

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students of
University of Puerto Rico Carolina (UPRCA)

By

A Team to the Institution on:

April 6-7, 2011

The Team:

Dr. Dora Carbonell Arroyo (Chair)
Retired Educator and Entrepreneur

Dr. Miguel Cairol (Finance Evaluator)
Vice President, City Tech, CUNY

Dr. Mary Ellen Petrisko
MSCHE Vice President

At the time of the visit:

Met with:

Prof. Trinidad-Miranda, Chancellor
Prof. Angel Maldonado, Assistant to the Chancellor
Dr. Geraldo Perfecto, Student Affairs Dean
Dr. Ana Falcon, Academic Affairs Dean
Mr. Rafael Gierbolini, Dean of Administrative Affairs
Dr. Awilda Nunez, Accreditation Affairs Coordinator
Prof. Wanda Rodriguez, Task Force Chair
Mr. Juan Torres, Finance Director
Ms. Sarahi Guadalupe, Budget Director
Ms. Carmen Luz Cruz, Planning Director
Dr. Maria Del Pilar Toral, External Resources and Development Director
Prof. Stanley Portela, Library Director

1. Institutional Overview

The University of Puerto Rico at Carolina (UPRCA) is part of the state-supported university system Consisting of eleven campuses.

The University of Puerto Rico at Carolina (UPRCA) is the only unit of the UPR system that offers the type of quarters, allowing complete studies in less time. This, given that specializes in highly dynamic and evolving disciplines such as Hotel and Restaurant Management and tourism. In fact, the UPR Carolina has the first accredited program of Hotel and Restaurant Administration.

The UPR-Carolina offers a small, friendly campus with approximately 3.930 students.

It has the following associate and baccalaureate degrees, unique in the UPR system:

- Associate Degree and Bachelor of Hotel and Restaurant Administration
- Associate Degree in Interior Design
- Associate Degree in Physical Education and Recreation for people with disabilities
- Associate Degree in Mechanical Engineering and Industrial Maintenance
- Associate Degree in Automotive Technology
- BA in Multi-disciplinary Studies

II. Nature and Conduct of the Visit

On November 18, 2010, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted to continue UPRCA's probation because of lack of evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) and Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance). MSCHE documented receipt of the Periodic Review Report and noted that the report provided limited information and analysis on Standard 3, including but not limited to a five-year financial projections for the UPR System including information from audited financial statements for fiscal year 2010 and a pro-forma budgets that demonstrate the institution's ability to generate a balanced budget for fiscal years 2012 through 2015.

MSCHE's Visiting Team considered UPRCA progress with regard to two standards. The Team reviewed the monitoring report and visited the campus and met with different campus constituencies.

III. Affirmation of Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation Under Review

Based on a review of the UPRCA Monitoring Report and appendices, interviews, and other institutional documents, the visit team affirms that the institution appears to meet the Requirements of Affiliation under review.

IV. Commendations and Summary of Institutional Strengths

The Visiting Team wishes to commend the institution for the quality of the documentation in support of the report and for providing meaningful exhibits in the evidence room.

The university administrators should also be commended for making sound decisions and careful planning to offset the budget cuts. Some of these cuts include projected savings from voluntary retirements, and continuation and expansion of external funding activities, including additional revenues from summer and continuing education programs

There is documented evidence of the development and implementation of an action plan, including steps taken to improve the institution's finances and the development of alternative funding sources.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

Based on our review of documents presented by the institution, interviews with faculty, students, administration and financial staff, the institution meets the standard.

In its November 18, 2010 action, the Commission requested "a monitoring report due by March 1, 2011, documenting evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with Standards 3 including, but not limited to (1) five-year financial projections for the UPR System including information from audited financial statements for fiscal year 2010; and (2) institutional pro-forma budgets that demonstrate the institution's ability to generate a balanced budget for fiscal years 2012 through 2015, including the personnel, compensation, and other assumptions on which these budgets are based."

The team was given evidence of a planning process tied to resource allocation, which includes assessment of outcomes and periodic reviews and updates. The plan is also produced with the participation of all the institutional stakeholders.

Not having an audited financial statement, which is the responsibility of Central Administration and is necessary in order to be able to gauge the fiscal health of the institution, five year budgets have been prepared to show how the institution is and will be dealing with existing conditions and the current financial crisis. The budget allocation assigned by the central office has been used as the basis for preparing plans and projections for the next five years which are designed to attain a balanced budget. It is crucial that Central Administration ensure that timely audited financial statements are available in the future, as has been assured by the Central Administration will be the case.

The institution has been working diligently to obtain \$2.7M in external funds from various sources, which have enabled it to continue a high quality of program offerings and services in spite of the current financial situation on the island. Plans to continue to do so include: the search for additional revenues through the institution's Continuing Education unit, continuing to procure grants, creating new partnership agreements with companies, facilities rentals, and developing arrangements with neighboring government agencies for training and development of their employees and for work on the campus, such as paving the parking lot.

Through interviews with administration, faculty, students and staff the team determines that the assumptions made to develop the financial plan and the budget projections to deal with the financial shortfall as well as current efforts are working and credible.

Commendations:

The visiting team wishes to commend the Chancellor and the administration for reinvigorating and improving the communication systems (including budget and financial information) and expanding discussions in the campus to include students, faculty and staff through meetings and the internet. Meetings and exchanges with the Central Administration have increased in frequency and content.

The visiting team wishes to commend the faculty and administration for their dedication and success in searching for and developing external opportunities to increase revenues through Continuing Education, facilities rentals, catering and automotive work.

