



UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
RÍO PIEDRAS CAMPUS

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION REPORT



SUBMITTED TO THE
MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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I. Introduction

The University of Puerto Rico (UPR) Río Piedras Campus¹ (RPC) submits this *Supplemental Information Report*, as requested by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), on June 10 and 24, 2013, in view of recent changes in UPR's governance and administration. The MSCHE required the institution to specifically address the impact of those changes "on institutional leadership", and "actions planned or taken by the University to ensure ongoing compliance" with the agency's Standard 4 *Leadership and Governance*, Standard 5 *Administration*, and Standard 6 *Integrity*, as well as with its policy on *Political Intervention in Education*.

In the short time that the recent changes in UPR's governance and administration have been in place, UPR and RPC show enhanced compliance with Standards 4, 5, and 6, and with the policy on *Political Intervention in Education*. The changes in the Governing Board and the ensuing appointments to the chief academic administrative positions were driven by repeated requests from students, professors and academic senates, intended to prevent erosion of the quality of scholarly activities and university life.

II. MSCHE Policy on Political Intervention in Education

Changes in the University Law as stated in Law No. 13 of April 30, 2013 were the result of a movement initiated by the student body, with support from other sectors from the academic community and followed a strict legislative process. The fundamental concerns were addressed with the enactment of this law: reduce the total number of trustees and increase the number of student representatives. The law has no effect on recruitment processes, academic decisions, or policies in the Río Piedras Campus.

The Río Piedras Campus conducts its affairs in a transparent and truthful manner. It involves the public and keeps constituents abreast of university affairs. Its adherence to ethical standards supports and promotes academic and intellectual freedom thus modeling standards for the students as societal leaders of the future.

¹ For brief overview of the Río Piedras Campus see Appendix 1. A more detailed institutional description appears in the accreditation and monitoring reports submitted recently (April 1st, 2012 and September 1st, 2011).

The purpose this Supplemental Report is to respond to MSCHE's inquiry into whether recent changes then have diminished the University's ability to comply with these standards. As is evident from this report, UPR and RPC is in full compliance with MSCHE Standards of Excellence. What follows is a description of the events leading to the enactment of Law 13, in which the RPC and its constituents played an important role.

Events leading from 2010 to present with direct impact on the Río Piedras Campus.

The major structural or legal change from 2010 to the present has been the substitution of the Board of Trustees (Junta de Síndicos) by the Governing Board (Junta de Gobierno), brought about by Law No. 13 of April 30, 2013. This statute reinstated a 13 member governing body, which had been the norm since Law No. 16 of June 16, 1993, but has been altered by Law 65 of June 21, 2010.

Rather than strengthening university governance, the 2010 law (No. 65) decreased the relative participation of elected student and faculty representatives by increasing the number of members appointed directly by the governor. The Río Piedras Campus community showed ample dissatisfaction with the approval and implementation of this legislation².

Law 65 was approved after a majority of the 13 members of the previous Board of Trustees refused to heed to partisan political claims and validated a settlement reached among parties in a legal suit which was to put an end to unrest at the Río Piedras Campus. In this sense, the 2013 law (No. 13) was, rather than a measure of political interference, one that defused the political intervention of 2010 (through Law No. 65) and restored the University's relative autonomy, in compliance with the Middle State Commission on Higher Education's policy regarding political intervention in education.

Since Law No. 13 was enacted in 2013, UPR and RPC administrators have moved to restore dialogue and shared governance, in compliance with the goal of MSCHE Standard 4, which mandates that responsibilities be *shared in a climate of mutual support and respect*, renewing contact with campus governing organisms. This has

² For example, Certification No. 42 (2012-2013) of RPC Academic Senate, asked for changes in the governance structure of UPR (See Appendix 2).

been the case with the Río Piedras Campus Academic Senate, which by virtue of Article 11 of the 1966 University enabling statute, Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966, holds important consulting, policy-making and governance roles. During academic year 2010-2011 the Academic Senate repeatedly claimed to be heard and to take part in what was one of the most fundamental aspects of campus life, its accreditation by the MSCHE.³

Obviously, during the 2010-2011 academic year, strong debates took place on campus. Although for different reasons, it was reminiscent of the American college experience of the 60's and 70's. However, the University did meet its obligations to the student body and to society. Only one summer session was cancelled and the campus has continued to operate on a regular basis. In this sense, all constituents involved decided to put compliance with education as their primary goal, as is evidenced by the fact the MSCHE renewed accreditation for the Río Piedras Campus.

