social Sciences nurture competencies in critical thinking and logic. These competencies assist students in identifying injustice and make socially responsible decisions. They also expose students to other cultures and teach them to see their own society and its traditions from new perspectives. Variants of the courses Introduction to the Social Sciences I & II (CISO 3121-3122) have been developed around subjects related to social responsibility such as social inequality, fundamentals of knowledge in the human sciences, the historicity of the human subject, and interdisciplinary approaches to the social sciences.

English courses have examined linguistic discrimination in a way that encourages critical reflection on attitudes toward marginalized languages and Puerto Ricans who are monolingual speakers of English. Students learn to value and responsibly respond to diversity through reading and writing exercises as well as guided discussions. Through these exchanges students acquire and make use of new knowledge and skills they will use to analyze and respond to intolerance, plurality, and aspects of difference linked to ethnicity, race, gender, age, class, nationality, sexual orientation and self-definition, and political opinion.

GE courses also nurture students' awareness of ethics by providing them with learning opportunities that make them more sensitive to contemporary social concerns. In the CGS Biological and Physical Sciences departments, for example, courses designed for students majoring in the Natural Sciences include an ethics component that addresses how scientific thought affects contemporary society. The Department of Biological Sciences' seminar Current Controversies in the Biological Sciences (CIBI 4105) introduces students to subjects such as transgenic crops, stem cell research, assisted reproduction, anthropogenic reproduction, neurobiology, and the challenges of old age. The Department of Physical Sciences' seminar Interdisciplinary Subjects in Physics (CIFI 4995) addresses topics such as the development of chemistry, nanotechnology, and human aspects of geological events. In other contexts, students have analyzed and formed opinions, for example, on Puerto Rico's looming debt crisis and on statistical analysis and the decisions experts make in representing cancer rates in Vieques.

Responsible Scholarship

The ethics component in GE courses is also addressed through responsible scholarship. Most GE courses now cover the responsible and professional use of information (including the avoidance of plagiarism), and many introduce students to research methods and resources for creative work. These skills are taught in all units offering GE courses and are reinforced in the major.

Extracurricular Activities

Each semester the campus sponsors hundreds of workshops, conferences, academic talks, and musical events. These complement the emphasis on diversity and ethics found in GE courses, as well as the learning objectives related to critical thinking and social responsibility. Specific units, such as the Program for Women's and Gender Studies, the Institute of Caribbean Studies, and the Institute for Research on Violence and Complexity frequently tackle issues such as racism, xenophobia, gender-based violence, and human rights, thereby enriching students' opportunities to expand their awareness and sensibilities. Conference series sponsored by the CGS English and Social Sciences departments contribute by providing students with opportunities to present their research and creative work to the campus. For more than 25 years the CGS's annual inaugural lecture, which is open to the campus and the general public, has featured prominent speakers who address topics related to the UPR's mission.

Students' Understanding of Requirements

GE requirements are introduced to students upon initial enrollment. To ensure that they are well understood, they are also reviewed at key points throughout the degree: in student orientations, periods of course selection, registration, degree audits, meetings with advisors and counselors.

Students have access to official information about GE requirements on web-based documents that they can use for planning and tracking progress in completing their degree requirements. These documents include a requirement summary on the webpage of the DAA and similar

resources on the pages of the numerous colleges and departments offering courses in GE. GE courses are also identified on MIUPI, the online system that students use to select courses and register.

Resources for Students

Academic advisors and psychological counselors are available to all students. Most academic programs have designated advisors, and faculty members and department and program directors assist in this area.

Advisors and Counselors in the CGS

The licensed professionals in DCODE (the Department of Counseling and Student Development) provide psychological counseling, academic advising, and information about their workshops and other services. DCODE support has been requested in the CGS because of the large number of incoming students and the tendency for first-year students to put off visiting the advisor in their program until they begin their major courses.

The professional counselors in DCODE are based in a separate unit due to the requirements of their professional accreditation agency (International Association of Counseling Services). With this in mind, the suggestion has been made that a rotation system be instituted that would allow DCODE professionals to visit the CGS on certain days of the week. This would permit them to maintain their current base and allow more first-year students to receive appropriate counseling and advising services.

Student-Centered Publications

Publications meant to inform students about requirements should be student-centered documents that are explicit, jargon-free, and straightforward. While existing publications are useful and include accurate information, they can be revised and made more student-centered. Specific publications should clearly explain how GE competencies contribute to a coherent and meaningful educational experience. They should also address how different types of courses (i.e., GE requirements, courses in the major, electives) relate to both specialization in a specific area and their long-term personal and professional development.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in General Education

Assessment will be discussed below, in Standard 14.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Learning Objectives

Opportunities for student learning have been strengthened by the revision of the general and specific objectives found on the syllabi of GE courses. Improvements in this area have been supported by the implementation of Certification 46, integrated learning, careful attention to course design, and greater course-selection flexibility.

Students' Acquisition of Competencies

In fulfillment of our mission, both curriculum and course redesign have provided students with opportunities to acquire the competencies crucial to their integral education. These competencies

contribute to their academic specialization as well as to their personal and professional development.

Next Steps

Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies (CDLC)

The CDLC, which is meant to serve the entire campus, could be strengthened so that its services can be more effective. Special attention might be given to services that strategically reinforce students' development in areas that assessment projects identify as needing support.

Department of Counseling and Student Development (DCODE)

Arrangements allowing for DCODE counselors to be physically based in the CGS on certain days of the week should be considered.

Sharing/Disseminating Assessment Data

The results of assessment projects focusing on the acquisition of GE competencies should continue to be widely shared (e.g., on the websites of the OEAE and colleges and departments). This action should be geared toward increasing professors' awareness of general patterns (strengths and weaknesses, long-term trends) in learning outcomes, especially those related to their areas of teaching.

STANDARD 14: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

I. INTRODUCTION

The UPR-RP is characterized by an institutional culture of assessment that has long been committed to reflecting on student learning. Assessment entails identifying and responding to student needs. Our assessment practices are organized at three main levels: General Education, our academic programs (undergraduate and graduate), and the campus level.

Conceptual Framework for the Assessment Process

During the past decade, the UPR-RP has been formally engaged in a systematic, sustained process of assessing student learning. These efforts have been guided by Academic Senate Certification 68, 2005-06 and Academic Senate Certification 46, 2005-06. These certifications mandate our current approach to the assessment of student learning and the adoption of a new baccalaureate degree, respectively.

Systematic planning for the assessment of student learning played an important role in the revision of all 70 undergraduate programs that took place from 2006 to 2009. The Academic Senate reviewed and approved each program. For this process it required that student-learning assessment goals be included in each program's proposal. Proposals identified program goals and requirements as well as information that would establish the groundwork for the assessment of student learning.

Assessment of student learning at the institution is guided by the learning outcomes established in the UPR-RP Mission and the Graduating Student Profile (**GSP**). The UPR-RP Mission calls for providing an education of excellence that promotes an integrated and comprehensive vision of knowledge. The GSP identifies the general characteristics that students are expected to possess at the end of their undergraduate experience. The competencies listed in the profile serve

as a guide for the design of curricular content, course sequences, and learning experiences, and for allocating resources to advance institutional goals. They also provide a framework that our academic programs have relied on in developing their assessment plans. (System-wide procedures for creating academic programs were established by Board of Trustees Certification 80, 2005-06.)

The Office of Student Learning Evaluation (OEAE)

The OEAE coordinates student-learning assessment activities. Established under the Dean of Academic Affairs in 2008, its main aim is to implement and coordinate the Institutional Plan for Assessing Student Learning. This plan, which is part of the aforementioned Academic Senate Certification 68, establishes the campus-level stages and cycles that have been followed and describes their relationship to our academic programs' assessment plans. Since August of 2014, the OEAE has coordinated these efforts for both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Detailed information related to assessment of student learning can be found on the OEAE webpage. It features complete information about our assessment process and related activities. The DEGI webpage also presents information about assessment, but at the graduate level. These resources include program assessment plans, learning objectives and outcomes, evaluations of assessment instruments and activities, and annual reports.

The OEAE is responsible for collecting and analyzing student learning data and providing assessment, planning, and reporting services to inform planning and policy decisions. It serves as the key coordinating office for the assessment of student-learning activities and provides support to the program and college assessment coordinators who are in charge of this initiative. These services include seminars for academic personnel, individual meetings to discuss findings, and the development of instruments.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes in General Education

Assessment of GE learning outcomes takes place at three levels: the CGS, academic programs (most of which are outside the CGS), and the campus. For all of these levels, emphasis is on specific competencies included in the Graduating Student Profile. In general terms, assessment efforts in the CGS focus on core competencies acquired in fulfillment of Group A and B requirements (these requirements are described above in the discussion of Standard 12). Academic programs' efforts tend to focus on linking GE competencies to knowledge in the area of the major. Assessment projects at the campus level provide a diachronic perspective, with comparisons that track the acquisition of competencies between students' initial studies and the end of their undergraduate career.

The UPR-RP's assessment projects are organized in cycles. While assessment is carried out for all learning outcomes, emphasis on particular competencies shifts across cycles (for an example, see Appendix 5.6: CGS Three-Year Assessment Plan for 2013-16). This approach is strengthened by the active and continuous participation of faculty members.

Since 2009, the UPR-RP has increased support for workshops, meetings, training sessions, and conferences on the assessment of student learning. Evidence of this support is the allotment of release time for an assessment coordinator for each department, an active college-level assessment committee, and faculty participation in assessment workshops, including those coordinated by the Ángel Quintero Alfaro Library, the Center for Academic Excellence, and the

Office for the Assessment of Student Learning. The number of sections taking part in formal assessment exercises increased significantly between 2011 and 2015, as faculty endorsement has helped to increase and diversify the size of data samples. This can be observed, for example, in the CGS, where participation grew from 59 to 149 students in the Physical Sciences; from 92 to 325 in Humanities; and from 48 to 235 in Intermediate English.

Assessment of GE learning competencies at the CGS has resulted in improvements in opportunities for students across Group A requirement offerings, as noted in Appendix 5.7, "Assessment Report on General Education Competencies" (submitted AY 2014-15). Assessment has impacted course offerings and also led to the revision of syllabi and teaching materials across departments. The sections below, organized in terms of competencies, address assessment projects carried out in the CGS. Detailed assessment results, rubrics used, and general information can be accessed through the CGS Assessment webpage.

Effective Written and Oral Communication in Spanish

Incoming CGS students are placed in one of three first-year Spanish courses by level, based on their College Entrance Exam scores. Effective written and oral communication in Spanish is assessed campus-wide. In August of 2012, all incoming freshmen were assessed in terms of their written communication skills in Spanish. A total of 1,686 students wrote essays responding to a standard prompt. Results indicate that only two of the four competencies assessed were met: content and organization. Weaknesses were identified in the areas of syntax and orthography (Appendix 5.8: Preliminary Summary of Assessment Results of Spanish Writing for Incoming Students). These results helped the CGS address weaknesses in student performance early on.

Assessment activities focusing on oral communication and writing have led to stronger learning outcomes. Oral communication was assessed in 2011–12. Results show great improvement in learning outcome results in Spanish oral communication from 2011–12 to 2014–15, as suggested in Appendix 5.7, Table 3. By AY 2014–15, desired goals were met at all three levels. Assessment data collected at both the intensive and basic levels during the second semester of AY 2013-14 indicate achievement of four out of four competencies in writing. Transformative actions included the systematic employment of short response papers and writing assignments that allowed students to practice and improve paragraph development.

