

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students
of

University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00931-3300

by
A Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared After a
Follow-Up Visit to the Institution on:
September 12, 2011

The Visitor(s):
Dr. Joseph W. Bascuas, Chair
Mr. Javier Miyares, Team Member

Working with the Visitor(s):
Dr. Tito Guerrero, III, Vice President

At the Time of the Visit:
Chief Executive Officer:
Dr. Ana R. Guadalupe, Chancellor

Chief Academic Officer:
Dr. Noemi Cintron, Dean of Academic Affairs

Chair of the Governing Board:
Ms. Ygri Rivera, Chair
Board of Trustees
University of Puerto Rico
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00931-3400

I. Institutional Overview

The University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras is a public, comprehensive doctoral institution. It was founded in 1903, and it is the largest institution within the University of Puerto Rico System. Its academic offerings consist of 70 undergraduate programs and 19 graduate degrees with 71 specializations in the basic disciplines and professional fields. Graduate offerings include 12 Ph.D. programs, one Doctorate in Education, and programs in Law, at both LLM and JD levels. The University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras confers on average close to 3,000 degrees a year. It also is the only higher education institution in Puerto Rico classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a comprehensive doctoral and high level research university. Its current enrollment exceeds 15,000 students. In addition to its accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and its licensing from the Council for Higher Education of Puerto Rico, the institution enjoys 57 professional accreditations.

II. Nature and Conduct of the Visit

The purpose of the visit was to ascertain whether or not the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras was in compliance with Standard 4, Leadership and Governance. The specific action language of the Commission calling for this visit follows:

To accept the monitoring report, to note that a small team visit took place, to note that the institution is in compliance with Standard 3 (Institutional Resources). To continue probation because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 4 (Governance). To note that the institution remains accredited while on probation. To request a monitoring report due September 1, 2011, documenting evidence of compliance with Standard 4, including, but not limited to (1) steps taken to improve communication and shared governance, especially in documenting how campus input is solicited and considered in decision making by senior campus administration and at the System level; (2) evidence that authority and responsibility are assigned, delegated, and shared in a climate of trust, mutual support and respect; and (3) evidence of an effective process and opportunities for student input regarding decisions that affect them, including evidence that student input is considered in decision making. A small team visit will follow submission of the September 1, 2011 report. To further request that the monitoring report due April 1, 2012 on Standards 2,3,7, 12 and 14 also include documentation of further progress in (1) strengthening institutional resources and developing alternative forms of income, including institutional pro-forma budgets that demonstrate the institution's ability to generate a balanced budget for fiscal years 2012 through 2014, including the personnel, compensation, and other assumptions on which these budgets are based; (2) steps taken to ensure timely production of audited financial statements for FY 2011 and subsequent years (Standard 3); (3) further steps taken to improve communication and shared governance, especially in documenting how campus input is solicited and considered in decision making at the System level; (4) evidence of further implementation of the UPR Action Plan, including evidence that the action plan is being assessed and data are used for improvements; (5) evidence that steps have been taken to assure continuity and stability of institutional leadership, particularly in times of governmental transitions; (6) evidence that communication between the Central Administration and the institution, is clear, timely, accurate, and made available to all constituents; and (7) evidence of further progress in implementing a procedure for the periodic

objective assessment of the Board of Trustees (Standard 4). A visit may follow submission of the April 1, 2012 report. The next evaluation visit will be scheduled once accreditation is reaffirmed.

Among the individuals and entities with whom the team members met on their September 12th visit to the campus included: the Board of Trustees of the University of Puerto Rico System, the Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras, the Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, Executive Deans, College Deans, members of the Ad Hoc Committee that prepared the Monitoring Report that was submitted on September 1, 2011, faculty and student representatives to the Academic Senate, President of the University of Puerto Rico System, the Vice President for Academic Affairs for the University of Puerto Rico System, members of the Faculty, members of the student body, and members of the Non-Faculty Staff. The Team made sure that every member of the University community who wanted to share his or her concerns was able to do so, even if it meant extending time allocated to the different constituencies.

III. Affirmation of Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

Based on a review of the Monitoring Report submitted on September 1, 2011 and appendices, interviews, and other institutional documents, the visitor/team affirms that the institution continues to meet the Requirements of Affiliation.

IV. Commendations and Summary of Institutional Strengths

Based on the substance of the Monitoring Report submitted on September 1, 2011, and on supporting materials and documents, as well as the content of what was conveyed in the various meetings held with the full array of university community members, it is apparent that the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras understands the need to attend to the fundamental elements of Standard 4, Leadership and Governance. It is clear that, beyond all disagreements, the System and campus administrations as well as the different campus constituencies share a commitment to the institution and its students. As expressed by several persons who spoke with the team, the fabric of the University was torn by the events that precipitated the Commission's actions and it will be a long and difficult journey to fully restore a climate of mutual trust. We believe that serious and focused steps have been taken to ensure that the institution is in compliance with Standard 4. Particularly noteworthy are some of the steps taken by the Deans of several individual schools to improve communication with their students and faculty. While there is room for improvement, we believe the University has taken the first steps in that journey. The Evaluating Team wants to encourage all parties to continue the path of increased communication in an environment of mutual respect.

As noted in previous MSCHE Team Visit Reports, the University of Puerto Rico System is a highly centralized one and we make no judgment on this local arrangement. But we also note that it seems that decisions that immediately precipitated the crisis originated at the System level. In this context, we believe that the System leadership also understands and is committed to the need to attend to the fundamental elements of Standard 4.

V. Compliance with Accreditation Standard(s) Under Review

Standard 4, Leadership and Governance

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

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments: Among the evidence that was considered in concluding that the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras is in compliance with Standard 4 are the Monitoring Report submitted to the MSCHE on September 1, 2011 and the appendices that accompanied that report as well as the testimony that was obtained in the various meetings conducted with the University of Puerto Rico System leadership (i.e., the Board of Trustees, the President, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs), the institution's academic and administrative leadership, and the wide array of university community members (members of the faculty, the student body, and non-faculty personnel). Even among those individuals with a history of expressing vocal concerns about the substance of prior administrative decisions at the campus and who even today have differences of opinion about specific actions of the leadership of the institution, there was acknowledgement that significant and positive steps have been taken in attending to the concerns communicated the institution on June 23, 2011. To be fair, some members of the community tempered this acknowledgement with a concern that, if probation status was removed, there may be backtracking on those steps.

Recommendations: In order to help ensure that the institution continues on the path on which it has already made a reasonable beginning with respect to complying with Standard 4, the team of evaluators recommends that the institution incorporate into the Monitoring Report that it will be required to submit to the MSCHE on April 1, 2012 the provision of further and new evidence:

- (1) That it continues to improve communication, especially with respect to soliciting and considering campus input in decision making. In this respect it is clear that sufficient formal channels of communication exist. Perhaps additional informal meetings between campus and system leadership with the various campus constituencies will help develop a stronger climate of trust.
- (2) That campus administration make every effort to expedite the work of the search committees that have been constituted to fill the deanships that are currently occupied by interims.
- (3) That the chancellor create additional opportunities, both formal and informal, whereby she can directly and personally receive input from students.

VI. Summary of Compliance

Based on a review of the Monitoring Report and appendices, interviews, and other documents reviewed during the visit, the team draws the following conclusions:

1. The University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras is in compliance with the Requirements of Affiliation.
2. The University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras is in compliance Accreditation Standard 4, Leadership and Governance.