Since enactment of the 2013 law, which has prompted MSCHE's concern, no disruption with the leadership and governance standard (4) has been observed. On the contrary, the 2013 law was beneficial to the university community, as it increased student participation in the new Governing Board from one to two, as well as the relative weight of students and faculty. In addition, several Board members were chosen from a pool of candidates who have been linked with academic life, increasing legitimacy before the academic community.

There is no doubt that the 2013 law entailed actions by the Legislative and the Executive branches of government. This does not mean that the University was politicized. The change came about from within, after ten academic senates in the 11 campuses asked the members of former Board of Trustees and the University President to resign⁴, a grass roots claim that could hardly be ignored following the events of 2010 and 2011, prompted, in addition, by a petition made by the students. As a result, the 2013 Board is more participatory than its previous 17-member Board, which was in place during the last accreditation process.

³ Academic Senate certifications Nos. 33, 34 and 39 (2010-2011) called for participation in the accreditation process or decried attempts to exclude that body, the main one representing faculty and student views, (See Appendix 3).

⁴ Certification No. 53 (2012-2013) of RPC Academic Senate asked UPR President and President of the Board of Trustees to resign, while Certification No. 85 (2012-2013) commends participants in the legislative effort to amend the University Law.

III. Compliance with Standard 4 Leadership and Governance

MSCHE Standard 4:

The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

For UPR's system-wide compliance with Standard 4 on *Leadership and Governance*, please refer to the report submitted by the Office of the President. The fundamental elements required for this standard relate to the Governing Board, which recently evidenced change as a result of the amendment to Article 3 of the University of Puerto Rico enabling law, as described above. In this report we will address only those aspects of governance which have a direct bearing on the Río Piedras Campus.

Campus relationship with Central Administration

There is continuous and consistent communication between Central Administration and the Río Piedras Campus on issues related to the administration of campus functions directly relating to UPR as a system. Regularly scheduled meetings take place between the Office of the President, the chancellors, the deans of Academic Affairs, and deans of Student Affairs. Communication with the President is uninterrupted and matters are treated expeditiously. The recently appointed Governing Board has instituted a new mechanism to communicate decisions after each meeting held, informed via the institutional email system and website.

The only part of the 1966 University statute that changed in 2013 was the one regarding the composition of the Governing Board. No other articles have been amended. None of the University's rules and regulations, from the General Bylaws (*Reglamento General*) and the Student Handbook (*Reglamento de Estudiantes*), which mandate open and equitable selection, tenure and admission rules and provide for open and reviewable grievance procedures, to those mandating compliance with procurement laws and regulations, those forbidding any form of discrimination for reasons of age, race, ethnicity and gender, and those requiring compliance with government's ethical education standards have been changed. They are available at the Central Administration's and campus web pages.

Collective bargaining agreements have all been rigorously respected. Degree and course offerings, international exchange programs, Student Ombudsperson (*Procurador Estudiantil*) services, and student, faculty and labor organizations are all in place as before. The overall structure of colleges, libraries, and administrative units remains the same.

Guidelines for future development, such as The University of Puerto Rico-Ten Challenges 2006-2016: An Agenda for Planning (*Diez para la década*) and RPC strategic plan, *Visión Universidad 2016*, are still the same, even when the economic crisis has forced revision of the growth plans, some of which were instituted by the former chancellor prior to the 2013 statute. Tenure, grade review and grievance review boards are all in place, with the same structure and under the same regulations as before the 2013 law was enacted.

The question then is: What, if anything, has changed?

While campus governance structures remain firmly in place, the style of leadership has changed, resulting in enhanced compliance with standard 4. There is an atmosphere of dialogue and openness on campus, as a result of Interim Chancellor Dr. Ethel Ríos Orlandi's vision. One important reason for this change in atmosphere has been her decision to consult openly with the Academic Senate (a notable change from prior practices, when the former chancellor ceased to chair Senate sessions, as required in the bylaws⁵), and with the various groups of professors, students and staff, as will be explained further in discussing compliance with Standard 5 regarding Administration. The interim chancellor is well aware of the clear roles spelled out by law as to the shared governance duties of each of the campus components and has strived, since her appointment, to fully respect them, restoring the shared governance mandated by the 1966 University enabling statute.