Effective Written and Oral Communication in English

Incoming freshmen students are placed in CGS English courses by proficiency level according to their College Entrance score in the English as a Second Language Assessment Test (**ESLAT**). Results (see Appendix 5.7, Table 2) suggest that in the lower-level English courses (INGL 3161-3162), students did not achieve the desired 70% outcome in written communication areas of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and sentence mechanics. They improved from 0/5 competencies in 2011-12 to 1/5 (with 65% in the content area) in 2012-13. A closer look at results shows a 50% improvement in writing skills when comparing pre- and post-tests results from AY 2011-12. Also noteworthy, INGL 3161-3162 students achieved the desired outcome in oral communication skills. Transformative actions at the intensive level included incorporating grammar exercises, creating grammar modules, lowering the number of students per section, and revising course and lab curricular content. Syllabi have been revised to address areas of concern identified through assessment, including the syllabus for the three-hour non-credit lab. These were recently reviewed by the CGS English Department's Curriculum Committee and will be used in the near future.

For the higher levels of English (Basic, Intermediate, and Honors), the desired outcomes were achieved in both written and oral English. Transformative actions implemented in upper-level courses include using the rubric as an instructional tool, identifying strategies for developing thesis statements, and assigning exercises focused on writing supporting paragraphs that develop the essay's thesis statement.

Information Literacy

Part of an ongoing campus-wide project, an initiative focusing on the assessment of information-literacy skills in GE courses was implemented in 2011-12 and continued in each of the three subsequent academic years. For this initiative, six competencies were selected from a list established by the Association of College and Research Libraries and incorporated into all master course syllabi. These ensure that students are able to define and articulate the need for information, identify a variety of types and formats of potential sources of information, select the most appropriate investigative methods or information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information, summarize the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered, articulate and apply initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources, and understand many of the ethical, legal, and socioeconomic issues surrounding information and information technology.

Students learn to use information retrieval systems, including discipline-specific electronic databases. In addition, a series of faculty workshops were held across the campus to help faculty members define and describe learning objectives, design syllabi, and develop rubrics and appropriate learning activities. As of 2014-15, all departments were assessing their defined student-learning outcomes and information literacy skills using measures appropriate to the individual disciplines and programs.

A summary of the information-literacy assessment results for the CGS confirm that all departments collected data in 2011-12 and again in 2014-15. Presented in Appendix 5.7, Table 1, this report also shows that all departments have used assessment results to shape teaching and learning. It is noteworthy that results for 2014-15 are considerably higher than those of the 2011-12 pilot projects. For example, the Department of Physical Sciences reported an improvement rate of 50%.

Scientific Reasoning and Research

For the CGS Department of Biological Sciences' assessment project in November of 2011, four of six goals were achieved. Students evidenced deficiencies in identifying problems and formulating conclusions, as shown in Appendix 5.7, Table 4. They did well in the description of observations and data collection. All faculty members were informed of the areas of student weakness and addressed them in the classroom. Data collected three years later, in November of 2014, show a shift. Two of four criteria goals were achieved: description of observations and identification of problems. In response to 2014 results, professors revised the instructional manual used in the non-credit laboratory required for their courses. They have paid special attention to the two areas of weakness identified in 2014: formulation of hypotheses and drawing conclusions.

In 2011 the CGS Department of Physical Sciences' assessment results indicated that students did not meet goals for two criteria: data analysis and establishing conclusions. In response, faculty members developed new activities with clear instructions. These emphasized the importance of paying careful attention to all the parts of a scientific experiment. Faculty members also

discussed protocols for the presentation of findings in lab reports with students. Transformative actions proved especially effective in the area of formulating appropriate conclusions. The goal was achieved in all six competencies in 2014.

Critical Thinking

The CGS Humanities Department assessed creativity during AY 2010-11 and critical thinking in 2011-12. Appendix 5.7, Table 5 reports results from the sample taken in 2011-12. As can be seen, the 92 students achieved the desired 70% outcome in all but one criterion: making value judgments. To improve learning outcomes, professors implemented various transformative actions (explaining the rubric to students, preparing instructional kits that included activity instructions and worksheets, and rewording and clarifying the rubric's criteria and performance levels). These proved successful. Results for 2013-14 show that 4 of 6 outcomes were achieved by 70% of 384 students, while for 2014-15, all (5 of 5) outcomes were achieved in a sample of 325 students.

Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is perhaps the most difficult GE learning outcome to assess. Some professors believe it should be assessed with "real-life" participation in community projects or other interactive activities. To tackle this issue, a professor from the CGS Department of Social Sciences developed a useful instrument that relies on case-study vignettes. It was piloted in AY 2010-11. Faculty members considered the instrument appropriate for measuring the effectiveness of teaching in this area, but they initially had some difficulty developing a concise rubric for the diversity of topics presented (e.g., environmental awareness, national heritage, gender violence, and academic ethics).

In AY 2011-12, results were analyzed using a scale ranging from Very Responsible to Irresponsible. Assessment activities were conducted again in AY 2012-13, first in September and again in April, given that the GE Social Sciences requirement is a two-semester course. Appendix 5.7, Table 6 presents the results of these assessment activities. As can be seen, outcomes were not met in September (one month into the academic year), but they were met by April. Transformative actions included discussing both the vignettes and the issues they presented. Results show that students responded well in all areas except environmental awareness and academic ethics. The instrument has been improved and is being used in 2015-16.

Assessment of Student Learning in Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

Undergraduate Programs

The undergraduate assessment process is faculty led, data driven, and course embedded. Each academic program is responsible for the creation of a five-year assessment plan with a plan for annual assessment of student learning, as well as the completion of a curricular matrix (see Appendix 5.9: Student Learning Assessment Curricular Matrix). These documents serve as guides for designing educational activities and instruments. The curricular matrix maps how learning outcomes are measured throughout each program's curriculum.

Undergraduate programs assess each of the learning outcomes included in the GSP and the content knowledge, skills, and aptitudes that should characterize specialization in each field or discipline. Given the diversity of our offerings, approaches to this process differ from program to program. Each program submits an annual report on student learning-assessment results to the OEAE, including a description of the activities implemented, assessment instruments used, and

analysis of results. It also identifies the transformative actions proposed to address any learning-outcome criteria not met that year.

The OEAE encourages the use of multiple assessment methods in more than one instance. Upon the analysis and discussion of results, its staff members assist professors in implementing transformative actions, either within the same year or the following cycle. The OEAE annual assessment cycle, which consists of six steps, ends with the evaluation of transformative actions, which takes place in the cycle following the one in which they are proposed. The first stage of our Institutional Plan for Assessing Student Learning ran from 2009 to 2014. In October of 2015 we began the first cycle of the second stage.

Graduate Programs

Implementation of the learning assessment process at the graduate level began in 2007. It took place in three phases: diagnostics, immersion, and institutionalization.

- The Diagnostic Phase: During this phase, each program determined its overall strength in developing students' research and critical-thinking competencies. In addition, assessment was formally integrated into the graduate-program evaluation carried out by the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs (now this is done by DEGI), in accordance with an institutional plan.
- The Immersion Phase: In this phase, which began in 2010-11, programs selected the learning outcomes to be measured, developed their own assessment instruments, and implemented them.
- The Integration Phase: This third phase began in 2013-14. It called for making the assessment of student learning routine in all of our graduate programs.

By 2015 all graduate programs had developed graduating student profiles (**GSP**s). Coursework and other degree requirements are designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to have mastered by completion of their degree. Programs are using assessment activities to address areas of weakness, enrich students' learning opportunities, and improve their offerings. Yet discussion about the possibility of developing a general Graduate Student Profile that is aligned with our mission should continue.

Assessment Results of Specific Undergraduate Programs

Annual assessment reports are completed by our academic programs and submitted to the OEAE. Each report addresses student-learning outcomes related both to GE and to the skills and knowledge inherent to the specific academic program, along with any transformative actions proposed. Recommendations based on assessment results are aimed at improving learning and strengthening future assessment processes. The transformative actions and their results are shared with the pertinent stakeholders.

Assessment of the student learning outcomes identified in the GSP are included in Table 5.2 for the third, fourth, and fifth years of the first five-year cycle. The table shows that assessment activities have been evenly distributed across the different outcomes that make up the profile and indicates that more attention should be given to ongoing learning. Assessment has supported an upward trend for 9 of the 12 learning outcomes, as suggested by data collected between 2011-12 and 2013-14.

Program Participation Rates

Academic programs assess different learning outcomes each year, and the evaluation of a given outcome is likely to extend across annual cycles. The rate of undergraduate program participation in the first five cycles' assessment stage and the number of cycles in which the programs have participated can be found in Appendix 5.10: Undergraduate Program Participation. Its Figure 1 shows consistent participation in assessment of cycles. It also shows that although the OEAE was closed in 2013-14 because of decisions made by the administration, 44 academic programs (64% of the total) continued to assess student learning. This evidences the commitment of faculty members to this process and the strength of the culture of assessment on campus.

Undergraduate programs have used the 13 learning outcomes that form part of the UPR-RP Mission in their assessment projects. Figures 2 and 3 of Appendix 5.10 shows how many programs assessed these outcomes by academic year. Learning outcomes related to effective communication, critical thinking; and information literacy have frequently been prioritized in five-year assessment plans of our programs.

Table 5.2: Undergraduate Program Participation in Assessment Cycles According to Learning Outcomes AY 2011-2014

Learning Outcomes	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14	
Effective Communication	42/57	74%	38/43	88%	37/40	93%
Critical Thinking	39/58	67%	40/46	87%	29/33	88%
Research and Creation	39/51	77%	13/18	72%	8/12	67%
Social Responsibility	31/45	69%	31/33	94%	27/28	96%
Information Literacy	36/52	69%	8/37	22%	9/32	28%
Content Knowledge, Skills, and Aptitude in the Academic Major	34/55	62%	37/44	84%	28/34	82%
Logical-Mathematical Reasoning	4/16	25%	4/7	57%	4/5	80%
Capacity for Independent Study	4/6	75%	2/4	50%	4/4	100%
Intellectual Curiosity	7/7	100%	2/3	67%	3/3	100%
Integration of Knowledge	29/39	74%	5/8	63%	5/7	71%
Ethical and Aesthetic Sensibility	5/16	31%	3/3	100%	2/3	67%
Appreciation for and Commitment to the Values and Ideals of Puerto Rican Society. . .	23/23	100%	24/24	100%	23/23	100%
Ongoing Learning	In process		In process		1/1	100%

Source: OEAE, October 2015

Table 5.3 shows the number of academic programs that took part in the assessment process in the last two years of the first assessment stage and the number of academic programs that used multiple measures in multiple instances. Progress can be observed in the assessment methodologies adopted by academic programs. Assessment coordinators have encouraged the use of diverse strategies, methods that rely on multiple measurements (i.e., multiple ways of evaluating a single learning outcome), and the collection of data in multiple instances. Their efforts have generally been successful. Of the 52 programs that took part in the 2012-13 cycle,

50 (96%) relied on multiple measurements and 52 (100%) collected the relevant data on more than one occasion.

