Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of
The University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras
By
An Evaluation Team Representing the
Middle State Commission on Higher Education
Prepared after a follow up visit of the Institution’s Progress Report
And a visit to Campus April 26-27, 2007

The Members of the MSCHE Team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation Team as interpreted by the Chair; it
goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission. It is a
confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution.
All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist the University of
Puerto Rico Río Piedras. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the
institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its education
objectives.
INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

The University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras is classified as a Doctoral/Research Intensive university.

AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Chancellor: Gladys Escalona de Motta
Chief Academic Office: Sonia Balet
President and CEO: Antonio García Padilla

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

Date when instruction began: 1903
Institution Type: Public

Degrees Offered: Seven undergraduate degrees, eleven Master degrees, thirteen Ph.D.s and an Ed.D. Also, a Juris Doctor and a MBA/JD, one graduate certificate and three post-master's certificates.

Enrollment (As of Fall, 2003)

Total unduplicated for-credit headcount = 21,607
Total non-credit enrollment = 59

Affirmation of continued compliance with Eligibility Requirements: Based on review of the Self Study, other institutional documents and interviews, the Team affirms that the institution continues to meet eligibility requirements 1-7 as described in the Characteristics of Excellence.

Compliance with federal requirements; issues relative to state regulatory or other accrediting agency requirements: The Team affirms that the institution’s Title IV cohort default rate of 18.42% is within the federal limits
INTRODUCTION

In June 2005, the Commission acted to reaffirm accreditation of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) at Rio Piedras. They requested a monitoring report due by November 1, 2006, documenting (1) progress made in the implementation of a comprehensive institutional strategic plan which links long-range planning to decision making and budgeting processes; (2) implementation of a written plan for the assessment of institutional effectiveness; and (3) progress toward the implementation of a new undergraduate curriculum. In this report, we respond to these concerns by the standards.

The Commission directed that submission of the report would be followed by a visit. Members of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Evaluation Team visited the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras Campus from April 26-27, 2007.

During the visit, the Team made every effort to meet with members of different sectors of the University community as it related to the progress of the areas identified by the Middle States.

For the Middle States Association site team, I am pleased to express our deep appreciation to the entire UPR Rio Piedras community for their gracious hospitality, their forthrightness, their generosity in their time and their responsiveness to our inquiries and requests during our visit. In particular we acknowledge Chancellor Gladys Escalona de Motta, Dr. Sonia Balet, Dr. Laura Galarza Garcia, and members of the UPRRP staff, notably Ana Velasquez, Carmen Villanueva, and Carlos Juan Garcia. We also thank the deans and other members of the steering committee for their dedicated efforts. We are pleased to report that all materials necessary for a fair and thorough evaluation were provided and that there was a sense of openness and collegiality that made the visit productive and pleasant.

Beginning with the Chancellor, we assert that the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras is led by a committed group of individuals who want to move the University into the 21st Century while preserving the heritage of the Campus. The University community loves the institution and at the same time is concerned with fulfilling its mission while continuing to serve the needs of the external community and Puerto Rican society.

This report is formatted to address evidence of progress for the Standards 2, 3, 7, and 12, in compliance as stated in the Characteristics of Excellence. Each section begins with a short narrative summarizing observations, evidence and findings based on review of the Progress Report (Nov. 2006), other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students and others. Also, each section addresses the Fundamental Elements necessary for compliance with the Characteristics of Excellence and provides suggestions, recommendations, and, if necessary requirements. Commendations are noted to recognize campus accomplishments. Suggestions are made in a collegial sense and are designed to assist the institution in meeting its goals and objectives. Recommendations and Requirements, on the other hand, must be addressed by the
institution in order to maintain compliance with all fourteen Characteristics of Excellence.

All members of the Team have reviewed and concur with the statements contained in this report.

