

**UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
UPR RIO PIEDRAS CAMPUS**



Update to the Monitoring Report of March 16,2020
to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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Due March 1. 2021
Subject of Report Update

Update to the Monitoring Report of March 16, 2020 summarizing changes at the institution after the submission date of the original report. Such changes include: Changes or updates related to the Standards and Requirements of Affiliation; Changes related to the Coronavirus interruptions and the institution's response; Significant changes in the organizational and administrative structure, including senior leadership; Enactment of emergency leadership and governance powers; Enrollment and Financial updates; Distance education and other substantive changes; Other Accrediting Agency status changes.

Because the Follow-up Visit concerns Standard VI, the latest financial statements will also be provided. Both the update and the evidence will be uploaded to the Additional Documents section of the specific review on the MSCHE portal.

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Introduction

The November 4, 2020 email from Dr. Idna Corbett, Vice President, to Luis A. Ferrao, Chancellor, informed the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus (UPRRP), that the institution was scheduled to host an on-site follow-up visit in Spring 2020 which the Commission delayed. Additionally, this email indicated that the visit would now be a virtual site visit during the Spring of 2021. The email also included the requirements for the virtual visit and the update report.

On November 12, Dr. Luis A. Ferrao, Chancellor, responded via email that UPRRP complies with the steps specified by MSCHE for a virtual visit. In communication with professors Mario Herane, Team Chair, and Marin E. Clarkberg, Team Member, the virtual meeting was programmed for April 13-14, 2021.

The email of November 4, 2020 established that six weeks prior to the virtual site visit, every institution granted a delay would upload to the MSCHE portal a 5-10-page update summarizing changes at the institution after the submission date of the original report. Such changes include:

- Changes or updates related to the Standards and Requirements of Affiliation
- Changes related to the Coronavirus interruptions and the institution's response
- Significant changes in the organizational and administrative structure, including senior leadership
- Enactment of emergency leadership and governance powers
- Enrollment and Financial updates
- Distance education and other substantive changes
- Other Accrediting Agency status changes

Because the follow-up visit concerns Standard VI, the latest financial statements will also be provided. Both the update and the evidence will be uploaded to the Additional Documents section of the specific review on the MSCHE portal.

While focusing on the 7 points above, this report also summarizes advances in the five points included in the March, 2020 Report, which are:

- (1) Improvements in the institution's annual closing processes and implementation of effective monitoring controls over financial information (Standard VI);
- (2) the development of multi-year financial plans for the institution that produce balanced budgets, including appropriate revenue assumptions (Standard VI);
- (3) management of financial reporting that provides for reliable financial data at the institutional level (Standard VI);
- (4) submission of the 2019 annual audits (Standard VI); and
- (5) the planning and implementation of restructuring for sustainability (Standard VI).

Update – Changes from March 16, 2020 on

Changes or updates related to the Standards and Requirements of Affiliation

At the beginning of 2020 the relentless COVID 19 Pandemic, which is still spreading aggressively, impacted the organization of work and lives worldwide. UPRRP has been facing this extraordinary challenge guided by its Strategic Plan, *Commitment 2018-2023*, and Mission Statement in harmony with MSCHE Standards. Rigorous administration of resources, creative and committed faculty and personnel have efficiently managed this situation and have continued research, teaching and social responsibilities. As this report shows, during these critical times UPRRP continues to advance its goals and conduct its activities consistent with MSCHE accreditation standards.

Changes related to the Coronavirus interruptions and the institution's response

In response to the Coronavirus crisis, the Government of Puerto Rico implemented “lockdown measures” beginning on March 16, 2020. Consequently, government agencies, including UPRRP, reorganized operations to continue work remotely using means assisted by technology, except for essential services. Initiatives were immediately put into practice to guarantee the continuity of operations in an environment requiring social distancing and concrete precautionary measures to minimize risks to the Campus community.

On March 13, 2020, the UPR President cancelled face to face classes from March 16 to March 23. This time allowed faculty to adapt to the new education environment and enroll in training workshops to become certified using on-line resources. On March 30, 2020, Chancellor Luis A. Ferrao responded to Dr. Elizabeth Sibolski's communication of March 9, 2020 indicating the steps taken to establish remote education on Campus, and guarantee compliance with the academic calendar. March 30th letter is included in Appendix 1.