Table 5.3: Undergraduate Academic Program Participation by Units (2012-13 and 2013-14)

College or School (Total no. of Programs)	Program Participation by College or School				Participating Programs that Assessed Learning Outcomes Using Multiple Methods				Participating Programs that Assessed Learning Outcomes in Multiple Instances			
	2012-13		2013-14		2012-13		2013-14		2012-13		2013-14	
Bus. Admin. (10)	1	10%	1	10%	1	100%	1	100%	1	100%	1	100%
Education (25)	23	92%	23	92%	23	100%	23	100%	23	100%	23	100%
Humanities (13)	12	92%	9	69%	11	92%	5	56%	12	100%	8	89%
Natural Sciences (8)	7	88%	7	88%	7	100%	5	71%	7	100%	6	86%
Social Sciences (9)	7	78%	1	11%	5	71%	1	100%	6	86%	1	100%
Communication (3)	3	100%	3	10%	3	100%	3	100%	3	100%	3	100%

Source: OEAE, October 2015

Assessment Results at the Graduate Level

Graduate-level program assessment projects have been ongoing, yet programs have progressed at different paces. Accredited programs tend to be more consistent because the assessment systems they implement tie the learning outcomes established in the UPR-RP Mission to the competencies, skills, and policies of their accreditation agency (see list of Accredited Graduate Programs). Programs in areas that are not accredited link their assessment practices to competencies and skills identified in the UPR-RP Mission. They use two sets of guidelines for alignment: those established by the DEGI and those established by the OEAE.

Diagnostic reports from 2008-09 identified research skills and critical thinking as competency areas in which students needed additional support. At that time, some graduate programs lacked updated descriptions of their program-specific learning outcomes and others did not have exit profiles for their students. As program descriptions were updated and GSPs were created, many graduate programs completed assessment activities related to research and critical thinking, both of which are mentioned in the UPR-RP Mission. This led to improved learning outcomes and to the use of exit profiles for those graduate programs that lacked them.

Since 2011-12, most graduate programs have completed assessment-of-learning projects that focus on four competencies: critical thinking, effective communication, research, and creativity. Each graduate program also selected additional learning outcomes associated with knowledge and skills in its own area. Accredited programs incorporated additional learning outcomes and standards for measuring them in their assessment cycles. Particular areas of emphasis important to individual accrediting agencies were aligned with those of the UPR-RP.

Many of the transformative actions from this period relate to making learning expectations and program requirements clearer to students. Students, faculty members, and administrators now have more precise information about academic expectations. Education (MEd and EdD), Information Sciences and Technology (MIS), and Business Administration (MBA) carried out curricular revisions. Some of the responses to assessment findings resulted in transformative actions and related improvements that took place outside of the classroom. A summary of these is provided in Appendix 5.11: Summary of Changes Implemented in Graduate Programs.

Most graduate programs assessed effective communication and critical thinking in 2012-13. In 2013-14 assessment categories were expanded to include research and creation, and most programs met the expected minimum outcomes. Table 5.4 presents the number of graduate programs that assessed learning outcomes in AY 2013-14 (of a total of 32). It also shows that a high percentage of programs consistently achieved their targets.

Table 5.4: Graduate Program Assessment Participation by Learning Outcomes (2013-14)

N=32 programs

Learning Outcomes	Number that Assessed Learning Outcomes	Number and % Achieving Desired Outcomes	
Effective Communication	27	25	93%
Critical Thinking	22	20	91%
Research and Creation	26	26	100%
Information Literacy	1	1	100%
Content Knowledge, Skills, and Aptitude in Specialization Area	6	6	100%

Source: OEAE, October 2015

As of 2015, all graduate programs have profiles detailing the research skills and learning outcomes that students should acquire. Programs rely on assessment to continually improve themselves and enrich the learning opportunities provided to students.

Transformative Actions Proposed: Undergraduate and Graduate

Undergraduate and graduate programs are responsible for disseminating learning outcomes and providing a description of the transformative actions they implement after data analysis. Transformative actions can be classified as short-, intermediate-, and long-term. Most of the transformative actions that academic programs propose are either short- or intermediate-term. As shown in Table 5.5, programs have consistently responded to assessment findings by proposing transformative actions that will improve teaching and student learning. Most have implemented these and assessed their effectiveness in subsequent assessment cycles.

Examples of Transformative Actions

A wide range of actions have contributed to the alignment of goals, objectives, and teaching strategies. Some of the short-term actions from the 2011-12 cycle include discussing evaluation rubrics with students along with course assignments, increasing specific types or numbers of course assignments or exercises, and providing support such as tutoring, office-hour consultations, and workshops.

Examples of intermediate-term transformative actions are requiring students to take prerequisites before enrolling in upper-level courses, creating assignments to address problems leading to weak performance, and implementing classroom activities that allow students to practice and receive feedback on their use of newly acquired knowledge and skills. These are strategic in that they provide learners with opportunities for deeper engagement with ideas and skills that are challenging to master.

Some transformative actions that require long-term implementation include modifying the curriculum, developing new courses (and securing approval by department- and college-level curriculum committees), reorganizing courses, and reorganizing or reprioritizing the time allotted to topics covered across consecutive courses. These actions have all been directed at opportunities for improving student-learning outcomes identified through assessment activities. Faculty members have also developed new courses to ensure the development of competencies included in a program's exit profile.

Table 5.5: Transformative Actions Proposed by Academic Programs in 2011-12

2011-12 Assessment Cycle Participants	Number of Programs Proposing Transformative Actions	Number of Programs Implementing and Assessing Transformative Actions		Number of Transformative Actions with Budgetary Impact	
Business Administration	10	10	100%	0	0.0%
Education	23	23	100%	0	0.0%
Humanities	12	5	41.7%	7	58.3%
Natural Sciences	8	6	75.0%	2	25.0%
Social Sciences	7	5	71.4%	1	14.3%
Communication	3	0	0.0%	1	33.3%

Source: OEAE, October 2015

Benefits and Patterns

Details about the process of learning-outcomes assessment at the program level point to some of the benefits resulting from it. For example, the Art History Program assessed critical thinking three times in a semester. After the first and second exercises, desired outcomes were not met. In response to this challenge, the faculty decided to incorporate new learning activities into the teaching process, and in the third assessment exercise, the expected outcome was met. This is an example of formative assessment that has been encouraged in our academic programs. Prior to this experience, the Art History faculty had not formally recognized this competency as one in which students needed additional support and direction. In this and similar cases, faculty have become more aware of difficulties students face in the application of new skills and knowledge.

General patterns are evident across some assessment findings and the transformative actions that programs put in place. For example, effective written communication has received attention from numerous programs. After reviewing assessment results, the School of Communication designed a required course on effective writing for all its students. Faculty members in the College of Education designed a program called Writing Zones that consists of workshops for all students in its Teacher Preparation program. These transformative actions contributed to addressing students' needs in effective communication.

Our undergraduate and graduate programs also regularly assess co-curricular activities. During the first semester 2015-16, for example, over 30 co-curricular and professional development activities were assessed in the CGS. A summary is available on the CGS webpage. Assessment focused on generating meaningful data to ensure that these activities complemented classroom-based learning and contributed to the development of competencies contained in our GSP.

Assessment Initiatives across Undergraduate Programs (Campus Level)

Assessment of student learning at the campus level, coordinated by the OEAE, focuses on the following learning outcomes: effective communication in Spanish, effective communication in English, logical-mathematical reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking skills. Details of the assessment results for the learning outcomes discussed below can be found on the OEAE webpage. A timetable of the assessment tests for all competencies can be found in Appendix 5.13: Schedule for Campus-Level Assessment of Student Learning AY 2007-08 to 2016-17).

Effective Communication in Spanish

Communication skills have been measured at the campus level since the first assessment cycle. Initially, a written test designed by The College Board was administered in August of 2007 and August of 2008. The areas assessed were theme and structure, lexical competency, mastery of syntactic structures, and grammatical correctness. A rubric with a scale of 20-80 was used to assess the essay portion of the test. Results showed achievement of 58% (409 students) and 82% (1604 students) for the first and second exam administration, respectively. In August of 2012, OEAE personnel completed a third assessment for this competency. Spanish professors expert in relevant areas designed a test similar to the previous one. The UPR-RP was in charge of all aspects of this effort, dramatically increasing cost-effectiveness. A total of 1,686 students, 80% of the incoming freshmen class, took the exam and 73% of the students tested achieved the desired outcome.

Test results were discussed with the leadership and faculty of the relevant academic units. Results were also sent to the Spanish departments of the colleges of General Studies and Humanities so they could implement transformative actions in the necessary language areas. They were also sent to students via email along with recommendations based on their performance. The recommendations suggested appropriate courses, announced upcoming workshops, and gave information about programs and offices that provide academic counseling and support.

An exit test to assess communication skills in Spanish was administered in April of 2015 to students in advanced Spanish courses. Good results were seen in the areas of morphosyntactic structure and lexical mastery. Weaker areas identified were theme, structure, and orthography, and these are being addressed through implementation of appropriate transformative actions.

A fourth institutional test to assess effective written communication skills in Spanish, similar to the one administered in August of 2012, was planned and designed by UPR-RP Spanish professors and administered to the incoming 2015-16 cohort. Some 77% of the incoming freshmen class (2,258 students) took the test. Results are pending.

Further details about campus-level assessment initiatives in this area are provided in section 1 of Appendix 5.12.

Effective Communication in English

As part of institutional efforts to assess writing skills in English, and in coordination with The College Board, the English Language Assessment System for Hispanics II (**ELASH II**) was administered to a sample of 819 incoming students in the first semester of AY 2008-09. ELASH II evaluates listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and language use. The scores were categorized in four levels: advanced, high intermediate, low intermediate, and novice. Scores on the test indicate that 89% of the students scored at the advanced and high intermediate levels in listening comprehension, with 11% percent at the low intermediate and novice levels.

Another significant measure for assessing effective communication in English is provided by the English Department of the College of Humanities. This department administers the Humanities English Placement Test (HEPT) for the evaluation and placement of undergraduate students in the most appropriate levels of competency. This placement test is offered twice per academic year. It assesses written and oral comprehension and composition. Assessment results provided by this department reveal that the majority of students placed at higher levels. Detailed results for assessment efforts of this learning outcome can be found in section 2 of Appendix 5.12: Campus Level Assessment of Learning Outcomes.

The OEAE is also planning, together with the College of Humanities, to administer an exit test in advanced courses during the second semester of AY 2015-16 to assess English communication skills.

Logical-Mathematical Reasoning

As an OEAE initiative, a committee of professors with expertise in this area created an instrument to assess logical-mathematical reasoning skills. After a series of meetings, the committee decided the areas to be assessed in the test aligned with the learning objectives in this area. The test was validated and administered to a series of sections of Math courses taken by students who are not from the Colleges of Business Administration and Natural Sciences. They take these to comply with General Education requirements. The test was also administered to the students of the College of General Studies who enroll in ESGE 3008 and ESGE 3009 courses to comply with the logical-mathematical reasoning component. This test was administered for the first time in May 2011.

The average test result was 11.5 correct answers out of 22 total items. The OEAE scheduled a meeting with the Director of the Mathematics Department for the discussion of the results, in order to discuss how to strengthen the teaching of those learning objectives and the students' logical-mathematical reasoning skills. A departmental meeting with the OEAE personnel also took place. As a result, professors proposed transformative actions. They agreed to implement a series of out of class tutoring sessions for students enrolled in the mathematic courses in which the logical-mathematical reasoning skills covered on the exam are taught. Scheduling the tutoring sessions outside official meeting hours provided students with one-on-one assistance.

During the second semester of AY 2011-12, additional measures geared to course modifications were adopted and tutor training strengthened. In addition, the effectiveness of the tutoring program was evaluated. The department's Director asked the OEAE to administer the test again to see if improvement in student learning could be documented.

The test was administered again in May 2013 and November 2014. The results were basically the same as those of 2011**.** In view of the low performance, the OEAE personnel met with the department Director and the program Assessment Coordinator to propose the design an educational activity to improve student's logical-mathematics skills, since the tutorial sessions were not effective.