The University statute, its regulations and personnel will continue to evolve. In the past few years, government proposals for a new University enabling statute were aired and many of these were discussed in the various colleges and departments and amongst students and staff, as well as in the Academic Senate⁶. Change in itself is not

⁵ For example, Certification No. 40 (2010-2011) of the Academic Senate requests the Chancellor to chair the upcoming Senate meetings; certifications No. 62 (2011-2012), No. 81 (2011-2012) and No. 52 (2012-2013) address the lack of compliance with Academic Senate bylaws, (See Appendix 5).

⁶ As stated in Certification No. 78 (2011-2012), on April 19, 2013, the Academic Senate rejected the Governor's Advisory Committee Report entitled "*Cambio de Rumbo para dar Pertinencia a la Educación Superior en el Siglo 21,*" after analyzing recommendations submitted by the campus colleges.

a problem. Governance is not affected by change itself but by the ways and processes through which change issues and decision making are undertaken.

Following selection of the new University President (Appendix 6), a search procedure for a new Chancellor will take place, both following procedures dictated by UPR's General Bylaws. Some of those currently chairing colleges or departments might tender their resignations, be it because they choose to go back to teaching and research, because they choose to retire, or because they feel they are not at ease with the new policies that they are asked to implement. This, however, is part of normal academic life and should cause no more stress here than it does elsewhere.

The Río Piedras Campus has gone through difficult times, and has weathered them far better than many feared. The mere change in the main governing body of the University of Puerto Rico and changes in the chancellorships and some college or unit leadership positions has not meant a disruption of governance. Rather, it signals an attitude of more collaborative and efficient decision-making.

IV. Administration – Standard 5

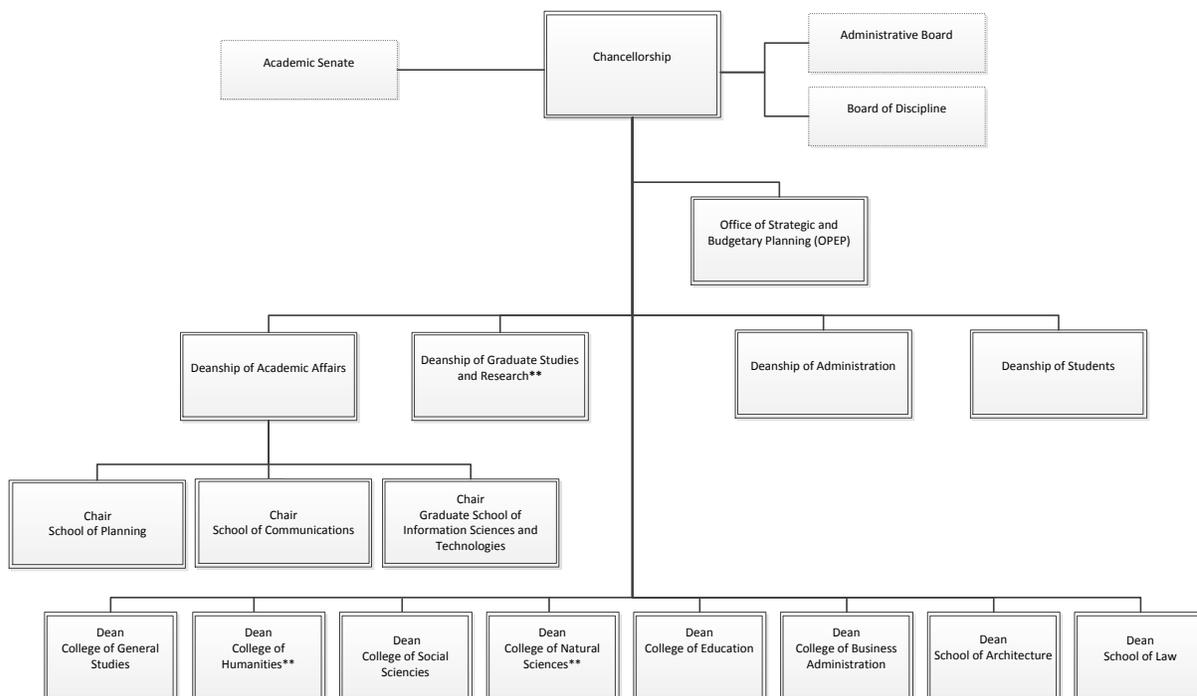
MSCHE Standard 5:

The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.

Campus administrative structures and policies

The Río Piedras Campus continues with the same administrative structure and functions as before the change in the University Law. The Chancellor's Office is supported by four campus level deans. There are 8 college deans that oversee their individual departments and units and are responsible for performing all the administrative functions.