Standard 2: Institutional Planning and Resources
An institution conducts 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 change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

Summary of Evidence and Findings
The Middle States Team Report of 2005 made one recommendation and one requirement. The recommendation was: "As one approach to gradually achieve a more direct relationship between plans and budget resources, we recommend that budget estimates be added to the 5-year PLEA goals and objectives (at least for those requiring new resources over the existing budget levels). A 5-year financial projection of general revenues and expenditures should also be prepared by financial officials and then compared and matched with the PLEA 5-year projected budget requirements. This would serve as basis for initial resource allocation decisions." The requirement was: "By the end of year 2005-06 the institution must complete the revision and updating of the PLEA 5-year strategic plan through a collegiate, participatory process. This new PLEA should include evaluation measurements or indicators, as well as time-frame indicators, and preliminary estimates of those additional budget resources needed to implement the plan, in order to serve as basis for planning and budgeting integration analysis. The revised PLEA must serve as basis for each unit to develop their individual development plans. Campus-level plans and priorities must be reinstated as the basis for both annual and long-range budget and resource allocations." Our present findings in follow-up to these statements are given below.

Significant Accomplishments
Through review of the documentation provided and after conducting several meetings and interviews with key representatives of the university community, it is clear to the visiting team that UPRRP has achieved impressive progress in the revision, updating, approval and implementation of a new and revitalized strategic planning process. The new Vision 2016 strategic plan represents not only a revision of the former PLEA reference document, but moreover an outstanding new level of quality in the analytical and decision-making processes of the institution, and a fresh and dynamic new approach for planning activity.

The new Vision 2016 is a sound, well focused long-range plan which provides a clear direction for institutional development and renewal through a reaffirmed mission, a challenging new vision statement and a set of well defined strategic priorities. In addition to this ambitious strategic agenda, the institution went on further to a second tier of
planning with the development of an “operational component” (Universidad 2011) which provides more specific goals and objectives, under the nine (9) strategic priorities, but focused on the first 5-year period of the strategic plan (2006-2011). At this operational level UPRRP was able to comply with the second recommendation of the MSA team in 2005, incorporating 5-year budget and financial projections for each one of the main goals and objectives as stated in the plan.

Moreover, the revised strategic plan incorporates a third level for the implementation process through the use of a new “project management” approach, developing special formats and reporting tools to authorize, fund and evaluate special priority projects, which must be properly aligned with Vision 2016 and contribute to the achievement of its priority goals. As also required by the MSA team in 2005, the new strategic plan is supported and complemented by an impressive system of performance indicators, specially identified and aligned to provide specific data to document progress for each main stated goal. This set of performance indicators includes a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative data and is available to all community constituents through a special web-page.

We strongly commend the administration and the committees that are taking part in the planning process. We further commend the strategic planning coordinator for putting in place a transparent and open process involving a variety of innovative and effective participatory strategies. These processes include not just committee work, but also workshops, public hearings, the creation of web pages, among other contributions.

The MSA visiting team commends UPRRP for demonstrating outstanding work in revamping the strategic planning process and making it a serious, more effective and participatory activity. We are confident that, counting with a consistent financial support and resources, Vision 2016 and Universidad 2011 will prove to be a positive turning point and a sound groundwork for institutional renewal.

Suggestions:
We suggest the University continue its efforts to integrate its institutional assessment procedures to strengthen its planning and budgeting procedures.

Recommendations:
None.

Requirements:
None.

We find that UPRRP meets Standard 2.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources
The human, financial, technical, 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.

Summary of Evidence and Findings
The 2005 Middle States Team made one recommendation and one requirement. The recommendation was: “The Campus must tie its strategic planning with the operating and capital improvement budgetary allocations process. Also this plan should clearly state ongoing outcomes assessment elements and criteria”. The requirement was: The Campus should present a progress report within two years in connection to planning, resource enhancement and cost efficiency measures to accommodate its challenges to improve and maintain its institutional quality. The Campus plan should clearly state the decision-making process for allocating resources and program for capital expenditures with measures of efficiency and effectiveness. It is of paramount importance to reflect clearly the operating and capital budget attributable to each activity.” Findings from our present review are given below.