A similar process was followed to design a test to measure logical-mathematical reasoning skills for students from the College of Business Administration who take Pre-Calculus (Quantitative Methods – MECU 3031) to comply with the requirements in this area. Assessment findings resulted in various transformative actions and related changes. These include a major revision of all three Quantitative Methods Courses (i.e., MECU 3001, General Mathematics; MECU 3031, Pre-Calculus; and MECU 3032, Calculus). Additional results include: (1) a 2012 summer immersion program for students in Quantitative Methods (geared toward recently admitted first-year Business Administration students who obtained low scores in the Mathematics Achievement section of the College Board entrance examination, (2) revision of the content of the three aforementioned Quantitative Methods courses; (3) creation of a website for students enrolled in Quantitative Methods courses to reinforce topics discussed in the classroom; and (4) strengthening of the Quantitative Methods courses tutoring program.

Further details about campus-level assessment initiatives in this area are provided in section 3 of Appendix 5.12

Information Literacy

Student learning outcomes in the area of information literacy are assessed in a number of academic programs and special projects: the Information Literacy and Research Program in the School of Architecture; the Project for the Integration of Information Literacy into the Curriculum (**PICIC** in Spanish) in the colleges of General Studies, Humanities, Business Administration, and Education; and the Natural Sciences Information Literacy Project. Details about these projects may be found on the OEAE webpage and in section 5 of Appendix 5.12.

Critical Thinking

Although this learning outcome is measured at the program level, the OEAE considers it important to also measure this competency at the institutional level in order to have uniform data that can be compared across units. In the second semester of AY 2014-15, a committee of faculty members with expertise in this area was named to develop a test to measure critical-thinking skills at the campus level. It has already begun the design of the instrument. In addition, a pilot project has been planned using representative samples of students enrolled in advanced courses. After validation of the instrument, assessment of this learning outcome will take place with a larger sample. Undergraduate academic programs have been encouraged to include critical thinking in the next Assessment of Student Learning cycle. Further details about campus-level assessment initiatives related to critical thinking are provided in section 5 of Appendix 5.12

Improvement of Assessment Processes

OEAE Services and Activities

The OEAE has organized numerous events to inform campus constituencies about assessment activities and results. These include meetings with deans, associate deans, department chairs,

assessment coordinators, and the General Student Council. The OEAE has also shared information through seminars, workshops, presentations, webinars, and electronic media.

As part of this self-study, an online questionnaire was developed to evaluate the OEAE's effectiveness. The response rate was 61%. The questionnaire sought general perceptions of the services provided by the OEAE. Services were classified as good or excellent by 94% of respondents; 97% percent of the respondents indicated that the activities organized were either appropriate or very appropriate; and 89% percent of respondents classified the effectiveness of these activities as either effective or very effective**.** Results of the evaluation can be found in Appendix 5.14: Evaluation of OEAE Services.

At the beginning of AY 2014-15, the OEAE, in coordination with the Center for Academic Excellence, developed a Learning Assessment Training Cycle. The activities included nine seminars and workshops and a Learning Assessment Mini-Fair. Graduate and undergraduate programs set up information stations related to their learning assessment process. Faculty and students from all colleges and schools attended, as did visitors from private institutions of higher education and UPR System campuses.

Online Learning Assessment System (OLAS)

An online application was developed as a special project in MATE 4996 (Development of Web-Based Applications) to facilitate faculty involvement with assessment activities. The campus's Academic and Administrative Technologies Division (**DTAA** in Spanish) later extended the web application, which became the Online Learning Assessment System (OLAS) and was introduced as a pilot project during the second semester of AY 2014-15. Participants included four undergraduate programs (Information and Journalism, Audiovisual Communication, Public Relations and Information, and Modern Languages) and two master's-level programs (Social Work and Communication). More programs are taking part during AY 2015-16. This online system assists helps faculty, administration, and staff in collecting, sharing, and using assessment data in more efficient and meaningful ways. Additional institutional support is needed in order to facilitate programming and training for participating professors. A report of the assessment results of the programs that took part in the 2014-15 pilot project can be found in Appendix 5.15: OLAS Pilot Results.

III. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Stronger Foundations for the Assessment of Student Learning

Since the last MSCHE decennial review in 2005, the UPR-RP has strengthened campus-wide implementation of student-learning assessment by planning, organizing, systematizing, and sustaining the process at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Expanding Assessment Efforts

The units and programs responsible for assessment are actively encouraging rapid development of effective assessment measures, and realistic timelines are in place. The institution is committed to expanding, intensifying, and improving the coordination of assessment projects at all levels and across all units.

Positive Results of Assessment

Improvements in the assessment of student learning are substantial; especially noteworthy is the active participation of professors, programs, units, and the coordination of campus-level initiatives. The ongoing development of an assessment culture is also evident in larger assessment samples and evaluation of co-curricular activities.

Transformative Actions

Data derived from assessment activities has permitted faculty members, assessment coordinators, and administrators to improve teaching practices and learning experiences by implementing transformative actions. These actions have led to improvements in the areas where results have indicated they are most needed. They have also increased communication about learning outcomes between professors and students.

Recommendation

Graduating Student Profile

Discussion about the possibility of developing a Graduating Student Profile that is aligned with our mission statement should continue. It would provide a general exit profile for graduates of our master's programs and one for our doctoral programs.

Next Steps

Continued Support for the OEAE

The DAA has identified a larger working space for the OEAE. It will ensure that the OEAE has the support and staff needed to continue to carry out its work.

Adoption of Practices

Campus administrators should adopt the following practices (some of which are in place informally or only in certain campus units) in support of the assessment of student learning and ongoing improvements in teaching and learning:

- Establish budget priorities to ensure the active participation of assessment coordinators;
- Continue to update technology related to the campus's assessment processes, including the full implementation of OLAS;
- Increase the use of student-learning assessment findings in decision-making at the academic and administrative levels.

Logical-Mathematical Reasoning

Assessment results indicate that many students need additional support in this area, especially non-science majors. Strategies to ensure that all students acquire and demonstrate skills in this area should continue to be developed.

CHAPTER 6: CULTIVATING KNOWLEDGE AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention – The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and to retain them until their educational goals are reached.

Standard 9: Student Support Services – The institution provides a diverse student body with all the support services necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities – Programs or activities characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet institutional standards.

STANDARD 8: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND RETENTION

I. INTRODUCTION

At the UPR-RP, students' achievement, success, well-being, and ability to complete the degree are vital to the fulfillment of our mission. The institution invests significant resources in fostering and facilitating student health, college-preparedness skill levels, engagement in academic and co-curricular activities, and participation in learning opportunities that make fundamental connections to the larger local and international community. This is done to ensure that all students admitted have access to necessary support services and the optimal conditions for completing their degree.

The UPR-RP leadership takes seriously the issue of recruiting and admitting a diverse student body, including first-generation students, public- and private-school students, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Our institution is working to make sure that qualified students from public high schools, who may have not had access to the academic guidance and resources available to their counterparts in private schools, are aware of the options and support services available on our campus. The UPR-RP also recruits talented students with special skills in areas such as the sciences, arts, and sports. VU 2016 emphasizes the importance of our recruitment focus and our commitment to student retention and progress: "the high quality of student recruitment and the university experience will promote students' continuous academic advancement, intellectual and cultural enrichment, and integral development."

The current admissions regulations stipulated by Board of Trustees Certification 25, 2003-04 (see Appendix 6.1), establishes that the "University of Puerto Rico will authorize the admission of a number of students taking into consideration their abilities, talents or exceptional conditions." Furthermore, "each institutional unit must indicate the abilities and talents that it will consider based on the affinity of said skills with the institution's academic programs, course offerings, co-curricular activities, and available support services." Admission and retention goals of the special-skills cohort are evaluated annually in a report that the Registrar's Office submits to the Admissions Office in the Vice Presidency of Student Affairs.

In January of 2015, the Governing Board instructed each campus within the UPR System to improve its access, retention, and graduation rates and adopt mechanisms to increase socio-economically disadvantaged students' access to the institution. Moreover, the new policy aims to

strengthen support services for qualified students from all backgrounds. Governing Board Certification 50, 2014-15 mandates that admission rates are to be increased by 10% and all programs are to fill their capacity to 100%. This initiative responds to the institutional mission, which promotes social equity and the positive transformation of Puerto Rican society.

Certification 50 is especially significant considering (1) differences in the socioeconomic profiles of students in public and private high schools, (2) differences in the quality of education received by public and private high school students, (3) a recent decline in the number of students from public high schools who study at the UPR-RP, and (4) lower retention and graduation rates among UPR-RP students who come from the public system. Developed by the UPR-RP DAA in coordination with each of the UPR-RP's colleges and schools, the campus plan (which identifies short-, medium-, and long-term measures and implementation methods for making the campus more accessible and improving student support) was presented to the Academic Senate by the Dean of Academic Affairs and approved on April 23, 2015.

Undergraduate Admissions

Each year the admissions policy for the UPR System establishes a "general admissions index," or **IGS** (calculated by a formula that takes into account the high school GPA and the College Board or SAT scores in Verbal and Mathematical Reasoning), for each academic program. The IGS is set by the UPR System Office of Admissions, which, in conjunction with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs (**DSA**) of each of the system's 11 campuses, coordinates first contact with students. The minimum IGS scores for each academic program are published annually so that students may determine their likelihood of admission to any given campus and/or program. Applicants choose a department or academic program to which they wish to apply and, depending on the program's quota, they may be admitted, placed on a waiting list (and later, circumstances permitting, either admitted or offered another choice of program to apply to), or denied admission.

Accessing the Admissions Policies

Admissions policies may be accessed online as well as in print materials. Potential students access these in multiple ways, including through high school guidance counselors. Guidelines and criteria are clearly spelled out so that applicants can survey the options available to them and make informed decisions. Individual programs are listed in our catalog and program descriptions are included on the websites of individual colleges, schools, and departments.

The Application, Acceptance of Admission, and Reconsideration

For the large majority of our undergraduates, the admissions process begins when the applicant takes the Evaluation and University Admission Test (**PEAU** in Spanish), which is given by the College Entrance Examination Board. Students who wish to be tested in English can opt to take the SAT. Applicants submit an electronic application to the UPR System. The application indicates campus preference and a maximum of three choices for an academic major. Admission is determined based on the applicant's academic credentials and the enrollment capacity of the program he or she wishes to enter.

Students who are accepted receive notification in April. Those who are not admitted are notified of a time period during which they can request reconsideration. A distinct process known as extended admission is used for applicants with disabilities or functional diversity. In these cases

different criteria are used to determine admission standards, as stipulated by Governing Board Certification 11 2014-15.

Orientations

The UPR-RP DSA is in charge of receiving new freshman students. Each July, it holds welcoming activities for incoming students at which students receive their student ID card and the student number they will use for the remainder of their academic career at the institution. Orientations are an important opportunity for students to seek answers to questions about general requirements, academic programs, financial aid, and support services.

Graduate Admissions

Requirements

Applicants to our graduate programs must hold a bachelor's degree or the equivalent from a recognized college or university and have a minimum grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. In addition, they should have knowledge of both English and Spanish and the capacity for critical analysis. In addition to these general requirements, each of our graduate programs has its own requirements for admission. These requirements are posted online with other information that can assist applicants. Along with the application, most programs require recommendation letters, official academic transcripts, an entrance exam (e.g., EXADEP, GMAT, GRE), and payment of the admissions fee. Some programs require an example of a scholarly work or portfolio, a statement of purpose, a professional license, or a CV.