More than 900 faculty members completed their certification as Online Facilitator/s and Virtual Course Designer/s via Moodle platform during the second semester of 2019-2020. Multiple workshops addressing the application of online tools were offered. Course syllabi were updated to specify course requirements in the new scenario, and communication with students was a priority. These measures continued until the end of the summer sessions, June, and July 2020, and have been expanded thereafter. The Campus took definite actions to reorganize administrative and academic services and operations.

Organizational Changes-continuity of operations

Work has been organized in a hybrid format. Precautions were taken to guarantee the continuity of operations in a safe environment aware of the physical and emotional effects of the Pandemic. Units reorganized work schedules and rotation of personnel. During May 2020, administrative functions were increased to work on Campus in an orderly manner. Protocols were established for handling identified or suspicious COVID-19 cases, and testing was provided for faculty, students, and staff. Many other measures for safety and effectiveness were implemented. Appendix 2 details steps taken by the Deanship of Administration to effectively manage operations, while simultaneously protecting the health of the community.

The COVID 19 work-group is studying the [COVID-19 Planning Guide and Self Assessment for Higher Education](#) and identifying a Campus Risk Profile in view of in-person classes in August, 2021.

Use of CARES Funds ^[s1]

In Spring 2020, the Federal Department of Education approved \$16,873,620.00 of CARES funds for UPRRP, 50% of which were granted for student support with the sole objective of providing emergency financial support that would help them overcome COVID-19 hardships. The remaining 50% (\$8,436,810) were awarded as Institutional support.

Deans and School Directors submitted project proposals in late July presenting their particular needs. An institutional committee assigned priorities and made recommendations. Appendix 3 details funds allocation. It includes equipment purchases, students' salaries and stipends or PEAFS, service contracts for instructional designers, faculty salaries for online course development, software licenses, and additional compensations. Audiovisual equipment was approved to convert rooms for streaming and video conferencing. Wi-Fi equipment was acquired for internet access from all areas on Campus.

CARES Minority Serving Institution (MSI) funds allowed UPRRP to approve reimbursements to faculty members for expenses incurred due to the pandemic and the requirements for remote education. Information on CARES funds can be accessed at <https://www.uprrp.edu/cares-act/>. At the end of January 2021, 564 applications had been received of which, 314 have been approved.

On January 2021, federal funds totaling \$ 27,909,114.00 were allotted for student support and infrastructure improvements as an additional aid due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, UPRRP has received two grants (as amendments to the original awards), each in the amount of \$8,436,810.00 for a total, once again, of \$16,873,620.00 (Appendix 4).

CARES funds are complemented by close to \$1.5 million from the student technology fee used for the installation of electric cables, data and audiovisual equipment across Campus.

On-Line Support Services for Student and Faculty

Effective student services and support in the distance education environment continues to be a priority. All units and Deanships have focused on transforming UPRRP into an effective remote learning institution, while maintaining social distancing and minimizing health risks for the Campus community. Appendix 5 presents services implemented or enhanced, such as the Registrar's office, admissions, external stakeholders, medical services, financial aid, and counseling, among others. A central Help "button" for online academic services was created by the Deanship of Academic Affairs, (DAA); and, the Registrar's Office services were expanded through remote access during the first semester of 2020- 2021, <https://academicos.uprrpedu/solicitud-informacion/>, and <https://www.uprrp.edu/registrator/>. Digital service forms were created to allow students and alumni to request services, and make online payments.

Likewise, as it is detailed in Appendix 5, the Library System designed its online appointment scheduling, telephone orientations, chats, email and social network spaces for communication at <https://www.upr.edu/biblioteca-rrp/>. Library services are updated periodically as is shown in the second semester schedule: <https://www.upr.edu/biblioteca-rrp/servicios/>.

Diverse cultural activities have been continuously programmed via Facebook Live and other means of communications. Virtual commencement activities took place. Online workshops were prepared for students with special needs, for example, in general at <http://estudiantes.uprrp.edu/>, and <https://estudiantes.uprrp.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Boletin-El-Inclusivo-OSEI-.pdf> and <https://estudiantes.uprrp.edu/servicios-al-estudiante/osei/>. Also, for orientation to faculty in <https://form.jotform.com/201775326709056>. Continuing Education requirements for personnel were converted to an on-line modality for UPRRP's staff free of cost. Short courses on COVID19 can be accessed at <https://form.jotform.com/200895091547865>. A central contact point via email for UPR students was established through servicios@upr.edu which redirects requests to the pertinent units or offices.