Besides the need to revise the strategic plan, probably the major concern of the MSA visiting team in 2005 was the need to strengthen the relationship between the plan and the financial resources needed to support its proper implementation. Fiscal constraints were identified as the major institutional limitation that could jeopardize not only the accomplishment of the mission and the advancement of institutional goals, but even the healthy operation of the university.

As the result of the present evaluation visit, we are encouraged by the affirmative and concrete steps taken by both campus and Central Administration authorities to address UPRRP financial needs. The recently approved Certification 100 from the Board of Directors reinstated the proper planning and budgeting annual cycle, providing for the consideration of campus plans, goals and priorities as the basis for budget allocation. On the other hand, circular letters #14 (2005-06) and #11 (2006-07) established new planning and budgeting procedures at campus levels, aligned and taking into consideration Vision 2016 strategic priorities. Although these newly reinforced processes are in an initial stage of implementation, already the Deans and other university officials have indicated that positive changes are being achieved through additional budget resources for strategically aligned projects.

For year 2006-07, the UPRRP total budget was around $256 million. In addition to this basic budget allocation the institution received some $13.3 million in additional funds for a series of requests and projects closely related to the strategic plan priorities, as requested by the institution. For the next fiscal year 2007-08 some $2.3 million is being identified for internal reallocation in order to be redirected to fund priority-oriented activities. In addition to those internal funds, the institution are soliciting over $8 million in additional funds (over the base budget) to support yet other critical areas such as library resources, program accreditations, and preventive maintenance, among others.

The area of capital improvements and physical plant renovation has been a serious concern at UPRRP for many years. In this aspect institutional officials noted that funds
are already allocated for several major projects, including renovation of aging buildings, and the student center, among others, to meet ADA standards. Nevertheless, no specific amounts or schedules were provided since all major physical planning is centralized and coordinated from the central system office. Although the visiting team was pleased to know about these projected developments, still it is concerned about this important issue and the need to expedite these projects.

We further note the fiscal constraints that affect the competitive position of faculty salaries within the University. While the University has undertaken measures to attract and retain qualified faculty, baseline salaries still make it difficult for the University to realize its ambitions of being a world-class institution.

**Commendations**

We commend the Budget Director for undertaking an outstanding job in reshaping the nature of the office. He has done so by moving the office from one of a traditional cost-control approach to being a pro-active facilitator. In so doing, he has helped to make sure that new and available resources are properly matched with institutional strategic priorities and providing recommendations for the re-allocation of resources. One major and encouraging development in the area of fiscal control is the stated commitment of the institution to systematically reduce the proportion of resources assigned to salaries and fringe benefits, which now account for eighty-four percent of total budget expenditures. Such a high percentage has severely hampered the institution in its efforts to engage in institutional renewal. Strategies now are in place to reduce that proportion to eighty percent by 2011. The director expects that these changes will produce a surplus of some $8 million.

**Suggestions**

Despite significant improvements in containing costs and making more rational budgetary decisions, we are concerned about the pace of the renovations of the campus physical infrastructure. We suggest that a timely implementation of measures to renovate aging buildings be undertaken to ensure the quality goals of the university as outlined in Vision 2016.

We suggest that along with the implementation of a more rational budgeting procedure, greater attention be given to raising faculty salary scales to accommodate the needs of an institution engaged in continuous faculty renewal.

**Recommendations**

None

**Requirements**

None.

**We find that UPRRP meets Standard 3.**
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.

Summary of Evidence and Findings
Based on a documentary review and meetings with campus representatives, we report the following on the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras (UPRRP) campus to fulfill standard seven. This statement is based on a review of three key documents: a. the Middle States Team Report of March 2005; b. the April 6, 2005 Reply of UPRRP to the March 2005 Middle States Team Report; c. the UPRRP 2006-2016 Strategic Plan; and d. the October 2006 UPRRP progress report on Progress in Implementation of the Plan for the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness.

