

Report to Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

University of Puerto Rico at Carolina  
P.O. Box 480  
Carolina, Puerto Rico 009844800

Prepared following analysis of the institution's Periodic Review  
Report

First Reviewer:  
Dr. Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers  
Associate Provost/  
Assistant Vice President  
Medgar Evers College, CUNY

Second Reviewer:  
Dr. Karen S. Goldman  
Assistant Director for External Relations, Development and Assessment  
Center for Latin American Studies  
University of Pittsburgh

August 1, 2016

**Evaluation of the Periodic Review Report of  
University of Puerto Rico at Carolina**

**I. Introduction**

The University of Puerto Rico at Carolina (UPRCA) was founded in 1974 as a part of the University of Puerto Rico System (UPR). Originally a Regional College, it became a Campus of the UPR in 1999; thereafter, Middle States affirmation of accreditation was granted in 2011. The governance structure of UPR consists of the Governing Board, UPR President, and the University Board; each campus is headed by a Chancellor. As Puerto Rico’s only public university, UPR receives the greater part of its funds from legislative appropriations, and the institution currently obtains the majority of its funding from government revenues on annual basis. Tuition is \$55 per credit, and tuition revenue represents a small portion of the institution’s overall budget.

While the Campus has 218 faculty, 52% of whom are full-time and 48% making up part-time faculty (see 2015-2016 Faculty Profile), there are also 252 non-teaching professionals that work on the campus as well. Enrollment for 2015-2016 was 3,786 students, with 79.9% registered as full-time; 76.5% of these enrollments were in baccalaureate degree programs, 10.7% in associate programs, and 9.7% in transfer programs. Carolina offers seven baccalaureate programs and four associate degree programs.

Associate Degree Programs	Baccalaureate Degree Programs
Interior Design Automotive Technology Mechanical Engineering Technology Instrumentation Engineering and Control Systems Technology	Hotel and Restaurant Administration Graphic Arts Advertising Multidisciplinary Studies with major in Tourist Culture Criminal Justice with majors in: -Forensic Psychology -Law and Society Secondary Education with majors in: -Occupational Education -Technology Education

(Periodic Review, p. 3)

The campus is the only one in the system that has an annual three-quarter semester calendar.

## **II. Responses to Recommendations from Previous Decennial Evaluation**

Aside from the 2011 Decennial Team visit recommendations, the Campus was requested to submit a Progress Report in October 2013. The Periodic Review addressed both those documents, specifically making reference to the following standards:

Standard 2: Planning, Resources Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

Standard 5: Administration

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

Standard 12: General Education

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

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

Under the leadership of the Accreditation, Assessment, Planning and Budget Committee, the Campus developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan with two foci: institutional revenues/recruitment and quality. The plan clearly outlines targets, operational strategies, leads, and connections to budgetary allocation priorities. The institution adopted the plan in 2014, and the Campus appears to be on target with satisfying the objectives contained therein. The challenge to deliver clear and effective communication at the departmental level, thus ensuring collaboration and efficacy among stakeholders, has been successfully achieved. Additionally, a well-defined decision making processes has been well developed and implemented.

### **Standard 3: Institutional Resources**

Institutional Resources now appears to be linked in meaningful ways to both the Strategic Plan (Appendix 1) and the Master Plan (Appendix 2), thus producing credible support for institutional effectiveness and demonstrating alignment with the institution's mission and goals; what is more the Strategic Plan has operational strategies with clear targets. The Master Plan (MP) has initiative highlights that deliver value to the institution in practices that affect different audiences: creation of maintenance and replacement protocols; support for learning resources (MP, p.12-16); and timelines for the Maintenance and Improvement Project that provide a clear, realistic approach to deferred maintenance—that include not only facility and educational updates, but also integrating technological updates. Using the 2011 Team visit findings and other progress reports that strongly recommend that the institution raise additional revenues, the

Campus has responded by developing and expanding ways to improve revenue, including crafting grants and alumni-giving campaigns, to mention a few.

