



May 12, 2011

Dr. Elizabeth H. Sibolski
President
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680

Dear President Sibolski:

On March 1, 2011 the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) submitted to the Middle States Commission of Higher Education (MSCHE) a Monitoring Report as requested by the Commission on November 19, 2010, evidencing progress in achieving and sustaining compliance with Standard 4, Leadership and Governance, and Standard 3, Institutional Resources. On March 6-7, 2011, the Río Piedras Campus received the corresponding onsite visit. The Campus appreciates the Visiting Team's evaluation and recognition of the *"sound decisions and careful planning to offset the budget cuts"* that the Campus and the whole University System face. Among others, the University leadership at both the Campus and System levels welcome the recommendation of providing incentives for campuses effectively dealing with the declining budgets and identifying new sources of funding to support initiatives, as demonstrated by the Río Piedras Campus, as a measure for recognizing and modeling best practices throughout the System and further stimulating the search for alternate sources of funding to advance institutional mission.

The following comments are respectfully offered to the Commission by way of providing additional institutional context to some observations, recommendations and requirements in the Visiting Team's Report regarding Standard 4.

To confront the unprecedented challenges faced since the past year and recognizing the utmost importance to recover the institution's history of good accreditation standing to continue the effective accomplishment of its mission, in September 2010, the UPR launched a proportionately ambitious Action Plan at the System and unit levels. The UPR Action Plan is guided by a set of thrusts and goals resulting from an introspective identification and critical self assessment in context with the relevant elements of the standards under review, and prompt and decisive actions therein deployed for sustained compliance (UPR Consolidated Monitoring Report, CMR, <http://www.upr.edu/docs-ms/N-UPR-Consolidated-Monitoring-Report-Sept6-2010.pdf>, pages 1-2). In accordance with Requirement 6 in the November 2010 Commission's letter and pursuant to the format agreed with the MSCHE Liaisons, the Task Force and accreditation coordinators of the University System, an Assessment Report of the implementation of the Action Plan was included as an appendix to the Río Piedras Campus Monitoring Report, as well as the other UPR units' Reports (<http://www.upr.edu/documentos/assessment-report-msche.pdf>).

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During the April 3 onsite visit to UPR Central Administration, the President of the UPR highlighted in his presentation to the Visiting Teams the outcomes to date on the implementation of the Plan, which is currently over 91% deployed (enclosed). Substantive evidence was made available in the Central Administration Exhibit Room for the Evaluation Teams' review confirming actions implemented by the Board of Trustees and University leadership at the System level to advance sustained compliance with standards under review and with all of the 9 requirements. Portfolios with aggregated data and supporting documentation, indexed and organized around each of the nine Commission's requirements, were disclosed to evaluators. The President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Research and Technology, Finance and Budget Directors, as well as other Senior Staff were available at the Exhibit Room, answered specific questions, and provided additional evidence during and after the visit to fully demonstrate the effectiveness of results, including maintaining the institution operating, safeguarding compliance with MSCHE affiliation requirements.

Evaluation Teams of all campuses acknowledged the documented evidence of the implementation of the Action Plan, the meaningful steps taken for continuous improvement of institutional processes, and the recommended actions taken to monitor and assure cost control measures and guidelines for distribution of resources at the system and unit level. In addition, the teams verified that these steps are being followed for the effective deployment of financial resources and mission success.

As its oldest and most complex constituent, the Río Piedras Campus is the Flagship of the Puerto Rico public system of higher education in numerous ways. Triggered by events that started at Río Piedras and propagated throughout the System between April and June 2010, for the first time in UPR history 10 of its 11 units were placed on probation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education on June 2010, and all of its 11 units temporarily lost their eligibility to the Higher Education Act (HEA) funds in July 2010. HEA funds currently represent over \$250 M per year in Title IV funds only, facilitating access to higher education to over 70% of the entire UPR student body. In order to ensure continuity of the institution's educational mission in compliance with the primary MSCHE affiliation and HEA requirements, the necessary leadership was exerted at all levels of the institution in compliance with institutional policies. Many swift and unpopular decisions, contrary to embedded institutional culture elements had to be made, especially at the Río Piedras Campus, in order to protect the institution and safeguard the viability and reputation of the Campus and of the rest of the University System for the present and future generations (CMR, pages 13-14).