The Middle States Team report of March 2005 states that UPRRP partially meets Standard 7, and makes several recommendations for achieving full compliance. The Team stated that the Mission Statement was not comprehensive in its coverage of all areas of institutional assessment, that there was a lack of systematic assessment procedures, and that for those areas where assessment plans have been undertaken, they did not result in the setting of priorities nor for budgeting, and that as part of a subsequent Periodic Review Report, UPRRP should address these issues.

In its April 6, 2005 response, the UPRRP administration contends that the Middle States Team findings do not properly interpret the evidence and that the UPRRP Self-Study and supporting documents demonstrate full compliance with this standard. UPRRP bases its conclusion on the role of the six-campus-wide priorities and in the adoption of a system-wide plan for institutional assessment. In follow-up, UPRRP's periodic review report of October 2006 points to the structure of institutional assessment as well as in terms of activities. In this document, UPRRP asserts that under the new Strategic Vision Plan, assessment is more widespread than before, that all academic program units are now covered, that new performance indicators have been developed that address areas not covered before, shortening the time for the production of institutional research results, enhancing the assessment infrastructure, and establishing measures to improve the quality of data that will encourage campus-wide use of the databases to support the assessment process.

In our view, UPRRP has made notable progress in its institutional assessment efforts since the Middle States Team visit of March 2005. Indeed, we find a growing culture of assessment that has engaged the various constituencies of the University. Under the new Vision University 2016 Strategic Plan, indicators are fixed using baseline data, procedures to generate them, identification of responsible reporting units, and reporting deadlines. All of this is now available on the UPRRP website. Topics covered include: admission and financial aid, renovation and development of academic programs, fundraising infrastructure capacity, status and adequacy of infrastructural support for learning, research, and creative endeavors, publication and other research and creative endeavor
products, extracurricular offerings, assessments of curricular offerings and demand, and assessment of the effectiveness of the educational process.

UPRRP indicates that institutional research in support of assessment incorporates data from an ongoing Freshman profile survey, a student satisfaction survey, a National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), a Rio Piedras Campus Student Profile, a No-shows analysis, and a Graduating Seniors Exit Survey. Moreover, in Table 4, the UPRRP Periodic Progress report displays results of an online system of data regarding faculty engagement in various aspects of their professional responsibilities. Finally, the Periodic Review indicates how findings from various surveys are now applied to the revision of goals and objectives as set forth in the Vision University 2016 Strategic Plan.

**Significant Accomplishments**
We commend UPRRP for its detailed progress in documenting how institutional assessment has now been incorporated into the institution's strategic planning process. We further commend UPRRP for the implementation of a web-based institutional research system that facilitates the regular gathering of data for purposes of institutional assessment.

**Suggestions**
We encourage UPRRP to continue its efforts to strengthen institutional assessment, using surveys of graduates and other stakeholders to affirm findings gathered from existing sources.

We further encourage UPRRP to extend assessment measures to non-academic areas of the institution. Toward this end, we strongly suggest that suitable assessment be completed for the seven strategic priorities for the 2011 time horizon.

**Recommendations**
None

**Requirements**
None

We find that UPRRP meets Standard 7.

**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.
Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on our review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with administrators and faculty members at the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras, the team arrived at the following conclusions, including commendations, suggestions and recommendations relative to this standard.

The MSCHE Report submitted by the Evaluation Team (Feb. 27- March 2, 2005), required “that the University submit their schedule for implementation of the undergraduate program. Such implementation must be scheduled to begin the 2007-2008 academic year.” A close examination of the Progress Report, submitted by the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs in October 2006, demonstrates that progress has been made leading to the implementation of the proposed undergraduate curricular revision, which also includes discussions on the revised general education component.

In January 2006, the Academic Senate approved Certification 46, 2005-2006, establishing specific guidelines and strategies pertaining to the re-conceptualization of the Campus general education component. The present model is at various stages of implementation. Some Schools and Colleges appear ready to offer a limited number of courses already approved by the appropriate administrative and faculty bodies, in August, 2007. Despite this, as of this target date, we find that fewer than half of the required number of revised general education courses will be ready for the incoming class in the fall semester.