Formal Process

The graduate admissions process is coordinated by the DEGI. Students apply online through Apply Yourself. Each graduate program has an admissions committee that evaluates applications and makes admission decisions. Rejected applicants are informed that they may petition for reconsideration by a date established by the graduate program. Graduate programs offer a welcome orientation for new students.

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Availability of Information

Academic Programs

Program descriptions are readily available on official webpages. According to accreditation guidelines, expected learning outcomes and institution-wide assessment results for programs should also be available to prospective students. Currently these are not always easily accessible. Each program has an established set of learning outcomes and a student profile, available in a document approved by the Academic Senate when the program was approved or revised. However, this information does not uniformly appear on all departmental and program websites. Data about the assessment of student-learning outcomes is available on the website of the Office of Student Learning Evaluation. Learning outcomes for specific courses are clearly indicated on syllabi, and most syllabi are online.

Information on Financial Aid

Information about financial aid in its many forms is readily available through the main page of the campus website, which has a link to an overview of the Financial Aid Program, a page containing answers to frequently asked questions, downloadable forms, and useful, easy-to-

access information. Significantly, prospective students can also review a comprehensive list of the different types of financial aid available, including a list of scholarships sponsored by private entities. This list includes the Program of Formative Academic Experiences (PEAF in Spanish), one of the most important sources of economic support for many graduate students, but details about the program (e.g., that it includes a stipend and tuition waiver) are not included. These should probably be included (or provided via a link) since they could help attract potential students and provide easy-to-find answers to applicants' questions.

Transfer Policy

The policy for transferring credits earned outside the UPR-RP, which was also addressed in Chapter 4, is clearly defined and accessible on our main website.

Undergraduate Admissions Formula

The current formula used for admitting new students gives 50% weight to the IGS and 50% to the entrance exam. A study should be considered to ascertain whether this is still the best method for determining applicants' level of academic preparedness. Recent statistical data specific to admissions trends on our campus and the progress of students admitted by alternative processes could be used in evaluating the adequacy of the current formula.

Undergraduate Enrollment

As shown in Table 6.1, the UPR-RP, on average, admits approximately 3,000 students annually. A marked decrease in enrollment in AY 2011-12 was motivated by the closure of campus and a student strike that was organized in response to the establishment of a fiscal emergency fee. The decrease had the greatest impact in the Colleges of Social Science and Education; nevertheless, within the next four years enrollment returned to prior levels.

Table 6.1: Number of Undergraduate Students Enrolled by College and School (2008-2015)

College or School	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Business Administration	557	524	399	281	352	405	418	558
Architecture	46	48	49	48	61	57	56	52
Natural Sciences	718	727	650	617	672	822	636	670
Social Sciences	386	439	414	220	246	365	447	535
Communication	182	157	139	113	120	140	126	112
Education	534	625	428	251	265	280	357	511
General Studies	56	61	63	62	87	152	103	104
Humanities	337	328	315	246	275	354	355	439
Articulated Transfer	37	50	37	45	37	29	34	37
Other (Skills and PECA)	151	179	145	109	164	182	132	176
Total	3,004	3,138	2,639	1,992	2,279	2,786	2,664	3,194

Source: Central Administration, October 2015

Characteristics of the Undergraduate Cohort

Number of Applicants and Admitted Students

Table 6.2 presents characteristics that suggest how the UPR-RP compares to other campuses within the UPR System. In 2014, the campus received 3,809 applications, which is close to a thousand more (22%) than the second most-requested campus, UPR Mayagüez, with 2,960. The UPR-RP admitted proportionally fewer students, with a 71.3% acceptance rate. Other campuses have acceptance rates ranging from 73.3% (UPR Utuado) to 90.4% (UPR Aguadilla).

Gender

Also notable is the high percentage of female students on nearly all campuses. This reflects the gender distribution characteristic of Puerto Rican society and the challenges that many males face in completing high school with a solid academic record. Table 6.2 shows that the percentage of males studying at the UPR-RP is among the lowest in the system. Put conversely, the UPR-RP's percentage of female students is among the highest in the system, at 59.8%.

The profile of enrolled students illustrates a consistent pattern over the past five years, as evidenced by aggregate data generated by the Office of Admissions. For the 2010-2014 entry cohorts, six out of every ten incoming students were females from private schools in the metropolitan area. Members of this cohort have scores that show that their verbal aptitude is statistically similar to their math aptitude, in the 75th to 78th percentiles. On average, this group has a general admissions index of 317 (of the range 260-391 in AY 2014-15), the second highest of the UPR System's 11 campuses. On the one hand, this suggests that many of the most competitive students consistently apply to our campus; on the other, it underscores that our most competitive applicants tend to share some basic demographic characteristics, with males and students from the public education system relatively underrepresented.

Table 6.2: UPR System Admissions Overview, AY 2014-15

Campus	Applicants	Students Admitted	% of Applicants Admitted	% Female	% from Public Schools
Río Piedras	**3,809**	**2,736**	**71.3**	**59.8**	**36.5**
Mayagüez	2,960	2,486	83.5	48.3	49.2
Cayey	1,001	889	88	63.3	58.8
Arecibo	1,283	1,011	78.3	59.1	75.3
Humacao	1,264	969	76.6	60.2	69.2
Ponce	1,222	932	76.2	56.8	70.6
Aguadilla	913	826	90.4	58.6	77.8
Carolina	1,342	1,054	78.5	60.5	51.9
Utuado	1,946	569	73.3	55.5	74.4
Bayamón	1,764	1,345	76.2	51.8	49.1
UPR System	**16,127**	**13,024**	**80.7**	**56.5**	**55.8**

Source: Central Administration Admissions Office, June 2015

Students from Public High Schools

Table 6.2 shows the number of students per campus who come from public schools. At the UPR-RP the percentage is 36.5%. On other campuses the percentage ranges from 49.1% (Bayamón) to 77.8% (Aguadilla). The acceptance rate for public schools at the system level is 55.8%.

Increasing the percentage of students from public high schools on our campus is challenging for several reasons. First, a large number of students come from areas geographically close to campus, and in the San Juan metropolitan area private schools outnumber public schools. Second, although the UPR-RP is widely recognized and highly respected, potential students in the more economically marginalized parts of the metropolitan area and island sometimes do not see the institution as a feasible place for them to study. (Reasons for this vary, but students may be hesitant to relocate to San Juan and in some cases counselors, teachers, and parents may encourage them to consider the programs offered by institutions with less demanding academic standards. Also, some students from small towns and rural areas report having been discouraged from studying in our campus because of its urban setting.) Third, in Puerto Rico, public-school dropout rates are high (as high as 40%), and both the adult literacy rates and bilingual statistics reflect gaps that make UPR-RP admission and retention standards difficult for many to meet. Thus, students who begin in the public system are less likely to graduate from high school with the credentials needed to be admitted to the UPR-RP.

Table 6.3 reveals general patterns in the distribution of students from public and private high schools. Incoming students from public schools tend to gravitate toward majors in four campus units: Social Sciences, Education, General Studies, and Humanities. Data from 2013, the most recent available at the time of this writing, show that some half or more of the students admitted to programs in these colleges came from the public system. Students from public high schools constitute a relatively small percentage of the students admitted to programs in the College of Business Administration and the School of Architecture; these units admitted groups in which students from public high schools constituted just 34% and 28% of their incoming classes, respectively. The public-private division of students admitted to the College of Natural Sciences resembles that of the campus as a whole, with approximately 36% of incoming students from the public system and 64% from the private. The School of Communications shows a similar pattern.

Table 6.3: Distribution of Provenance (Public or Private High School) of Incoming Class by College or School, AY 2013-14

UPR-RP College or School	Private School		Public School		Unknown		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Architecture	34	72	13	28	0	0	**47**
Business Admin.	213	66	108	34	0	0	**321**
Communication	60	60	39	40	0	0	**99**
Education	86	50	85	50	1	<.01	**172**
General Studies	174	52	155	48	2	<.01	**331**
Humanities	151	58	105	42	0	0	**256**
Natural Sciences	461	64	252	36	6	<.01	**719**
Social Sciences	163	56	128	44	0	0	**291**
Totals	**1,352**	**60**	**885**	**40**	**9**	**<.01**	**2,236**

Source: OPEP, June 2015

Graduate Admissions and Enrollment

Graduate Admissions

In general, over the past five years the number of graduate applications and admissions has remained fairly steady. A larger number of applications are received for August admission than for January; one reason is that some programs do not accept applications for January. Table 6.4 reveals several general tendencies related to our graduate admissions. First, most graduate students study at the master's level. In 2015, for example, 74% of our applicants (550 of 740) applied at this level. The average acceptance rate at the master's level between 2010 and 2015 was 73%. Second, admission is most competitive in programs at the doctoral level, with an average August acceptance rate of 66%.

The category "other" in Table 6.4 includes "special admissions." This group generally includes students who have not been accepted to a program because they lack a prerequisite. Some of them are given permission to take a minimal number of credits in a program before formal application.

Table 6.4: Graduate Student Applications and Admissions by Level, AY 2010-11 through First Semester 2015-16

	2010-11						2011-12						2012-13					
Semester	**1**			**2**			**1**			**2**			**1**			**2**		
	Appl.	**Adm.**	**%**	**Appl.**	**Adm.**	**%**	**Appl.**	**Adm.**	**%**	**Appl.**	**Adm.**	**%**	**Appl.**	**Adm.**	**%**	**Appl.**	**Adm.**	**%**
Master's	994	680	68	253	177	70	711	581	82	285	230	81	842	614	73	308	261	85
PhD	240	165	69	54	39	72	179	117	65	75	63	84	211	133	63	79	63	80
Other	114	93	82	71	56	92	94	83	88	110	104	94	188	171	91	82	77	94
Total	**1,348**	**938**	**70**	**378**	**272**	**72**	**984**	**781**	**79**	**470**	**397**	**84**	**1,241**	**918**		**469**	**401**	**86**

Source: DEGI, June 2015

	2013-14						2014-15						2015-16		
Semester	**1**			**2**			**1**			**2**			**1**		
	Appl.	**Adm.**	**%**	**Appl.**	**Adm.**	**%**	**Appl.**	**Adm.**	**%**	**Appl.**	**Adm.**	**%**	**Appl.**	**Adm.**	**%**
Master's	853	650	76	405	281	69	800	602	75	283	222	78	860	550	64
PhD	221	139	63	87	61	70	210	143	69	68	47	69	213	136	64
Other	199	169	85	55	52	94	162	144	88	93	69	74	98	54	55
Total	**1,273**	**958**	**75**	**547**	**394**	**78**	**1,172**	**889**	**75**	**444**	**338**	**76**	**1,171**	**740**	**63**

Source: Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, October 2015

Graduate Enrollment

Enrollment for graduate students has remained fairly consistent between the AYs 2008 and 2015; however, some programs show significant shifts from one year to the next, as can be seen in Table 6.5. Factors that contextualize these patterns are currently being discussed by the Council for Graduate Studies and Research (CEGI in Spanish).

Table 6.5 Number of Graduate Students Enrolled by College and School (AY 2008-2015)

College or School	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Business Administration	145	180	143	136	132	133	143	131
Architecture	55	50	46	47	43	59	44	51
Natural Sciences	100	140	127	118	115	97	96	131
Social Sciences	267	334	292	281	327	341	313	316
Science, Technology Information	85	103	74	85	87	101	65	81
Communication	30	17	17	23	19	15	23	19
Education	215	228	217	179	264	247	248	276
Humanities	253	276	243	252	277	312	359	241
Planning	61	66	51	57	55	47	37	38
Total	1,211	1,394	1,210	1,178	1,319	1,352	1,228	1,284

Source: DEGI, October 2015

Undergraduate Recruitment

UPR Central Administration includes a recruitment office, but campuses are responsible for developing complementary efforts. Recently, substantial energy has been devoted to increasing high school students' exposure to the UPR-RP and familiarity with learning in a university context. Area high school seniors are sent a recruitment letter by conventional mail (see Appendix 6.2). The following section details various other initiatives that seek to promote the institution, diversify its applicant pool, and increase the male student population.