Organizational Chart*
July 2013



* Includes OPEP

** Interim Dean, appointed after May 14, 2013.

Office of Strategic and Budgetary Planning
July 31, 2013

On May 14, 2013, Dr. Ethel Ríos Orlandi was appointed Interim Chancellor of the Río Piedras campus. She has a solid academic background and first-rate knowledge of campus matters. It is evident from her curriculum vitae (Appendix 7) that she has the highest degree for the position, as required by the Governing Board (Certification No. 99, 2009-10, Board of Trustees, *Requisitos para ocupar puestos de alta gerencia*). Dr. Ríos Orlandi previously served as assistant dean at the campus level for six years as Dean for Graduate Studies and Research (DGSR) and as interim chancellor on several occasions. She also served four years as Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs in Pharmaceutical Sciences at UPR Medical Sciences Campus.

Dr. Ríos Orlandi's expertise in higher education has been recognized locally, in the United States (Executive Committee of the Council for Research Policy and Graduate Education; GRE and TOEFL Boards, ETS's Visiting Panel on Research) and

internationally (consultant to UNESCO's IESALC⁸). She has actively and continuously collaborated in various campus-wide initiatives and was enthusiastically endorsed as the candidate of choice by professors, administrative personnel, and students.

While most deans are still in their positions, new appointments to deanships have taken place, as needed. Dr Aurora Lauzardo, from the Humanities College was appointed as the Interim Dean for Graduate Studies and Research (DGSR), after the previous dean decided to return to her regular academic position. Dr. Lauzardo is particularly suited for the position because of her four-year experience as Associate DGSR. She has also chaired the Graduate Program in Translation, with a high graduation rate and is very much aware of the current challenges faced by higher education in these trying times. At the time of her appointment, Dr. Lauzardo was heading the faculty component of INAS, a federally funded project to improve undergraduate research on campus (Appendix 8).

Resignation by the Dean of the Humanities College was accepted on May 21, 2013. The recently retired professor, and founder of the Ph.D Program in History, Dr. María de los Angeles Castro, was appointed Interim Dean. Dr. Castro held administrative positions at campus level and served as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the Humanities College for a number of years. Her intellectual productivity and administrative expertise is widely recognized by her peers. A few months ago she was recognized with the "*Humanista del Año*" Award for Puerto Rico by the Fundación Puertorriqueña de la Humanidades and the National Endowment for the Humanities. (Appendix 9)

The College of Natural Sciences Dean had resigned to his position prior to the appointment of the interim chancellor. Consequently, Associate Dean Dr. Noemí Cintrón served as acting dean until the end of June, 2013. Dr. Rafael Arce, a respected scholar and former Dean of this college, graciously accepted to serve as Interim Dean until a new Chancellor takes office (Appendix 10).

Dr. Ríos Orlandi, as well as Dr. Lauzardo, Dr. Castro and Dr. Arce, are very much committed to serving our students and providing the means for the best learning and scholarship environment possible. They support the research priorities of the Campus and, particularly, the faculty and students engaged in it. As stated, these changes are minimal and not out of the ordinary. These are expected during the summer months as people prepare for a new academic term and move to different

⁸ IESALC is UNESCO's International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

projects. All appointments have been very well received by the academic community, nurturing an emergent sense of trust and collegiality on campus.

Pending contracts for services at the Chancellor's Office were revised as a function of campus goals and objectives. The interim chancellor's aids are recruited from within the experienced university pool. For example, she was able to recruit as Executive Secretary of the Administrative Board, a retired academic-administrative specialist, Ms. Minerva Estrada, who for thirty years helped put in place the policies and guidelines of this body. She is currently reviewing the Board's files, helping to gear present cases before the Board, and performing an intense knowledge transfer process to her current assistant. The Chancellor's Office is reviewing present contracts in place, so as to best use of the institution's budget according to its strategic plan *Visión Universidad 2016*.

All other aspects of an administrative nature remain the same, but with the intention to address real participation of all sectors with an interest in these decisions. One such body is the Academic Senate, with which the Interim Chancellor already met twice at the end of last semester. The Academic Senate is, under the 1966 University enabling statute, the official representative body of the academic community. The communication with the General Student Council has been open and consistent. Every time this administration has engaged in an important decision with direct consequences for students, the Student Council President is duly advised and his opinion taken into account.