As recognized by the Visiting Team: *"Both the Central Administration and the UPR-Río Piedras have clear institutional policies specifying respective authority."* According to the University Law and Bylaws, the Academic Senates and Administrative Boards are advisory bodies to the Chancellors at the unit level, as well as the University Board is an advisory body to the President at the System level. The only governance body of the UPR System is the Board of Trustees. As evidenced in the Monitoring and the Assessment Reports, the advisory and governance structures in the UPR System are highly inclusive providing for the participation of faculty and students at all levels. However, in order to make the best use of this highly participatory structure, all constituencies must equally share the effort towards fostering a climate of true participation and input to promote transparency in an environment of trustworthiness and respect, within the framework of the clearly established UPR policies regarding how responsibility is to be assigned, delegated, and shared within the institution.

One of the major findings of the aforementioned critical self assessment that shaped the thrusts and goals in the UPR Action Plan was the need to conscientiously revisit the roles and responsibilities of University leadership, advisory and governance bodies at all levels, to guarantee that all players fully understand and exert their separate but complementary roles and responsibilities to the appropriate degree and in the most effective and efficient manner in a climate of mutual support, to sustain the necessary balance for an effective shared collegial governance (CMR, pages 17-18). Actions in progress toward that end were evidenced in the President's presentation and documented in the Central Administration's Exhibit Room.

The Monitoring Report (pages 23-24 and appendices therein) accounts and evidences efforts to intensify communication with academic and non academic constituencies, creating new spaces within the Campus to receive input for decision making, thus fostering an improved institutional climate. This has been achieved, among others, through meetings with student leadership; the creation of a Dialogue and Mediation Committee by the Academic Senate to facilitate consensus during the student conflict; Power Point presentations of the campus fiscal situation and budget in Faculty town-hall meetings, in the Academic Senate, in the Administrative Board and to other constituents; the creation of a Budget and Finance Task Force to make recommendations to the Chancellor, including input from the University Community at large by means of a blog; a calendar of systematic visits by the Chancellor to Colleges and Schools to report to them on critical issues, provide support and directly receive their concerns and recommendations in a timely manner.

At the system wide level, as informed in the Assessment Report and supported by evidence available in the Central Administration Exhibit Room, some actions underway for enhanced communication, participation and trust among constituents in alignment with the Visiting Team's recommendations included: implementation of the electronic vote mechanism; development of Institutional Climate surveys to be administered in August 2011 throughout the System to gather input to be used for decision making; ongoing system wide electronic postings by the Board of Trustees and the President to receive direct input on decisions that affect the University Community (examples include the Tuition Exemption and Summer Offer policies, and currently, an amendment to the Students Bylaws that was also contemplated in the Action Plan, http://sindicatos.upr.edu/?page_id=344); the UPR President's commitment to continue meeting periodically with student leadership at their respective levels to consider their input for decision making; the Board of Trustees' ongoing self assessment process and current development of an Action Plan for improved performance. It was also reported and evidenced that the Board of Trustees has been conducting campus visits (Assessment Report, pages 29-32). Campus visits by the recently appointed UPR Interim President and senior staff are also being scheduled to receive direct input from constituencies including students, as recommended by other evaluation teams as well, and embraced by the UPR System leadership and governance since the September 2010 Evaluation Team Report (starting in May 2011 with a visit by the President staff to UPR at Utuado; plus a meeting of the Vice President for Academic Affairs with the Academic Affairs Committee of the Río Piedras Campus Academic Senate, being scheduled at their request).

Given that the events and their consequences are still very recent, more time is needed for the Campus to consolidate its recently accomplished normalcy, and to gather, document and accurately assess with the appropriate perspective the results of these institutional efforts, and the true perception of the greater majority of the Academic Community of their impact in improving institutional climate and fostering a healthy and balanced exercise of leadership and governance in keeping with institutional policies. It is clear that the institution is moving forward, evidenced by the fact that during the current semester the Campus has been able to accomplish its main education mission without disruptions, in compliance with MSCHE affiliation and HEA requirements and the framework of the institution's commitment with an Open University Culture. Notwithstanding the progress achieved, it is equally acknowledged that efforts must continue at all levels of the institution to keep on building the necessary environment of trust and collaboration among constituencies for effective accomplishment of the institutional mission. The Río Piedras Campus, as well as the UPR governance and leadership at the System level, reiterate their commitment with vigorously continuing these efforts to assure ongoing and sustained compliance with the Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education, thus promoting the highest values and quality in our University.