Though the Campus is attempting to secure external funding through grants, gifts, and alumni, these efforts must be buttressed by strong enrollments; therefore, the institution's Enrollment Management Plan is an essential element for the fiscal success of the College. Moreover, a comprehensive effort to strengthen the institution's financial stability will require that the Strategic Plan include strategies for effectively addressing the issue of identifying broad revenue support beyond tuition dollars. Even though PRR includes an appendix titled The General and External Funds (Academic Years 2015-2016 to 2018-2019), the institution needs to develop and implement a practical Fiscal Management Plan. While UPRCA has already done creditable work in this area—through internal and external environmental scans of its academic, fiscal, and facility's needs—it nevertheless must take the next step, that is, developing a comprehensive approach to the funding its needs.

**Recommendation(s):**

1- UPRCA should develop a Fiscal Management Plan, using a financial and budgeting process aligned with its mission and goals. The Plan should address resource acquisition and allocation for the institution as they relate to enrollment, external funding, and strategic initiatives.

**Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

Considering the structure for the overall University, which is outlined in the introduction of the Periodic Review, along with the communication and adoption process of the Strategic Plan outlined by the Accreditation, Assessment, Planning and Budget Committee, the reviewers find that the Campus has a well-defined system of collegial governance. The Institutional Assessment System Implementation Rubric that is referenced in the PRR on p.12 and in Appendix 6 confirms communication with and participation from a wide-range of constituencies across the campus, including students.

**Standard 5: Administration**

The PRR (p.12) outlines the guidance of the Chancellor's Office in connecting all the other leadership areas on the campus to develop the Strategic Plan and other planning documents. There also appears to be adequate decision-making systems/networks to support the work of the institutions' leadership.

**Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**

The Campus has made a real investment in assessment by naming an Assessment Director, who, with the support of the Administration, is helping UPRCA develop a culture of assessment and institutional renewal. The Institutional Assessment System (IAS) was another

major step in developing an organized and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve departments, units, and overall institutional effectiveness. The adoption of the assessment software Weave and the NILOA Transparency Model makes it clear that the UPRCA has made institutional assessment a priority on every level. (Other assessment efforts that impact departments and student learning will be highlighted in the section on Standard 14.) Even though a comprehensive process of assessment is in place, the document all the same contains a number areas that are designated as “In Design or Reviewing” or “In Progress.” Consequently, the leadership of UPRCA must review the status of these efforts in a timely way to insure that progress of data collection, data analyses, and data-driven interventions can be introduced—that is, after results are shared and discussed with the appropriate constituencies so that institutional renewal and budgetary allocations can be contemplated.

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

It is evident that UPRCA has made efforts to improve its student admissions, largely by visiting and reaching out to public and private high schools and by participating in the UPR EXPO 2016. (PPR p. 17); another successful effort includes the creation of bridge opportunities for high school students initiatives like Estudiantes Talentosos en Escapad and the Programade Articulacion Universitaria. The UPRCA should also consider the development of an Enrollment Management Plan, one that outlines specific enrollment targets, strategies, measures by program, and goals for overall Associates and baccalaureate enrollments.

In the area of retention, the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs has appointed a Retention and Support Committee (PPR p. 17). The PPR outlines detailed activities the Committee has undertaken, including examining the use of data about student probation and attrition. A chart on page 19 of the PRR exhibits what appears to be an up-tick in first-year retention for first-year students; however it would be helpful to see retention rates beyond the first year, especially for baccalaureate students. It would also be helpful to see data focusing on retention strategies that appear to be making an impact, thus assisting the campus in determining which practices to institutionalize.

### **Recommendation (s):**

1. The reviewers recommend that UPRCA develop an Enrollment Management Plan that outlines specific enrollment strategies and measures to improve overall enrollment at the campus.
2. While the development of a retention effort supported by a standing committee (Retention and Support Committee) is commendable, the reviewer’s recommend that the Committee develop a way of capturing data pertaining to the various mentioned strategies to ascertain the efficacy of those strategies.

3. The Campus should develop as part of its retention plan a way to capture attrition and persistence by program and by campus.