The Academic Senate will be back in session in August, as usual, to resume its duties. All administrative and academic services are being offered without interruption, as are student services. Student academic evaluation for degree completion was completed on time for graduation, the summer session ran smoothly, and so did registration for the coming semester. Admissions for the Fall Semester are underway and the campus is ready to receive 4,270 new students in August, of which 2,385⁹ are first-year college students. In addition, the yearly Student Manual for 2014-2015 with the institution's academic offerings is being prepared and will be available through the central administration admissions platform, as is the case every year. All other areas, such as other administrative policies, periodic assessments of effectiveness, administrative structures and services, issues related to processes, ethical practices, academic inquiry, catalog, and institution-wide assessments, remain the same and have not been affected by changes in the governing body of UPR.

⁹ Registered first year students, as of July 31, 2013.

The Governing Board has indicated that the consulting process for chancellors will start once the UPR President is appointed, which is expected in October 2013 (Appendix 6). The interim chancellor will serve until a new chancellor is appointed, after a consultation process led by the Academic Senate, as required by UPR bylaws. All other aspects of an administrative nature continue as expected.

Campus administrators are working enthusiastically to continue compliance with their responsibilities in all areas without interruption, as the campus prepares for the coming academic year. Campus administrative structure and services continue to facilitate learning, research, and scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.

Reactions of the university community

During the past year, the academic community expressed concern regarding the effectiveness of the campus administrative bodies. In fact, the Academic Senate approved certifications requesting the resignation of the Río Piedras campus former chancellor. The chancellor resigned effective May 13, 2013, following resignations by both, the University and the Board of Trustees, presidents. An interim president was appointed immediately and an advisory group was formed to gather feedback from the university community concerning the appointment of new chancellors to lead a transition phase until a new president is appointed. The interim chancellor of the Río Piedras campus was selected through a consultation process involving different campus constituents: professors, students and non-academic staff. Her appointment was recommended as a priority by all three sectors.

Two days into her appointment, the Interim Chancellor held an open dialogue meeting with the Academic Senate, as she understood the need to hear and tend to the concern of this important policy-making body. The meeting, which took place on May 16, 2013, was an opportunity for the academic senators to express their concerns and make proposals for improvement (Appendix 11).

Soon after, on June 5, 2013, commencement ceremonies for the Río Piedras campus were celebrated with a much greater participation of the academic community than in previous years—an expression of approval of the new administration. The organizational design put in place during the last years was changed so as to allow for more interaction between students, faculty and administration. For example, at the

graduation ceremony, there were no bodyguards, and campus security enjoyed the usual interaction of care and respect for all participants in the event. No students turned their back on the president and chancellor as they delivered their speeches. Instead they showed their joy with applause.

The recent changes in administration brought a renewed commitment to quality and excellence to the Río Piedras campus. New communication channels have been opened with all campus constituents. During her first month in the position, the interim chancellor met with the General Student Council and with each of the four active labor organizations¹⁰ on campus. In all cases, those meetings were recognized as the first in a number of years. Their concerns were heard and acted upon, in an effort to recognize their knowledge and their commitment to the University as we all engage in a collaborative process towards its improvement.

The interim chancellor is also providing strong guidance concerning campus administration and the fair and equitable compliance with the diverse body of norms and regulations of the university. During the past two months, this guidance became evident in solving issues, such as guaranteeing a functional and efficient student registration process for August, the availability of summer courses, as well as the recruitment of quality faculty and personnel.

The structure and services in place at the Río Piedras Campus provide an excellent context for learning, research, and scholarship. Excellence is a continuous target in order to guarantee quality and the effectiveness of our institutional mission.

V. Compliance with Standard 6 Integrity

MSCHE Standard 6:

In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

¹⁰ Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No-Docentes de la UPR, Sindicato de Trabajadores de la UPR, Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarios, and Unión Bonafide de Oficiales de Seguridad.

The Río Piedras Campus is governed by a comprehensive set of regulations, policies and procedures that permeate all of its activities and guarantee fair practices. Grievance procedures are duly in place and properly disclosed to the affected parties in the General University Bylaws, available on-line¹¹. Rules, regulations, policies, and procedures are clearly stated, amply disseminated and explained to the campus community through training sessions and written material. The campus has sufficient resources for the autonomous enforcement of the rules and has designated specific personnel responsible for their application¹². The institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and to its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

No policies, regulations or procedures pertaining institutional integrity have changed as a result of changes to the University Law and the ensuing changes in administration. As interim chancellor, Dr. Ríos Orlandi is paying particular attention to the strict compliance with university policies and regulations, as well as with external norms and laws to which the university is subject. Her style encourages participation, and it permeates the whole organization, increasing awareness and commitment to abide by ethical standards.