The UPR Río Piedras Campus wishes to thank the Visiting Team members once more for their feedback, which will be considered and used for the continuous improvement of the institution.

Sincerely,


Ana R. Guadalupe, Ph. D.
Chancellor



The University of Puerto Rico: Overview and Accomplishments

MSCHE Follow up Visit April 3, 2011

Miguel A. Muñoz, Ph.D.
Acting President



Welcome to the University of Puerto Rico!

Dr. John Cavanaugh, Chair

Dr. Estela Lopez, Chair

Mr. John Palmucci, Finance Evaluator

Dr. Luis G. Pedraja, VP MSCHE

Dr. Dora Carbonell, Chair

Dr. Miguel Cairol, Finance Evaluator

Dr. Mary Ellen Petrisko, VP MSCHE

Dr. Robert Albrecht, Chair

Dr. Bronte D. Jones, Finance Evaluator

Dr. Ellie Fogarty, VP MSCHE



UPR Facts and Strengths

- Founded in 1903, UPR is a state supported university system with the Mission to serve the people of Puerto Rico and contribute to the development and enjoyment of the fundamental, ethical and aesthetic values of Puerto Rican culture, committed to the ideals of a democratic society. To advance its mission, the University strives to provide high quality education and create new knowledge in the Arts, Sciences and Technology
- Since its inception, the UPR has educated the majority of the top leadership of Puerto Rico's academic, business, and government sectors and confers about 9,000 degrees per year
- UPR is the premier Hispanic serving institution in the United States and the baccalaureate origin institution of 17% of all Hispanics that have obtained a Ph.D. in Science and Engineering nationwide



UPR Facts and Strengths

- The UPR System is comprised of 11 institutional units:
 - Three main campuses: Río Piedras, Mayagüez, and Medical Sciences;
 - Eight colleges: UPR at Cayey, Humacao, Arecibo, Bayamón, Ponce, Aguadilla, Carolina, and Utuado





UPR Facts and Strengths

- Since 1946, the University of Puerto Rico embraced accreditation as its leading credential to validate and strengthen the quality and integrity of its endeavors relative to internationally recognized standards of excellence, to prove itself worthy of public confidence and support

Institutional Unit	Carnegie Classification	Accredited Since
Río Piedras Campus	Research – High Research Activity	1946
Mayagüez Campus	Master's Colleges and Universities – Larger Programs	1946
Medical Science Campus	Special Focus – Medical Schools and Medical Centers	1949
UPR at Humacao	Baccalaureate-Diverse Fields	1962
UPR at Cayey	Baccalaureate-Diverse Fields	1967
UPR at Arecibo	Baccalaureate-Diverse Fields	1967
UPR at Bayamón	Baccalaureate-Diverse Fields	1960
UPR at Ponce	Baccalaureate-Diverse Fields	1970
UPR at Aguadilla	Baccalaureate-Diverse Fields	1976
UPR at Carolina	Baccalaureate-Diverse Fields	1978
UPR at Utuado	Baccalaureate-Diverse Fields	1986



UPR Facts and Strengths

- As of first session of AY 2010-2011, total enrollment of 61,967 (56% Female, 44% Male), 4,613 Faculty and 7,448 Non Teaching Employees
- Over 90% of the UPR student body is of Hispanic origin, and about 70% of undergraduates receive the PELL Grant
- Highest selectivity index of all colleges and universities in Puerto Rico
- An average of 18,000 freshman applicants over the past 5 years representing 43% of all high school seniors
- Of the over 30,000 high school students that take the College Board in Puerto Rico, 65% apply for admission to the UPR
- One out of 3 university students in the Island pursues studies in UPR
- One of every two university degrees are conferred by the UPR