Almost every group interviewed during the MSCHE Team visit agrees that full implementation will take place by the fall 2008 semester. What is important, however, is that a campus wide concept of General Education is in place. Furthermore, almost everyone agrees that the process of developing the new undergraduate curriculum, especially the general education component, has been a fully participatory activity, and has helped in the integration of faculty across disciplines and academic units.

Our review of a sample of general education course offerings reveals wide variation of adherence to the new standards. We note that learning objectives are not always embodied in course syllabi, that some courses are listed in catalog file report form only, that in general, there is a notable lack of consistency in the format of course packages.

Significant Accomplishments

1. The administration at UPR, Rio Piedras, is to be commended for establishing a Campus Implementation Committee to maintain continuity during the implementation process of the undergraduate general education curriculum, and to ensure that progress takes place as planned.

2. The creation of a Summer Institute, in collaboration with several Schools and Colleges, will go a long way in addressing the special needs of newly admitted students in Spanish, English and Mathematical competencies.
3. The Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies will become the focus of interdepartmental collaboration to monitor academic progress and support the development of competencies in linguistics, Spanish, and English.

4. We commend the Implementation Committee for developing a course rubric to create or revise GE courses (Appendix 3) as well as for establishing general education standards to determine compliance with revision guidelines (Appendix 4).

5. In the areas of arts, literature, natural sciences and mathematics/quantitative analysis, the Implementation Committee developed criteria that every course must satisfy to comply with the campus concept of General Education.

6. The new policy of reducing graduation requirements in most concentrations offers students more opportunities to choose free electives within the new bachelor’s degree structure.

Suggestions
We suggest that clear guidelines and statements be developed and included in the undergraduate catalogue, in all recruitment, admission and advising materials. These guidelines should explain in simple terms what the guiding principles of General Education are and how specific courses reflect the mission of the institution.

We strongly suggest that each academic unit develop courses that meet general education guidelines. Toward this end, we encourage the adoption of administrative incentives to encourage qualified faculty in every academic unit to participate in the teaching of general education courses on a rotating basis.

To ensure the successful implementation of the new general education curriculum, we encourage the organization of inter-college/inter-departmental discussion groups. The work of these groups would focus on expectations for general education courses on a regular basis. The joint seminar about interdisciplinary offerings which took place in the Spring 2007 semester should serve as a model.

Recommendations:
In light of the slow pace of implementation, we have continuing concerns about the successful integration of the general education reform as part of the undergraduate program. Toward this end, we note several recommendations.

The revised undergraduate curriculum and the general education document needs to articulate, in a manner that is easily understood by all, how and when the proposed undergraduate curriculum will be fully implemented. We further recommend the creation of a separate brochure (bulletin) listing all courses to be offered as part of the general education requirements, to be distributed to every academic unit, the office of the Registrar and all advising personnel. This publication should include all courses approved by the General Education Implementation Committee to facilitate the advising process.

The visiting team strongly recommends that every academic unit be provided with adequate budgetary allocation, administrative oversight, and appropriate salary incentives
for faculty participation in the revised undergraduate curriculum, and specifically the new general education component. This includes a credible timetable for implementation that ensures the integrity of the new program guidelines.

We find that UPRRP minimally meets Standard 12.
Documento con correcciones
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Suggestions:
We suggest the University continue its efforts to integrate its institutional assessment procedures to strengthen its planning and budgeting procedures.

Recommendations:
None.

Requirements:
None.

We find that UPRRP meets Standard 2.

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Besides the need to revise the strategic plan, probably the major concern of the MSA visiting team in 2005 was the need to strengthen the relationship between the plan and the financial resources needed to support its proper implementation. Fiscal constraints were identified as the major institutional limitation that could jeopardize not only the accomplishment of the mission and the advancement of institutional goals, but even the healthy operation of the university.