University Collective for Access

The Office of the President launched a pilot project at five UPR campuses, including the UPR-RP, to facilitate access to the institution for students from lower socioeconomic levels. The project, University Collective for Access, began in August of 2014 and caters to selected public schools from the San Juan metropolitan area, offering tutoring and academic support in subjects such as Spanish, English, and Math, as well as orientation about university life. It prepares students by encouraging them to apply and ensuring that they have the academic credentials and study skills needed to succeed.

Current Initiatives

The Summer School Initiative familiarizes youth with the campus and university life. Participants take a pre-university class in English, Spanish, Science, or Math that combines classroom and online activities. This program exceeded expectations in 2015, generating over two hundred applications to the UPR-RP. Another program first funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Bridge to Success has been offered since 2011. Through this

program, students from neighboring high schools attend a two-week summer session on the Humanities. In September and October, the UPR-RP holds a large-scale recruitment event, known as the Open House, for potential students interested in both undergraduate and graduate programs. Since 2010, the campus has been visited by over 10,000 students from 118 high schools.

In many campus departments and colleges, faculty members committed to the wider community help recruit students for the campus by visiting high schools. Several of these faculty members are active in community-outreach programs in the Río Piedras neighborhood and beyond. One example is the College of Natural Sciences, where professors often serve as mentors for high school science fairs. In 2012, one distinguished professor was in charge of the regional fair in the neighboring city of Bayamón. He has served as a research mentor for middle school and high school students and led discussions with parents, school directors, and science teachers about the importance of research, the necessity of educating and training researchers for the island, and careers and funding opportunities in Puerto Rico.

Graduate Student Recruitment

In order to reach a wider range and larger number of prospective students, the DEGI promotes the campus's graduate academic offerings both locally and internationally. Key to this effort is the in-progress redesigning of the electronic support systems that have been used to disseminate information about our academic programs. The DEGI also organizes a Graduate Studies Fair each year. In 2015, the UPR-RP, UPR Medical Sciences Campus, and UPR Mayagüez took part.

In addition to accessing potential candidates for graduate programs through technological resources, the DEGI regularly takes part in graduate study fairs held on campus, in San Juan, and on other campuses of the UPR System. DEGI also encourages our graduate programs to establish collaborative agreements with institutions of higher education in other countries as a way of fostering international academic mobility among students, faculty members, and researchers. For example, after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the UPR-RP brought a group of students from the state university of Haiti to study in our College of Natural Sciences. In July of 2015, the campus renewed its agreement between our School of Law and the University of Barcelona Law School that allows students to earn a joint degree and study at both institutions.

Undergraduate Retention Rates

The UPR-RP recognizes that improving the study skills of our first-year students is essential. The DSA works with the campus's colleges and schools to offer multiple activities designed to ensure retention in programs. The colleges and schools, in turn, provide support services through guidance officials and academic advisors. Additional campus-wide services are offered through counselors, tutorials, social workers, psychologists, and the Office for Students with Disabilities.

With respect to retention rates, the campus compares favorably with similar institutions in the U.S. As presented in Table 6.6, data show that 85% or more of first-year students have continued on to their second year every year since 2005. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) records data that can be considered alongside data from our institution. For 2007, for example, the average retention rate between the first and second years at comparable public universities was 80%, substantially lower than at the UPR-RP, which that year was 90%.

Table 6.6: Retention Rates for Undergraduate Cohorts, AY 2000-01 to 2013-14

Year	Students	Continue 2nd Year (%)	Continue 3rd Year (%)	Continue 4th Year (%)	Continue 5th Year (%)	Continue 6th Year (%)	Continue 7th Year (%)
2000	**2,976**	90.1	78.9	72.7	55.1	26.8	11.3
2001	**3,018**	87.1	77.1	71.5	53.1	25.9	11.5
2002	**3,109**	88.5	77.4	68.9	52.9	27.0	12.0
2003	**2,980**	88.0	76.2	68.9	52.4	26.4	12.7
2004	**2,992**	87.1	74.5	68.0	51.6	25.2	10.8
2005	**2,342**	89.6	82.1	76.4	56.2	26.2	10.2
2006	**2,329**	89.5	81.9	76.2	56.9	26.8	12.1
2007	**2,658**	90.6	81.4	71.3	51.3	24.6	11.0
2008	**2,780**	91.8	79.3	67.8	52.9	26.3	10.2
2009	**2,825**	86.1	71.1	65.2	53.7	27.3	--
2010	**2,228**	86.9	78.8	73.6	57.4	--	--
2011	**1,715**	92.0	83.8	78.3	--	--	--
2012	**1,985**	90.6	82.0	--	--	--	--
2013	**2,205**	91.0	--	--	--	--	--

Source: OPEP, May 2015

To better understand the challenges facing UPR-RP students in the area of retention, data from the third year should be examined. That is, there is not an exceptionally high rate of retention once students complete their second year of study. For example, as shown in Table 6.4, 92% of our 2011 cohort continued to their second year, but only 84% advanced to year three. This finding suggests that while retention efforts should seek to maintain high rates for students entering the second year, they should also pay attention to the transition between years two and three. Specific challenges that these students face should be identified alongside information about who they are and support mechanisms that could assist them in continuing their studies.

Currently, the Educational Initiatives Program (**PIE** in Spanish) is linked to the Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies, which offers tutoring in English and Spanish to undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, it helps strengthen student retention by addressing the educational needs of non-traditional students and those with special skill needs. To do this, it employs three specific programs: the Program of Continuing Education for Adults (PECA in Spanish); the Academic Support Program for Special Skills Students (PAAED in Spanish); and the Program to Recruit High-Performing Athletes (PRAAR in Spanish).

Additionally, the Academic Services Program (**PSAE** in Spanish) aims to ensure the retention of first-generation university students who come from low-income backgrounds and/or have a learning disability. These undergraduates are offered counseling, financial aid, university housing, mentoring, tutoring, and cultural activities. The UPR-RP submitted a proposal to the U.S. Department of Education to have this program extended through 2020, and it was approved in July of 2015.

Another unit contributing to student retention is the Department of Counseling for Student Development (**DCODE**), which has been accredited by the International Association of Counseling Services since 2008. DCODE records the main factors that affect student academic

performance by using Titanium Schedule, an electronic clinical filing system specially designed for counseling centers in university settings. The system aggregates common concerns expressed by students in individual counseling sessions to develop group events and programs that address factors interfering with academic progress. Its reports inform university administrators about the most pervasive needs among students so that those needs can be addressed.

Undergraduate Graduation Rates

This section presents graduation data for the last seven years and makes some comparisons between the UPR-RP and other institutions.

Table 6.7 shows the graduation rate for the cohorts admitted in AYs 1997-98 through 2008-09.

Stateside data show that UPR-RP graduation rates are somewhat lower than the rates at large U.S. institutions of higher education, which stand at 59.2% at private institutions and 51.7% at public institutions. The average U.S. graduation rate for students in public institutions similar to UPR for a six-year period is 54.9%.

Table 6.7: Undergraduate Graduation Rates

Cohort (start date)	Originally Enrolled	% to Graduate within 6 Years
1997	2,985	51%
1998	3,026	51%
1999	3,072	48%
2000	2,992	49%
2001	3,025	48%
2002	3,109	47%
2003	2,974	48%
2004	2,992	48%
2005	2,353	53%
2006	2,333	51%
2007	2,682	51%
2008	2,836	48%

***Cohorts are defined according to federal guidelines and include students who were registered as full-time students during their first semester.**
Source: Office of the Registrar, January 2015

The examination of graduation rates conducted for this self-study also addressed the issue of provenance (whether the student attended a public or private high school). Findings show that students who attended private high schools graduated at higher rates than those who attended public high schools. For example, data from the 2008 cohort shows that about 30% of students from private high schools completed their degree within six years, while the same figure for students from public high schools is approximately 18%. The DAA has discussed these tendencies with college deans so that they can be considered in efforts to increase graduation rates and improve support services.

Considering UPR-RP's overall retention and graduation rates with those of private and public institutions of higher education on the island shows that this campus's performance is far superior. A 2012 report by the Center for Studies and Research on Puerto Rican Higher Education (**CEDESP** in Spanish), titled "Strategies for Admission and Institutional Factors Related to Academic Success," examined most of the island's public and private institutions of higher learning. It found that in 2008 the overall college graduation rate was 20.7%. The UPR-RP's rate for the same year was 48%. A 2012 study by the Puerto Rico Board of Education documented the full spectrum, pointing out that college graduate rates in Puerto Rico ranged between 6.2% and 66%.

Graduate Level: Retention and Graduation Rates

The DEGI has begun systematically examining program requirements and working with programs in order to implement curricular changes. This, in response to a steady decline in retention and graduation rates for both master's and doctoral programs in the first decade of the new millennium. Retention rates have declined for MA and PhD students but varied from one year to the next. Graduation rates declined from 40% in 2002 to approximately 17% in 2007. (See Appendix 6.3: Retention and Graduation Rates for Graduate Programs at the UPR-RP.)

One resulting measure, Academic Senate Certification 38, 2012-13 (replacing the more rigid Academic Senate Certification 72, 1991-92 and providing graduate programs with more flexibility), establishes a maximum of 30 credits for most master's programs and makes the thesis and qualifying exams optional requirements. As part of the overall reform, master's programs have been, and are expected to continue, profoundly modifying their program requirements, some of which are a vestige of a time when there were very few doctoral programs at the UPR-RP.

Changes in degree requirements will, it is hoped, improve both retention and graduation rates, while also making our graduate programs more attractive to applicants. Master's-level research skills and experience will be acquired through means other than the thesis, such as shorter projects included in course activities. Certification 38 establishes strict guidelines, requiring programs to show that 50% of full-time master's students will graduate within three years of admission and 60% of full-time PhD students, within six years. Achieving these changes in requirements and time-to-degree goals will take time and the joint efforts of faculty, administrators, and students.

In conjunction with the implementation of Certification 38, in 2013 DEGI established a five-year evaluation initiative in which each graduate program performs a self-study, identifying and analyzing achievements and challenges. It requires that programs propose and implement transformative actions for, among other results, improving retention and graduation rates. The first cycle was completed in 2013. Some of the actions resulting from it are better student selection and support, better academic advising, and closer supervision of students by faculty mentors. In 2015-16, all graduate programs in the College of Natural Sciences are taking part in this process; the College of Humanities will begin its cycle in 2016-17.

III. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Admission Policies

Admission policies are clear, available, and in keeping with the campus mission.

Recruitment and Retention Initiatives

Multiple initiatives are underway to recruit students and support them in achieving their goals. Recruitment initiatives aim to attract socioeconomically diverse students, first generation university students, students with differential learning, and students with a broad array of disciplinary talents and interests.

Graduation Rates

Undergraduate graduation rates are relatively high compared to the rest of the island and compare favorably to similar U.S. institutions; nevertheless, our leadership will continue to improve them. The rates for graduate programs have declined considerably in recent years.