For example, following established grievance procedures, several previous decisions by the campus Administrative Board have been reviewed recently by the UPR system's University Board. The Interim Chancellor led a dialogue session with all board members, so as to achieve a higher degree of fairness in decisions, as strict compliance with the Administrative Board procedures and university bylaws is enforced. Just recently, candidates in tenure track positions due for tenure were evaluated by the Administrative Board in a fair and timely manner, as established by the university regulations. Promotions and tenure track decisions are announced to the whole community through certifications by the Administrative Board.

Administrative changes at the Río Piedras Campus did not interfere with ongoing academic recruitment efforts. These continued as usual, while improving the documentation process. Following established procedures, official announcements for the positions were issued according to development plans and accreditation requirements of the specific programs; candidates were evaluated by the personnel

¹¹ http://www.upr.edu/?type=page&id=documentos&ancla=reglamentos_institucionales

¹² Some examples are: the Office for Policy, Systems and Audits (OPSA <http://opsa.uprrp.edu/>), the Institutional Review Board, the Administrative Board, the Office of the Student's Ombdusperson, and the Board of Discipline (*Junta de Disciplina*).

committees and recommended for their appointment by the dean. After final review by the Dean of Academic Affairs, formal letters with the job offer are being sent by the Interim Chancellor.

Administrative personnel are evaluated according to previously established performance criteria. Supervisors and personnel committees review and evaluate performance and provide recommendations, which are then reviewed by their school dean and the campus academic dean. It is a check and balance system created to support fairness and the highest academic standards. The promotion and appointment decisions are announced through the campus web page, <http://www.uprrp.edu/>, in the news and events section.

Every year the campus reviews and updates the academic offerings included in the catalogs, as well as any new policy approved by the Governing Board or by institutional bodies such the Academic Senate. This information, available on our webpage, is organized so that students may access any data they need, pursuant to our educational offerings. The annual update of catalogs is coordinated with the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Central Administration, who oversees the database of all the programs and courses offered at UPR.

The Río Piedras Campus continues to implement its strategic Plan *Visión Universidad 2016*, which is in line with the institution's Strategic Plan, The University of Puerto Rico-Ten Challenges 2006-2016: An Agenda for Planning (*Diez para la década*). This guiding instrument is used to implement an operational plan and to evaluate and assess the goals and strategic development of the campus.¹³ There have been no deviations from these plans or delays as a result of recent changes.

Registration and the financial aid processes for the next term are in place and working properly as the new academic term nears its starting date. Students are kept informed using our webpage and social networks. The campus marketing and development office is continuously assessing the media outlets and social networks to make sure the campus responds quickly to any concern that arises among our more than 16,000 registered users. Information is also distributed through the same channels (website, Twitter, Facebook, institutional email, and MIUPI, our institutional platform for student services).

¹³ Campus guidelines for strategic planning, resource allocation and assessment of institutional effectiveness are stated in certifications No. 38 and 39 (2011-2012) of RPC Administrative Board.

The Río Piedras Campus is very serious about keeping the general public informed. This is done through the Office of the Chancellor, which is very much aware of the MSCHE Public Communication policy and provides honest and verifiable communication. Likewise, the Río Piedras Campus community greatly values open communication channels with the administration. By improving dialogue and communication, the current Interim Chancellor has been able to respond as quickly and accurately as possible to voiced concerns stemming from the community, thus providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

VI. Final Comment

We are confident in our statement that changes in the UPR Governing Board and in campus administration have enhanced both UPR and RPC compliance with Standards 4, 5 and 6, as well as with MSCHE's policy on *Political Intervention in Education*. This improved operational compliance is particularly significant at our Río Piedras Campus and has been well received by faculty, students and staff. The fact that those changes were affirmatively promoted by broad sectors of the university community helps explain their wide-ranging acceptance.

RPC navigates a transition that has been characterized as a healing process. The interim administration is addressing all issues following the highest care and ethical standards. At the same time, it infuses the academic community with an acutely needed sense of trust in its administrative officers and in its institutional procedures. As the academic atmosphere heals, all campus constituents continue to build the best possible public university for the generations to come.

RPC administrators understand MSCHE concerns with recent changes, but we believe that the evidence presented in this brief report demonstrates our full compliance with Standards 4, 5, and 6 and the MSCHE policy on *Political Intervention in Education*.

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