As the result of the present evaluation visit, we are encouraged by the affirmative and concrete steps taken by both campus and Central Administration authorities to address UPRRP financial needs. The recently approved Certification 100 from the Board of Directors reinstated the proper planning and budgeting annual cycle, providing for the consideration of campus plans, goals and priorities as the basis for budget allocation. On the other hand, circular letters #14 (2005-06) and #11 (2006-07) established new planning and budgeting procedures at campus levels, aligned and taking into consideration Vision 2016 strategic priorities. Although these newly reinforced processes are in an initial stage of implementation, already the Deans and other university officials have indicated that positive changes are being achieved through additional budget resources for strategically aligned projects.

For year 2006-07, the UPRRP total budget was around $256 million. In addition to this basic budget allocation the institution received some $13.3 million in additional funds for a series of requests and projects closely related to the strategic plan priorities, as requested by the institution. For the next fiscal year 2007-08 some $2.3 million is being identified for internal reallocation in order to be redirected to fund priority-oriented activities. In addition to those internal funds, the institution are soliciting over $8 million in additional funds (over the base budget) to support yet other critical areas such as library resources, program accreditations, and preventive maintenance, among others.

The area of capital improvements and physical plant renovation has been a serious concern at UPRRP for many years. In this aspect institutional officials noted that funds
are already allocated for several major projects, including renovation of aging buildings, and the student center, among others, to meet ADA standards. Nevertheless, no specific amounts or schedules were provided since all major physical planning is centralized and coordinated from the central system office. Although the visiting team was pleased to know about these projected developments, still it is concerned about this important issue and the need to expedite these projects.

We further note the fiscal constraints that affect the competitive position of faculty salaries within the University. While the University has undertaken measures to attract and retain qualified faculty, baseline salaries still make it difficult for the University to realize its ambitions of being a world-class institution.

**Commendations**

We commend the Budget Director for undertaking an outstanding job in reshaping the nature of the office. He has done so by moving the office from one of a traditional cost-control approach to being a pro-active facilitator. In so doing, he has helped to make sure that new and available resources are properly matched with institutional strategic priorities and providing recommendations for the re-allocation of resources. One major and encouraging development in the area of fiscal control is the stated commitment of the institution to systematically reduce the proportion of resources assigned to salaries and fringe benefits, which now account for eighty-four percent of total budget expenditures. Such a high percentage has severely hampered the institution in its efforts to engage in institutional renewal. Strategies now are in place to reduce that proportion to eighty percent by 2011. The director expects that these changes will produce a surplus of some $8 million.

**Suggestions**

Despite significant improvements in containing costs and making more rational budgetary decisions, we are concerned about the pace of the renovations of the campus physical infrastructure. We suggest that a timely implementation of measures to renovate aging buildings be undertaken to ensure the quality goals of the university as outlined in Vision 2016.

We suggest that along with the implementation of a more rational budgeting procedure, greater attention be given to raising faculty salary scales to accommodate the needs of an institution engaged in continuous faculty renewal.

**Recommendations**

None

**Requirements**

None.

**We find that UPRRP meets Standard 3.**
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.

Summary of Evidence and Findings
Based on a documentary review and meetings with campus representatives, we report the following on the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras (UPRRP) campus to fulfill standard seven. This statement is based on a review of three key documents: a. the Middle States Team Report of March 2005; b. the April 6, 2005 Reply of UPRRP to the March 2005 Middle States Team Report; c. the UPRRP 2006-2016 Strategic Plan; and d. the October 2006 UPRRP progress report on Progress in Implementation of the Plan for the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness.

The Middle States Team report of March 2005 states that UPRRP partially meets Standard 7, and makes several recommendations for achieving full compliance. The Team stated that the Mission Statement was not comprehensive in its coverage of all areas of institutional assessment, that there was a lack of systematic assessment procedures, and that for those areas where assessment plans have been undertaken, they did not result in the setting of priorities nor for budgeting, and that as part of a subsequent Periodic Review Report, UPRRP should address these issues.