The Chancellor's and the financial staff's attitude and enthusiasm regarding the future of the university were evident. All documents presented with the follow-up report and those available at the team room, including any requests made by the team during the visit were produced willingly and expeditiously.

Recommendations:

Ensure the prompt completion of the audited financial statement for 2010 by the end of April, as promised, and to submit it to MSCHE as soon as it is made available to UPR.

Take appropriate steps to set financial goals and targets going forward and set up controls and a system of evaluation to continue improve the institution and ensure its future viability.

The campus should continue to think strategically and, with the support of the Board of Trustees, continue to move toward less dependence on the government for funding.

Standard 4: leadership and governance

Based on the team's review of submitted documents presented by UPRCA, interviews with administrators, faculty, students, and financial staff, the institution appears to meet the standard.

In its November 18, 2010 action, the commission requested "a monitoring report due by March 1, 2011, documenting evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with standards 4, including but not limited to the following items:

- 1) "Evidence of implementation of clear institutional policies specifying the respective authority of the different governance bodies and their respective roles and responsibilities in shared governance";

After reviewing the evidence presented and interviews conducted, the team is satisfied that there are clear policies and procedures in place specifying the responsibilities of the university's board of trustees, university board, UPRCA's Administrative Board and Academic Senate, faculty governance, and the Student Government. The members of the community with whom the team spoke expressed great satisfaction with the clarification of the respective roles and responsibilities of university constituencies and with the improvement in shared governance at the institution.

- 2) "Evidence that the Board of Trustees assists in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the institution";

As a means to generate alternate sources of funding, the Board of Trustees implemented an \$800 stabilization fee per academic year, effective on 2010-2011. UPRCA instituted alternatives for collecting this fee, one being that students had the opportunity to pro-rate the stabilization fee into five payment terms per quarter term. It was also noted that financial aid covered this fee. UPRCA has successfully implemented the academic 2010-2011 quarter term electronic payment for students.

The board has also been proactive in procuring lines of credit to clear previous deficits and ensure ongoing operations as well as make the university's case to government to ensure that strong financial support be continued for the institution.

Additionally, the Board is working to develop stronger fundraising capabilities throughout all institutions of the UPR system.

The dedication of the Board in generating resources is very clear.

- 3) "Evidence of a procedure in place for the periodic objective assessment of the Board of Trustees in meeting stated governing body objectives and responsibilities";

The Board has undergone self-evaluation with a consultant and is continuing its work to ensure that it is operating in the most efficient and effective way to guarantee its proper role in collaboration with other bodies in shared governance. It has also clearly accepted its role in identifying new sources of funding to support campus initiatives.

- 4) “Evidence that steps have been taken to assure continuity and Stability of institutional leadership, particularly in times of governmental transition”;

Discussions at the campus with all constituents made it clear that even in times of transition, individuals are chosen for leadership roles that have appropriate experience and the respect of the community. The leadership at UPRCA is qualified for the positions they hold, and the work of the institution clearly appears to have continued throughout the most recent transition period without detriment to student learning.

The Chancellor of the campus, with her entrepreneurial savvy, has successfully built a cohesive, well-qualified team of administrators, which provide needed stability during this time of financial crisis.

- 5) “Evidence that the UPR action plan is implemented, that it is assessed, and the data are used for continuous improvement of the institution’s processes”;

Implementation of the action plan submitted in the first monitoring report on September 1, 2010 has continued, and significant progress was reported in each of the areas that needed to be strengthened. The academic offerings at UPRCA are perceived to be excellent by all constituents concerned and consistent with the mission of the institution.

- 6) “Evidence that steps have been taken to improve shared governance, especially in documenting how campus input is solicited and considered in decision making at the system level”;

At UPRCA, Department Directors have been requested by the Dean of Academic Affairs to disseminate updated information to the university community concerning the action plan and related future actions.

Additionally, the President of UPR has required Chancellors and staff to participate in a series of workshops and training to prompt a collective understanding of their task in collaboration with their constituents in policy development and decision-making.

While there is always room for improvement in ensuring that all voices are heard in the shared governance processes, it was clear from evidence that there is ample opportunity at UPRCA for input by various constituencies into the decision making process.

In meeting with UPRCA students, it was clearly evident that at this time, students were pleased with their input into the institution's governance.

- 7) "Evidence that communication between the central administration and the institution and within the institution, is clear, timely, and accurate, and that the sources of such communication are clearly defined and made available to all constituents";

At UPRCA, evidence has been presented showing that there have been many communication measures that have been taken in the form of meetings, print and electronic media.

Additionally, team meetings with constituents of the institution clearly pointed to the positive satisfaction level of the campus community regarding communications.

Recommendations and Conclusions:

The visiting team recommends that UPRCA administrators document how they are adhering to the certification no. 3 (2009-2010) issued by the Board of Trustees which defines a set of 30 indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the UPR planning agenda, Ten for the Decade.

The team also recommends the implementation of a rubric based on expectations contained in Characteristics of Excellence Standard 4, to assist the institution in identifying areas of strength and areas in need for improvement in their current practices.

Lastly, the team highly recommends that UPRCA document evidence that the UPR Action Plan has been fully implemented at the campus.

Conclusion:

The team was impressed with the scope of documents presented and made available in the team room; additional requests made by the team during the visit were produced willingly and expeditiously.

The university administrators should be commended for making sound decisions and careful planning to offset the budget cuts.

The team found that there is documented evidence of the development and implementation of an action plan, including steps taken to improve the institution's finances and the development of alternative funding sources.

Lastly, the cooperative and enthusiastic attitude of all the constituents of the campus regarding the future of the institution was very evident.