### **Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

From the information contained in Educational Offerings, the reviewers, attending to sample syllabi (PPR, Appendix 9), conclude that, on a course-level, the institution is providing expected learning outcomes. Moreover, from Assessment Tools (Appendix 11), we also confirm that departments are affording students a broad range of appropriate and useful information and learning opportunities. It is likewise clear that the programs are providing sufficient rigor inasmuch as several of the baccalaureate programs have successfully secured professional accreditation, including International Association of Counseling Services (IACS); Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP); Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration (ACPHA); and Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

Other ways that UPRCA is confirming assessment of student learning and program outcomes are through practicums offered to evaluate student competencies upon graduating and the learning objectives in the sample syllabi.

#### **Recommendation(s):**

1. The academic programs, especially those that are not accredited, would benefit from a cyclical program review process.

### **Standard 12: General Education**

Using the recommendations outlined by the 2011 visit to inform its efforts, the Office of Dean of Academic Affairs in 2013 established what appear to be several committees to “review and analyze the total credits for majors, transfers, and career degree programs, assessment plans for bachelor and associate degree programs....” (PPR p.20) The result was the adoption of a 36-credit General Education requirement, consisting of the following:

- Natural Sciences-six credits
- Social Sciences-six credits
- Spanish-six credits
- History-three credits
- Humanities-six credits
- English-six credits
- Mathematics-three credits

The General Education requirements appear not only to be distributional, that is, proportioned among traditional general educational disciplines, but are also aligned with

UPRCA's mission and institutional goals. The assessment of the GenEd is outlined on page 20 of the PRR, and the results of the assessment appear on Weave. As a result of the assessment, several changes were put in place, including revision of a GenEd Student Manual, the alignment of GenEd courses to concentrations and to the associate and bachelor programs, and the revision of objectives and expected outcomes in these core courses. These changes are consistent with Middle States Fundamental Elements of General Education. However, important questions remain. Is this assessment going to be on-going and cyclical? And Is this "assessment of general education outcomes within the institution's overall plan for assessing student learning, and [what is the] evidence that such assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement [?]" (Characteristics of Excellence, p. 48)

### **Recommendation(s):**

1. The assessment of GenEd should be part of an on-going assessment efforts in the College. The GenEd assessment efforts should be cyclical and reported at the end of program.

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

Throughout the PRR, it is evident that UPRCA has been immersed in creating and fostering an environment that embraces and enhances student learning. With the assistance of Institutional Assessment and its integration into the Office of Planning and Institutional Research (OPEI), the campus has structures in place to continually assess and improve student learning. It is also evident that the faculty and staff of the institution are engaged in assessment efforts. The development of faculty involved in assessment is crucial to any organization fully adopting this culture. In addition to structure and professional engagement, UPRCA has invested in technologies that will assist it in institutionalizing the assessment of student learning, including Weave and Remark Office Software. The measures, i.e., rubrics, test blueprints, etc., appear to be appropriate.

Though in reviewing The Assessment of Student Learning 2012-2015 document (Appendix 12), the reviewers find that the assessment results may be too general to be instructive. For example, in Education, specifically EDIN49, the learning outcome was "Effective planning of instruction"; it projected that "70% of students will score 3, 4, or 5 in a 1-5 scaled evaluation." The specified results, however, do not tell us much, particularly as recorded that 100% of students rated 3, 4, 5. What were the actual ratings for each scale on the evaluation? So, if 3 were the minimum, what percentage rated 3? Was it the highest? What curricular improvements could be identified for students to upgrade their scores to 4 or 5? Reporting becomes a challenge for most departments because they often want to report that 80 or 90% of students have achieved their learning goals. But the real purpose of assessment is to uncover gaps in learning to improve student learning. A review all the reporting demonstrates that all the students either met or exceeded criteria for success. Though on the surface that looks very good, the faculty might want

to review their measures and develop an approach that describes areas in student learning that require improvement.

### **Recommendation(s)**

1. It is recommended that assessment results should be of sufficient value that they can be used to inform decisions to change or improve curricula or pedagogy.