In its April 6, 2005 response, the UPRRP administration contends that the Middle States Team findings do not properly interpret the evidence and that the UPRRP Self-Study and supporting documents demonstrate full compliance with this standard. UPRRP bases its conclusion on the role of the six-campus-wide priorities and in the adoption of a system-wide plan for institutional assessment. In follow-up, UPRRP's periodic review report of October 2006 points to the structure of institutional assessment as well as in terms of activities. In this document, UPRRP asserts that under the new Strategic Vision Plan, assessment is more widespread than before, that all academic program units are now covered, that new performance indicators have been developed that address areas not covered before, shortening the time for the production of institutional research results, enhancing the assessment infrastructure, and establishing measures to improve the quality of data that will encourage campus-wide use of the databases to support the assessment process.

In our view, UPRRP has made notable progress in its institutional assessment efforts since the Middle States Team visit of March 2005. Indeed, we find a growing culture of assessment that has engaged the various constituencies of the University. Under the new Vision University 2016 Strategic Plan, indicators are fixed using baseline data, procedures to generate them, identification of responsible reporting units, and reporting deadlines. All of this is now available on the UPRRP website. Topics covered include: admission and financial aid, renovation and development of academic programs, fund-raising infrastructure capacity, status and adequacy of infrastructural support for learning, research, and creative endeavors, publication and other research and creative endeavor.
products, extracurricular offerings, assessments of curricular offerings and demand, and assessment of the effectiveness of the educational process.

UPRRP indicates that institutional research in support of assessment incorporates data from an ongoing Freshman profile survey, a student satisfaction survey, a National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), a Rio Piedras Campus Student Profile, a No-shows analysis, and a Graduating Seniors Exit Survey. Moreover, in Table 4, the UPRRP Periodic Progress report displays results of an online system of data regarding faculty engagement in various aspects of their professional responsibilities. Finally, the Periodic Review indicates how findings from various surveys are now applied to the revision of goals and objectives as set forth in the Vision University 2016 Strategic Plan.

**Significant Accomplishments**

We commend UPRRP for its detailed progress in documenting how institutional assessment has now been incorporated into the institution's strategic planning process. We further commend UPRRP for the implementation of a web-based institutional research system that facilitates the regular gathering of data for purposes of institutional assessment.

**Suggestions**

We encourage UPRRP to continue its efforts to strengthen institutional assessment, using surveys of graduates and other stakeholders to affirm findings gathered from existing sources.

We further encourage UPRRP to extend assessment measures to non-academic areas of the institution. Toward this end, we strongly suggest that suitable assessment be completed for the seven strategic priorities for the 2011 time horizon.

**Recommendations**

None

**Requirements**

None

We find that UPRRP meets Standard 7.

**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.
Summary of Evidence and Findings
Based on our review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with administrators and faculty members at the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras, the team arrived at the following conclusions, including commendations, suggestions and recommendations relative to this standard.

The MSCHE Report submitted by the Evaluation Team (Feb. 27- March 2, 2005), required “that the University submit their schedule for implementation of the undergraduate program. Such implementation must be scheduled to begin the 2007-2008 academic year.” A close examination of the Progress Report, submitted by the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs in October 2006, demonstrates that progress has been made leading to the implementation of the proposed undergraduate curricular revision, which also includes discussions on the revised general education component.

In January 2006, the Academic Senate approved Certification 46, 2005-2006, establishing specific guidelines and strategies pertaining to the re-conceptualization of the Campus general education component. The present model is at various stages of implementation. Some Schools and Colleges appear ready to offer a limited number of courses already approved by the appropriate administrative and faculty boards in August, 2007. Despite this, as of this target date, we find that fewer than half of the required number of revised general education courses will be ready for the incoming class in the fall semester.

Almost every group interviewed during the MSCHE Team visit agrees that full implementation will take place by the fall 2008 semester. What is important, however, is that a campus wide concept of General Education is in place. Furthermore, almost everyone agrees that the process of developing the new undergraduate curriculum, especially the general education component, has been a fully participatory activity, and has helped in the integration of faculty across disciplines and academic units.