Recommendation

Graduation Rates

We have to increase the graduation rates of undergraduate students, as established by the plan developed by the DAA. Given that graduation rates of students in our graduate programs demand immediate attention, the undergraduate initiative should be extended to include graduate programs. Data to be considered should be updated and organized so that the substantial variation across programs can be analyzed.

Next Steps

Ongoing Recruitment for Undergraduate Programs

The strengthening of our recruitment plan, which covers the undergraduate and graduate levels, should be continued. Undergraduate recruitment should be facilitated through coordinated efforts by the Central Administration Admissions Office and campus-level units.

Application Deadlines and Publicity for Graduate Programs

Admission deadlines for graduate programs should be carefully evaluated so that international and local applicants can be evaluated at the same time and admissions letters issued earlier. This change can assist international students by allowing them more time to complete visa applications and make other necessary arrangements. A well-articulated promotional campaign should include all essential information about the application process.

Increased Retention

The DAA will continue to examine student retention over the course of the undergraduate experience. A study might be conducted based on statistical data and other types of information (factors related to program-specific retention rates, scheduling, transportation, societal changes, the current financial crisis, and possible attrition due to emigration). Retention data should be broken down to show such student attributes as race/ethnicity, gender, reported socioeconomic level, and whether the student is first-generation, admitted through differential admissions processes, etc. Other strategies to be considered in increasing retention include improving our early warning system and complementary support services.

STANDARD 9: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

I. INTRODUCTION

The UPR-RP has a long-standing commitment to student support services. The campus's multiple services are staffed by qualified professionals and trained staff. They are evaluated regularly for effectiveness and improvements are instituted. Be it through programs that assist with the acquisition of basic skills, financial aid, housing, peer advising, medical and counseling services, differential learning resources, high-impact educational experiences that dynamically engage students, or a vibrant athletic, artistic and cultural life, the campus serves as a nexus for the stability that enables students to develop personally and scholastically and persevere in their studies and succeed.

Services Coordinated by the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs

The Office of the Dean of Student Affairs (**DSA**) provides support services consistent with the university's mission to "foster the integrated education of students through programs of study which promote intellectual curiosity, the capacity for critical thinking, constant and ongoing learning, effective communication skills, an appreciation for and cultivation of ethical and aesthetic values, involvement in campus governance, and a sense of social awareness and responsibility." The office oversees several important programs that provide for students' on-campus needs and prepare them for long-term personal and professional development in the local and global society.

Financial Aid Program

One fundamental service vital to students' success is help in securing the financial resources needed for study and graduation. The Financial Aid Program (**PAE** in Spanish) provides financial assistance services at both the undergraduate and graduate level. The PAE offers a wide range of scholarship and funding options which can partially or totally cover tuition costs. The following are the financial aid programs coordinated by the PAE: Pell Grants; local legislative scholarships; federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants; student loans; the work-study program; and supplementary aid for graduate students.

The UPR-RP has an enrollment of approximately 12,500 active undergraduate students, of whom approximately 60%, or 7,400, benefit from the financial aid program. As shown in Appendix 6.4, 60% of our students pay tuition costs with Pell Grants. More than half the students who receive Pell Grants receive the maximum support established by federal guidelines. This is determined by information provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The work-study Program employs between 300 and 400 students each year, who gain work experience on campus while earning money to pay for their studies. Appendix 6.4 also shows that the main sources of financial aid granted in AYs 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 have been relatively stable.

With the majority of UPR-RP students receiving Pell Grants or other types of financial aid, including work-study and tuition waivers, the effective and timely functioning of financial aid services is crucial for students living on and off campus, so that they can afford the cost of study and materials. In the past, students sometimes faced situations in which they had to wait longer than expect for financial aid distribution. Significant improvements in this area are evident in the period under review, and the DSA is committed to ensuring that financial aid payments are made as quickly as possible.

Tuition waivers, which are not contemplated in Appendix 6.4, are also an important source of financial support, with a large number of students in the following categories receiving this aid: athletics, theater (Teatro Rodante), Honors Students, Student Peers, members of our choir and band, the children of veterans, the children of UPR employees, and the student representatives to the University's Governing Board and Administrative Board.

The Department of Counseling for Student Development

Important student support services are provided by the Department of Counseling for Student Development (**DCODE** in Spanish), which assists students in overcoming personal and psychological difficulties that may negatively affect their academic, social, and work performance. Each year, DCODE offers individual counseling services to an average of 1,100 students and group workshops and training sessions to approximately 1,020 students. Its services complement those of the Career Resource Room, which also provides counseling services.

Student Organizations

The DSA provides support to a growing number of official student organizations. Experiences in these organizations forge students' leadership skills and no doubt contribute to fomenting agendas of social change, environmental stewardship, advancement of the arts, and community services, among a plethora of other worthy interests.

In the Natural Sciences, for example, student groups use cutting-edge scientific technology to help renew urban forests, while others help re-establish depleted coral reefs in Puerto Rico and abroad. Student organizations advocate for vulnerable populations such as the homeless, immigrant groups, medical patients, women, and children and take a leading role in reconceptualizing current social services. Student groups in architecture and the fine arts are active on the local and international level, for example contributing to urban renewal not just in the Río Piedras neighborhood mural program, but also in Chiapas, India, and other destinations.

The Office for Students with Disabilities

The Office for Students with Disabilities (**OAPI** in Spanish) is notable for its commitment to bettering the social and physical environment to meet the diverse needs and abilities of the student population. In 2003, the UPR Board of Trustees issued Certification 143, which affirms the institution's commitment to providing services to meet the needs of all students. This document requires their "inclusion in all areas of social life [and their] equality before the law, which is a centerpiece for facilitating the process of inclusion." The 893 students who receive OAPI services might be considered a small percentage of the overall enrollment of 12,500, but their inclusion in campus activities is widely recognized as contributing substantially to student life and government. Currently, some 38 conditions are registered with OAPI, the majority being related to attention deficit disorder and other specific learning disabilities, depression, visual impairment, and anxiety disorders.

The OAPI works with all departments and schools on campus and, along with the Center for Academic Excellence, has designed a module titled "Bill of Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Law 238 of August 31, 2004" which is used to train and educate the university and wider community on issues related to disabilities, including relevant legislation, inclusiveness, and technological assistance. The College of Social Sciences, in coordination with OAPI, designated a multiple-use classroom equipped with technology for students with functional diversity for use as of January 2016. This initiative is the first of its kind in the UPR System.

The advocacy work of the OAPI has extended even into the legislative arena. Its most recent success is Law 250, the "Post-Secondary Passport for Reasonable Accommodation Act," which requires institutions of higher education to establish alternative admissions methods for students with differentiated learning. The UPR-RP administration has ensured that today, faculty and personnel alike are keenly aware that a student who is otherwise qualified is entitled to receive the support and special help needed to complete his or her degree. The first group of students to benefit from this initiative began their studies in August 2015. The UPR-RP has been a leader in implementing this legislative mandate.

Peer Orientation Program

The Peer Orientation Program is a student-led program that actively supports campus retention and graduation rates. For close to 45 years, this program has welcomed incoming students, assisting them in the transition to university life. To qualify to serve as peer counselors and educators, student volunteers must fulfill their academic responsibilities with a grade-point average of 2.50 or more, be enrolled in classes for a total of 12 or more credits, attend training sessions during one semester, and stay informed about the services and activities on campus. Each year, the program holds 650-800 group meetings and 1,000-3,000 individual meetings with first-year students.

Medical Services Department

The Medical Services Department is housed at the heart of the campus in an easily accessible two-story building. It is the go-to health center for both students and faculty. The department not only services walk-ins and medical appointments but also emphasizes preventive medicine. To this end, it sponsors educational and early-disease-detection activities at health fairs; offers group services, workshops, and orientation sessions; provides support and information to student organizations; and holds individual meetings. Health services are available at little or no cost to students. One of its current projects is creating a vaccination center.

Housing Program

The Housing Office has options for the general student population as well as for low-income and special-needs students, including three campus housing complexes. The North Tower is a 21-story residential building steps away from our main entrance. Next to it is the newest housing complex, University Plaza, with three housing buildings; it also contains an amphitheater and food establishments. Located within the campus gates is the Student Residence, which houses a large number of students and is surrounded by gardening projects. The North Tower and Student Residence are known for their affordability, which makes them accessible to even the lowest-income students. The number of students accommodated in campus housing has remained consistent during the last four years, with an average of 760 student residents each year.

Support Services for International Exchange

The campus has drafted an Internationalization Policy that responds to the prioritization of internationalization in Ten for the Decade and VU 2016. The policy outlines much of the work done by our Office of the Assistant Dean of International Relations (**DARI** in Spanish). DARI offers academic support services for student and faculty exchange with institutions abroad. The office has instituted a process for expediting course-equivalency accrediting between universities, for students in formal or informal exchange programs. The process has been streamlined through an electronic authorization request form for taking courses abroad. This

authorization mechanism enables students to be sure that the courses they intend to take at the off-island institution will be transferable to the UPR-RP.

In addition, DARI coordinates exchanges for about 300 students, some 225 going out and 80 coming in, per academic year. The office provides support services for international students, including welcoming activities, individualized orientations, and tutoring. In 2014-15, the campus hosted 78 international students at the graduate and undergraduate levels. There is substantial interest in increasing this number.

Evaluation of Student Services

Technological Needs

The DSA seeks to continue to improve services with more agile processes in all its units. To that end, its leadership has conducted analyses of each unit and formulated a plan to address future recruitment needs and better publicize its services. One area that needs attention is the processing of student requests for services. Technological resources and training are necessary.

Another need in this area is the development of a system for documenting and analyzing student complaints and grievance procedures. It should complement rather than replicate the existing system that is coordinated by the Student Ombudsman.

Office for Students Living with Disabilities

The byword of the Office for Students Living with Disabilities (**OAPI**) has been excellence and satisfaction in its services, and its overwhelmingly positive evaluation rate testifies to its achievement of these goals. The OAPI is among the first UPR-RP units to create and implement various student-tested assessment tools and surveys.

Of the clients completing OAPI's Satisfaction Survey on Reasonable Accommodation Services, 97% reported that the unit provided adequate services for their needs; 96% indicated that OAPI satisfied their expectations; and 96% stated that the services received helped them maintain or improve their academic performance. In addition, 100% of the sample indicated that the service was necessary for achieving their academic and professional goals. In the case of the note-taking service, 100% of the students that received it indicated that it adequately supported their academic work. The early enrollment service was also favorably evaluated. According to the results, it helped 85% of the students to establish flexible schedules and to select the course they preferred.

The Department of Counseling for Student Development

DCODE has developed several evaluation forms for students who take part in counseling, psychotherapy, workshops, and training sessions. The department has also recently completed systematic evaluations of effectiveness to determine how a student's academic performance improves during the counseling process. In order to evaluate students' progress in counseling, in AY 2014-15 DCODE began to administer an instrument known as Counseling Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (see Appendix 6.5: CCAPS Instrument).

Peer Orientation Program

The Peer Orientation Program involved all of its activities. This process enables the program to improve services and fit them to the needs of the university community. The program receives input from three different populations: first-year students, peer counselor candidates, and peer

counselors. In the period of 2011-12 to 2013-14, some 84% of students surveyed indicated that these services helped them adapt to university life.

Medical Services Department

The Medical Services Department also recognizes the need to promote a culture of assessment among the students who receive its services. To that end, it developed two instruments for evaluating its services: Lecture and Workshop Evaluation Sheet and Pregnant Student Program Final Evaluation Sheet.