UPR Facts and Strengths

- UPR offers a total of 450 different Degree Granting Programs in the Arts, Sciences, Business, Engineering and Technology:
 - 34 Philosophy and Professional Doctorates, 127 Masters, 16 Graduate Certificates, 236 Baccalaureates and 37 Associate Degrees, many of which are unique to the Island
- 42 Medicine and Dental Medicine Residency Programs in the Medical Sciences Campus
- 194 Articulated Transfer Programs between units leading to Baccalaureate Degrees.
- Of all academic offerings in UPR, 64% are susceptible to professional accreditation, of which close to 63% are already accredited
- All susceptible academic programs and services projected to be fully accredited by year 2016
- UPR is the only higher education institution in the Island where all of its teacher preparation programs are accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
- The UPR Carolina Hotel School is the only one accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration in Puerto Rico



UPR Facts and Strengths

- 8,667 degrees granted in 2010: 8% Ph. D's and Professional Doctorates, 9% Masters, 78% Baccalaureates, and 5% Associate Degrees
- During the past decade UPR development has focused on the graduate level, conferring over 450 PhD's in the last 5 years, close to 50% in Science and Technology
- Research and scholarly articles published in indexed and peer reviewed journals totaled 805 in Puerto Rico during 2009, 85% of which were produced by UPR faculty
- Close to \$105 M in External Funding awarded during AY 2010-2011 to sponsor research activity in the Sciences, Health Sciences, Engineering, Technology and the Arts
- Close to \$9.8 M in Matching Funds and \$11.6 M in Indirect Costs distributed throughout the system



UPR Facts and Strengths

- The Molecular Sciences Building: most important and ambitious biomedical research project with 152,000 sq. ft. to facilitate interdisciplinary collaborative efforts in clinical and translational research with impact in health disparities
- We expect that by August 2011 the first two floors will in full research operation by our researchers from the Rio Piedras and Medical Sciences Campuses.





Presidente de la Universidad de Puerto Rico

**The University of Puerto Rico
at the Beginning
of its Second Century:**

**Engaged in
a Change of Culture**



UPR Action Plan for Ongoing and Sustained Compliance with the Leadership and Governance, Educational Offerings, and Institutional Resources Standards of Excellence

- To confront its unprecedented challenges and to promptly recuperate UPR's traditional good accreditation standing, the UPR Action Plan set forth an ambitious agenda of institutional change aligned with the prevailing values and expectations on higher education institutions, aimed to:
 - **Foster an Enhanced Institutional Climate and Identity**
 - **Develop an Open University Culture**
 - **Revisit and Empower Leadership and Governance at all levels**
 - **Guarantee Sustained Length, Rigor and Depth of Academic Offerings**
 - **Secure Continuity and Institutional Effectiveness with Available Resources**
 - **Maintain And Nurture Additional Sources of Funding to Continue Advancing Institutional Education, Research and Service Priorities**



UPR Action Plan for Ongoing and Sustained Compliance with the Leadership and Governance, Educational Offerings, and Institutional Resources Standards of Excellence

- The UPR Action Plan is 11-fold, with one Plan at system level and individual plans for each of the 10 units in the Commission's Actions
- The prompt and decisive actions therein have been effectively deployed at all levels of the University system, to evidence sustained and ongoing compliance at the system and each unit level
- **91% of activities in the Action Plan are already fulfilled or in progress supporting full compliance with all of Commission's Actions**



Foster an Enhanced Institutional Climate and Identity

- **Goal:** Optimize the flow and exchange of timely and accurate information and broaden opportunities for productive communication and input to all sectors of the university community, to stimulate a climate of trust, collaboration, commitment and identification with the institution's mission, goals, and challenges



Foster an Enhanced Institutional Climate and Identity

OUTCOMES

1. Communication delivery channels broadened including continuous updates of institutional/unit web pages and other outlets
2. University community informed on implementation, progress and assessment of the UPR Action Plan
3. Periodic forums of the President with elected student leadership are being held
4. Visits by senior leaders to campus for informational and listening sessions are being held
5. On-line surveys about situations and issues that concern and affect the University Community in development
6. Electronic vote mechanism for students' elections and assemblies in place as mandated by Law



Develop an Open University Culture

- **Goal:** Support an Open University Culture that values diversity of ideas, guarantees and encourages freedom of speech and the right to dissent, while safeguarding the rights and responsibilities of all members of the university community with the continuity of the institutional education, research and service mission