### **III. Major Challenges and Opportunities**

UPRCA faces formidable challenges; the most critical one is the fiscal crisis that the Island of Puerto Rico is currently experiencing, being over 70 billion dollars in debt. The College outlines financial strategies that in essence provide short-term ideas for improving its fiscal bottom-line. Thus, as stated in the review of Standard 3, it is recommended that a multi-year fiscal management plan be developed to meet this challenge.

The Campus has seized the opportunity to improve its offerings by developing its Distance Education offerings. UPRCA has outlined a commendable plan towards this end, in planned and deliberate phases to expand its offerings on-line. The Campus has secured external funding to begin its work on hybrid or blended courses and has a plan to expand those offerings across the institution. UPRCA believes that on-line instruction will also assist in its retention efforts and with its efforts to expand academic offerings. Though blended/hybrid courses have the potential to engage students at a deeper level, they also have their documented challenges.

### **IV. Enrollment and Finance Trends and Projections**

As discussed in Standards 2 and 3 and in the Challenges section of the review, enrollment and Finances must be monitored carefully, given the tenuous fiscal situation that the island is in. General Fund allocations have been flat and are predicted to remain flat into 2019, at a little over 20 million. And external funds have been steadily declining since 2016.

### **V. Assessment Processes and Plans**

As stated earlier in observations about Standards 7 and 14, the Campus is immersed in developing a culture of assessment. Those responsible are to be commended for the structures and processes that have been created to assess the institution and student learning. Of particular note is the securing of external accreditations for the College's various professional programs. Even with these important successes, the institution nonetheless must focus more on institutional and program level assessments, moving beyond the planning construction of assessment processes. To be clear, the reviewers urge the institution to direct its efforts to applicable data collection and analyses that will promote successful learning outcomes. In short, only when the



assessment *loop is closed* will the College be able to benefit from documenting student and institutional performance.

## **VI. Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting Processes**

Effective Institutional Planning and Budgeting no doubt will be a critical component for the institution's success going forward, particularly if the College is to be successful in achieving its strategic goals. Even though UPRCA has connected its Strategic Plan and the Master Plan to budgeting needs, the College would greatly benefit from developing an integrated multi-year financial plan that includes goals for internal and external revenue sources. Above all, the College must be responsive to the educational needs of the students it serves by leveraging scarce resources to accomplish its educational mission.

## **VII. Conclusions**

The UPRCA has accomplished much in the preceding five years. For example, the institution has been restructured to create an Institutional Assessment Office among; it has developed a Strategic and Master Plan that is well integrated with its mission and goals; and it has created a culture of assessment as evidenced, in part, by the areas that received accreditation from professional organizations.

UPRCA is to be commended for a thorough, comprehensive, and forthright Periodic Review Report and for the work done by all who contributed to this document. It is evident that the institution seriously considered the recommendations of the 2011 MSCHE visit as all suggestions have been incorporated into in the Campus's various efforts. Though UPRCA should be proud of its achievements, much remains to be done.

In summary, the readers will now restate recommendations that appear earlier in the report:

- UPRCA should develop a Fiscal Management Plan, using a financial and budgeting process aligned with its mission and goals. The Plan should address resource acquisition and allocation for the institution as they relate to enrollment, external funding, and strategic initiatives.
- The reviewer's recommend that UPRCA develop an Enrollment Management Plan that outlines specific enrollment strategies and measures to improve overall enrollment at the campus.
- While the development of a retention effort supported by a standing committee (Retention and Support Committee) is commendable, the reviewer's recommend that the Committee develop a way of capturing data pertaining to the various mentioned strategies to ascertain the efficacy of those strategies.

- The Campus should develop as part of its retention plan a way to capture attrition and persistence by program and by campus.
- The academic programs, especially those that are not accredited, would benefit from a cyclical program review process.
- The assessment of GenEd should be part of an on-going assessment efforts in the College. The GenEd assessment efforts should be cyclical and reported at the end of program.
- It is recommended that assessment results should be of sufficient value that they can be used to inform decisions to change or improve curricula or pedagogy.