Housing Office

The Housing Office students developed the Housing Program Services Evaluation Sheet to measure the level of satisfaction of students admitted to university dorms. As a test, 10% of these students were selected randomly and were sent an evaluation sheet during the first semester of AY 2014-15. The results showed that 95% of the respondents indicated that their needs were identified and addressed in a respectful manner. A full 100% of the sample stated that they would recommend the Housing Office's services to other students.

Office of the Assistant Dean of International Relations

Finally, DARI collects information to evaluate the unit and its employees' performance through two instruments: the Group Orientation Evaluation Sheet (Appendix 6.6) and the Parent and Student Evaluation Sheet for Pre-Exchange Orientations (Appendix 6.7). Data collected during an orientation session for sophomore, junior, and senior undergraduates from the colleges of Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Humanities, and Education during the second semester of AY 2013-14 reflect that of 44 total participants, 84% rated the resource as excellent and 16% as good. Appendix 6.8 includes a brief historical outline of internationalization efforts at the UPR-RP.

Other Support Services

The Office of Student Organizations is also now advising student organizations to use assessment tools to improve their own current and projected services. As a result of this self-study and the dialogue it has fostered among units, both the Social, Recreational, and Institutional Events Unit and the Office of Student Organizations have begun to develop an evaluation instrument. Similarly, the Recruitment and Retention Program for Student Success has created an evaluation instrument. This unit receives constant feedback both electronically and by phone from employers and students.

Graduate Students: Financial Aid, Assistantships

One of the most important sources of financial assistance for our graduate students is the Formative Academic Experiences Program (**PEAF** in Spanish). Funds are allocated by graduate programs and our institutional research funds program (FIPI in Spanish). A total of 559 applications were received in 2014 from graduate students for assistantships under PEAF.

Selection Formula and Distribution

Last year our colleges, schools, and graduate programs were asked to submit their criteria for selecting students for assistantships under PEAF, with the goal of evaluating current fund distribution. With this information the institution designed a formula for the equitable allocation of PEAF funds (institutional and legislative) to colleges, schools, and graduate programs.

Eligibility Changes

The PEAF manual was revised and uploaded to DEGI's new site. Among the changes to be made is the elimination of a requirement that students must study full-time the year before receiving a PEAF assistantship. By definition and mandate, PEAF was created to provide students the opportunity to study full-time by covering their financial needs.

Graduate Students: Grants and Fellowships

Institutional Funds

The Program for the Support of Graduate Students' Research and Professional Development provides financial aid. DEGI administers several grants and fellowships, including the Fellowship for Academic Merit and Exceptional Accomplishments, the Dissertation, Thesis, or Equivalent Project Fellowship, the Golf Tournament Fellowship, the Padilla Ascencio Fellowship and the Title V Scholarship, PPHOA.

Legislative Funds

Legislative funds totaling some $95,000 were recently distributed in the following areas: travel for research (21 applications received and approved, $42,000); travel to present at congresses or symposia (47 applications received and approved, $47,000); dissemination of research (3 applications received and approved, $6,000). During the reporting period, priority was given to the dissemination of research through travel to conferences and professional meetings, with 155 student trips supported. Applications are received year round, and all applications for trips last summer were approved.

Student Professional Development

The Graduate Student Training Program regularly hosts lectures, conferences and workshops related to professional development. During AY 2013-14, the Graduate Student Training Program hosted three 20-activity workshops in professional development and workplace skills (75 applicants; 51 selected); the acquisition of research skills (141 applicants; 53 selected); and the preparation of future faculty (89 applicants; 25 selected). Participants receive an economic incentive for completion of a training program. Through electronic correspondence and on its webpage the DEGI announces application deadlines for fellowships and professional and academic development programs.

III. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATION, AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Professional Services

The UPR-RP offers a broad array of professionally-staffed student services, such as would be expected of the flagship campus of a public university of its size and scope, geared toward assisting students to achieve their academic and professional goals. Student services are evaluated regularly through mechanisms such as questionnaires for participating students, to ensure and improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Student Support

Student needs are addressed in recognition of a diverse, complex, and dynamic student body, as well as to comply with legal requirements, such as for students with disabilities.

Financial Aid

With the majority of UPR-RP students receiving Pell Grants or other types of financial aid, including work-study and tuition waivers, the effective and timely functioning of financial aid services is crucial. Improvements in this area are evident in the period under review.

Recommendation

Official Records of Student Complaints and Grievances

The DSA should develop a system to archive, tally, generate statistics on, and analyze student complaints and grievance procedures. It should complement rather than replicate the work of the Student Ombudsman.

Next Steps

Technology

Students' requests for services should be more quickly processed, as suggested by the DSA. These improvements can build on those mentioned in Chapter 3 of this report.

STANDARD 13: RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

The UPR-RP supports various educational programs, activities and initiatives involving students' acquisition of basic skills, the granting of post-baccalaureate and post-master's certificate degrees, and experiential learning. These programs are provided in accordance with the UPR-RP Mission and VU 2016 mandate to provide "an institutional climate that promotes quality of life, a sense of belonging and identification, and a commitment to students' active participation [in the life of] the institution."

II. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Basic Skills

The Educational Initiatives Program (**PIE**), was inaugurated in 2007 as a result of the restructuring of the Continuing Education Program for Adults (in existence since 1972). PIE students are non-traditional students accepted through special admissions procedures. They benefit from personal and academic counseling and academic tutoring in all subjects. Currently, PIE is comprised of the following units: Continuing Education for Adults Program (**PECA**), Academic Support Program for Special Skills Students (**PAAED**), High-Performing Athletes Recruitment Program (**PRAAR**), and the Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies (**CDCL** in Spanish).

Table 6.8 presents the number of students who have received support in the area of basic skills services for the period 2009 to 2014 from PECA, PAAED, and PRAAR.

Table 6.8: Students Receiving Basic Skills Services, AYs 2009–2014

Program	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
PAAED	74	83	52	63	92
PRAAR	74	23	55	40	23
PECA	31	39	19	39	33
Total	**179**	**145**	**126**	**142**	**148**

Source: Educational Initiatives Program, March 2015

PECA is an advanced basic skills program that serves as a bridge to university studies. It targets working students who did not begin university upon high school graduation. Participants must pass a pre-basic summer training cycle consisting of four courses: Spanish, English, Math, and Study Habits. Once students pass an initial training cycle, the program's Admissions Committee evaluates their academic records to make final admissions decisions. Night classes are scheduled for PECA students in the initial part of their degree, but few are available in the latter part. This has been challenging for students who must work during the day. The scheduling of weekend and night classes appears to offer a solution to this problem.

Credit and Non-Credit Basic Skills Courses in Language Acquisition and Competency

Basic skills courses in reading, writing, and oral communication in English and Spanish are offered by the College of General Studies. Students receive credit for these. The Continuing Education and Professional Studies Division (**DECEP** in Spanish) offers non-credit basic skills courses in languages.

Certificate Programs

The UPR-RP offers 15 post-bachelor's and post-master's certificates as part of its academic offerings. Most of these are administered by the College of Humanities and Graduate School of Technology and Information Sciences. In the past six years the following post-bachelor's certificate programs have been most active: Online Library Teaching Certificate, Document and Archive Management Certificate, and Applied Linguistics Certificate. The Graduate School of Technology and Information Sciences also offers an Academic Library Manager Certificate.

Distance or Distributed Learning: Distance and Hybrid Course Modalities

Since the 1990s, distance-learning and corresponding infrastructural needs have been discussed, and in late 2015 a policy was approved by the Academic Senate. This should enable the institution to develop online courses in the near future. Any new protocol regarding distance learning education will be approved by the Academic Senate.

Approval of Courses through "8-A" Exams

Students with evidence of prior content knowledge or professional experience in the subject matter of a course may arrange with a professor to satisfy the course requirements through a test rather than by attending the course (Certification 8A, 1973-74). University credit is awarded to students that pass the progress exam in the given subject with a minimum of 3.00 (B) on a four-point scale. The number of credits awarded to any student through "8-A" exams is limited to 25% of the total required credits for the corresponding degree.

Internships and In-Service Learning

Children's Lab

The Children's Lab (**LIM** in Spanish) provides services for students who are parents, also serving as a practicum center for students enrolled in the undergraduate Preschool Education program in the College of Education's School of Family Ecology. The LIM is the only university laboratory center for observing infants and toddlers in Puerto Rico. The lab serves providers of the Puerto Rican government unit known as the Integral Childhood Care and Development Administration (**ACUDEN** in Spanish), as well as the university and the general community.

Legal Aid Clinic

The Legal Aid Clinic is a six-credit, two-semester required course for advanced students in the Law School. Students are trained in interviewing, research, simulations, and writing, as well as in presenting motions and preparing and presenting real cases before state and federal judicial and administrative forums. The Legal Aid course is dedicated to handling cases involving general civil law, felonies and misdemeanors, minors, immigration law, family law, labor law, environmental law, federal criminal law, and discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Psychological and Rehabilitation Counseling and Social Work

The University Center for Psychological Services and Studies allows students to combine professional practice, service, theory, and research. In practicum courses, graduate students work under the close supervision of the unit's faculty and professional staff to provide psychological services to adults, children, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Each supervisor assumes responsibility for his or her students' cases to ensure that activities meet the standards established by the professional ethics of the field.

Additionally, the College of Social Sciences offers fieldwork experience for students in three programs (Administration of Social Programs, Family Social Work, and Community Social Work), in accordance with the Council on Social Work Education's accreditation standards. Doctoral students in social work complete an internship in policy analysis. Psychology students are provided with field practice/instruction in clinical psychology at the master's and doctoral level. The master's-level Counseling Rehabilitation Program also affords students field practice instruction in accordance with the accreditation standards of the Council on Rehabilitation Counseling. These experiences are supervised by faculty and professional staff at a number of field instruction agencies and sites.

Study Abroad Programs

Study abroad programs provide unique intercultural, experiential learning opportunities for our students. The programs respond to the UPR-RP's internationalization policy, publicized to the university community via the Office of the Chancellor Circular Letter, November 14, 2007. A digital copy is available online.

The campus is a signatory to 26 collaborative agreements with institutions in the United States, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and to umbrella agreements signed by Central Administration. Totaling more than 40, many of these international agreements facilitate teaching and research as well as student exchanges. Lists of current agreements and consortiums are available online. The important consortiums listed below are exclusively for student exchange.

- International Student Exchange Program (ISEP), which is a consortium of exchange programs with over 136 universities in 37 countries;
- National Student Exchange (NSE), another consortium that includes roughly 178 universities in the United States;
- MICEFA, which is a consortium of universities in Paris;
- Association of Caribbean Universities and Research Institutes (**UNICA** in Spanish)

Of special note are campus collaborative agreements with leading Spanish universities, including the Universidad Autónoma in Madrid, the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, the Universidad Carlos III in Madrid, and the University of Salamanca. A large percentage of the UPR-RP students that study abroad each year do so in Spain, while our campus is receiving a growing number of students.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

Diverse Educational Opportunities

The array of related educational activities offered on the UPR-RP campus includes programs designed to impart basic skills to non-traditional students, offer educational certificates for current and future professionals, and develop experiential learning in areas such as child development, urban community outreach, legal aid, psychological services, and study-abroad programs.

Next Steps

PECA Students' Course Scheduling

PECA students' scheduling problems should be addressed. The scheduling of evening and weekend offerings would facilitate their enrollment in the courses they need for graduation. (See also the section on "Integrity: Course Offerings" in Chapter 4, above.)

Distance Learning Education

The distance learning education policy was recently approved by the Academic Senate. Campus leadership should strive to complete the operational plan as soon as possible.