Develop an Open University Culture

OUTCOMES

1. Increased awareness of the internal and external community on the need for ongoing and sustainable compliance with accreditation requirements regarding continuity of academic offerings to maintain good accreditation standing and eligibility for funding from the Higher Education Act and other external funds to advance the institution's mission
2. Student's Code of Conduct disseminated to the student body through multiple outlets throughout the system
3. Architectural Plan for the integration of campuses to their communities in accordance with their respective master plans deployed
4. Continuity and Security Plan in partnership with state and/or city governments to guarantee access, improve security in campuses and surrounding communities in place



Revisit and Empower Leadership and Governance at all levels

- **Goal:** Revisit the roles and responsibilities of all constituents of the institution's leadership and governance to foster an environment that stimulates and enforces compliance with the best practices in university rules and regulations, leadership, governance and institutional integrity accreditation standards, to ensure an empowered and committed leadership effectively supporting the accomplishment of the institution's mission in a manner appropriate to their charge



Revisit and Empower Leadership and Governance at all levels

OUTCOMES

1. All agreements with students honored, including: (a) Postponing implementation of Stabilization Fee, (b) Calendar set for the establishment of a new Tuition Exemption Policy for the UPR
2. Proposal for a new Summer Offering Policy to support continuity of Summer offerings with available resources under consideration of the University Board
3. Proposal to amend the General Student Bylaws requiring all elected student leaders to fully meet eligibility criteria, not only in order to qualify to be elected but also throughout the length of their terms, under consideration of the Board of Trustees
4. Scope and reach of the state of law regarding what is a legal and valid exercise of freedom of speech within a public higher education institution clarified



Revisit and Empower Leadership and Governance at all levels

OUTCOMES

5. Leadership and governance players advised on their roles and responsibilities, the scope and functions of the governance and advisory bodies at system and unit levels and the consideration of their input in decision making at system level evidenced
6. Increased command by the Board of Trustees on their roles and responsibilities in alignment with the University Law, bylaws and accreditation expectations
7. Board of Trustees currently undergoing a self evaluation process in meeting its roles and responsibilities
8. Evidenced continuity of experience, expertise, institutional memory and adequate overlap across administrations



Secure continuity and institutional effectiveness with available resources

- **Goal:** Secure continuity and effective accomplishment of the institutional mission and goals with the available resources by developing and implementing the appropriate financial measures



Secure continuity and institutional effectiveness with available resources

OUTCOMES

1. Capital Improvement Program revised in alignment with resources to continue with priority projects
2. Five-year financial projections developed for the UPR System
3. Pro-forma budgets with specific set of assumptions implemented to generate balanced budgets
4. Proactively minimizing accounts receivables for improved financial stability
5. Aggressive measures in progress to improve performance Financial Information Systems Software to issue FY 2010-2011 Audited Financial Statement (AFS) no later than May 2011 and to guarantee timely issuance of future AFS.



Secure continuity and institutional effectiveness with available resources

OUTCOMES

6. Strong lead communicating, monitoring and assuring cost control measures throughout the system:
 - Monitor unit's current versus budgeted expenses
 - Review, transfer, and freeze accounts when necessary to enforce compliance with institutional directives
 - Request reports by program for comparison with approved budget to detect discrepancies
 - Request quarterly budget, expenses and projection reports as mandated by Certification No. 135 (2009-2010) of the Board of Trustees
 - Periodic meetings with unit Budget Directors to receive input and provide guidance
 - Aggressively identifying additional cost control measures and other corrective actions, incorporating assessment results of institutional planning, to assure balanced budgets, sufficient financial resources to carry out UPR mission and execute its plans effectively



Maintain and nurture additional sources of funding to continue advancing institutional education, research and research priorities

Goal: Continue and develop initiatives to increase and diversify sources of funding to support the accomplishment of the institutional mission and goals



Maintain and nurture additional sources of funding to continue advancing institutional education, research and research priorities

OUTCOMES

1. New and diversified sources of funding to effectively accomplish institutional mission
2. Institutional matching funds allocation maintained at current level
3. Fund-raising activities in progress to continue nurturing the Endowment Fund
4. Stronger role of unit's Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies in the accomplishment of the institution's service mission and as institutional funding enterprise
 - Grant proposals developed to service the Puerto Rico Department of Education through the Divisions which represent over \$60 M in additional funds to be distributed throughout the system