Our review of a sample of general education courses reveals wide variation of adherence to the new standards. We note that learning objectives are not always embodied in course syllabi, that some courses are listed in catalog file report form only, that in general, there is a notable lack of consistency in the format of course parameters.

Significant Accomplishments
1. The administration at UPR, Rio Piedras, is to be commended for establishing a Campus Implementation Committee to maintain continuity during the implementation process of the undergraduate general education curriculum, and to ensure that progress takes place as planned.
2. The creation of a Summer Institute, in collaboration with several Schools and Colleges, will go a long way in addressing the special needs of newly admitted students in Spanish, English and Mathematical competencies.
3. The Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies will become the focus of interdepartmental collaboration to monitor academic progress and support the development of competencies in linguistics, Spanish, and English.

4. We commend the Implementation Committee for developing a course rubric to create or revise GE courses (Appendix 3) as well as for establishing general education standards to determine compliance with revision guidelines (Appendix 4).

5. In the areas of arts, literature, natural sciences and mathematics/quantitative analysis, the Implementation Committee developed criteria that every course must satisfy to comply with the campus concept of General Education.

6. The new policy of reducing graduation requirements in most concentrations offers students more opportunities to choose free electives within the new bachelor’s degree structure.

Suggestions

We suggest that clear guidelines and statements be developed and included in the undergraduate catalogue, in all recruitment, admission and advising materials. These guidelines should explain in simple terms what the guiding principles of General Education are and how specific courses reflect the mission of the institution.

We strongly suggest that each academic unit develop courses that meet general education guidelines. Toward this end, we encourage the adoption of administrative incentives to encourage qualified faculty in every academic unit to participate in the teaching of general education courses on a rotating basis.

To ensure the successful implementation of the new general education curriculum, we encourage the organization of inter-college/inter-departmental discussion groups. The work of these groups would focus on expectations for general education courses on a regular basis. The joint seminar about interdisciplinary offerings which took place in the Spring 2007 semester should serve as a model.

Recommendations:

In light of the slow pace of implementation, we have continuing concerns about the successful integration of the general education reform as part of the undergraduate program. Toward this end, we note several recommendations.

The revised undergraduate curriculum and the general education document needs to articulate, in a manner that is easily understood by all, how and when the proposed undergraduate curriculum will be fully implemented. We further recommend the creation of a separate brochure (bulletin) listing all courses to be offered as part of the general education requirements, to be distributed to every academic unit, the office of the Registrar and all advising personnel. This publication should include all courses approved by the General Education Implementation Committee to facilitate the advising process.

The visiting team strongly recommends that every academic unit be provided with adequate budgetary allocation, administrative oversight, and appropriate salary incentives
for faculty participation in the revised undergraduate curriculum, and specifically the new general education component. This includes a credible timetable for implementation that ensures the integrity of the new program guidelines.

We find that UPRRP minimally meets Standard 12.
Dear Dr. Lugo: 

I respectfully submit our corrections to the Report by the Evaluation Team prepared after the follow-up visit of the Institution's Progress Report to the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico on April 26 and 27, 2007.

Standard 7 – page 9

Suggestions – second paragraph

We further encourage the UPRRP to increase the number of assessment measures of non academic areas of the institution. Toward...

Summary of Evidence and Findings – page 10

Paragraph 3 – last sentence should read:

Paragraph 5 – paragraph should read

Our review of a sample of rough drafts of general education courses reveals wide variation of adherence to the new standards. We note that learning objectives are not always embodied in course syllabi, that some courses are listed in catalog file report form only, that in general, there is a notable lack of consistency in the format of the proposed courses.

Carmen M. Villanueva
Secretaria Ejecutiva
Decanato de Asuntos Académicos
Ext. 4916
I respectfully submit our corrections to the Report prepared by the Evaluation Team upon their visit to follow up on the Progress Report filed by the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico, April 1989.