Significant Changes in the Organizational and Administrative Structure, including Senior Leadership

All aspects related to this matter have remained stable.

Enactment of Emergency Leadership and Governance Powers

The University of Puerto Rico is overseen by a Governing Board that is constituted by 14 members. It is composed of two students (elected), two faculty members (elected), 8 citizens from the community appointed by the Governor, and two ex officio members (Puerto Rico’s Department of Education Secretary and a representative from the Financial Advisory Authority and Fiscal Agency known as FAAFA). On July 7, 2017, the Governing Board elected Walter Alomar, Esq., as President, and Zoraida Buxó, Esq., as Vice President (Certification 32-2017-2018). Their term presiding the Board concluded. As a result, on October 29, 2020, Emilio Colón-Beltrán was elected President of the Governing Board. Dr. Mayda Velasco-Bonilla is the current Vice President (Governing Board Certification 19-2020-2021).

Enrollment Update

Table 1 below presents enrollment by academic level and comparisons between the Fall of 2019-2020 and Fall of 2020-2021. Table 2 updates enrollment to actual figures for Spring 2021. The Monitoring Report of March 16, 2020 projected a 2.5% decrease in total enrollment. Pandemic effects were not anticipated at that time. UPRRP is very much aware of the demographic trends that affect the pool of traditional students and the impact of natural phenomena on enrollment. The DAA has provided Schools and Colleges with data concerning applications, new admissions, and enrollment to re-assess unit capacity and target student demand. Strategies implemented by the Admissions Office are detailed in Appendix 6.

Table 1 Enrollment by Levels: Fall 2019, Fall 2020

Undergraduate			Graduate			Total		Total Change Fall 2019-2020
Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Change (%)	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Change (%)	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Total Change (%)
11,254	10,877	-3.35%	3,141	3,015	- 4.01%	14,395	13,892	-3.49%

UPRRP was the second lowest in the UPR System with a percentage decrease of undergraduate enrollment (-3.35%) from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020. As Table 1 shows a decrease occurred at all levels. Spring numbers show great improvement in graduate enrollment, which could predict improved overall numbers for the Fall of 2021. The Graduate Studies Deanship promotes recruitment beyond the usual niche of undergraduate students in the metropolitan area in order to attract nontraditional learners with very specific requirements. Appendix 6 also

includes strategies used to diversify and increase admissions at the graduate level. In order to do so, UPRRP is expanding its online graduate programs to better serve prospective students in the current job market.

Table 2 Enrollment by Levels Spring 2020, Spring 2021

Undergraduate			Graduate			Total		Total Change Spring 2020-vs spring 2019-2020
Spring 2019-2020	Spring 2020-2021	Change (%)	Spring 2019-2020	Spring 2020-2021	Change (%)	Spring 2020	Spring 2021	Total Change (%)
10,353	9,974	-3.6%	2,806	2,959	+5.4%	13,151	12,933	-1.7%

Freshmen enrollment increased from 2,217 during Fall 2019 to 2,360 in Fall 2020.

Financial Update- Provided by UPR Central Administration

The University of Puerto Rico continues to comply with the issuance of audited financial statements and reports required by the Uniform Guidance (i.e. Single Audit). Henceforth having issued its reports for fiscal year 2019 in March 2020 within the uniqueness to said year in the context of COVID-19 – an evolving epidemic that has radically reshaped the operations of the University, management has kept working hard to continue shortening its annual financial reporting time-to-issuance in a manner that allows for the timely and consistent completion of reports, thus achieving one of the principal characteristics of information in financial reporting as stated in Concepts Statement No. 1 of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), Objectives of Financial Reporting. The University keeps making decisions based on assessment results and updated information. This has been an effective practice that has focused and enlarged its sound business practices. The University has continued various actions and initiatives that have been fruitful in the past to keep improving its timeliness over financial reporting. First, a timeline for significant milestones and to monitor the audit progress is still in place. All necessary resources (human, financial, and technological) to solve problems and to help with the progress of the audit process have been identified. Likewise, regular virtual meetings among the Finance Office Directors of the eleven campuses are held to monitor the progress of all the steps in the course of action. There are permanent financial consultants still designated to the three biggest campuses to promptly aid in the resolution of issues related to the audit process. Also, the University has continued to hire professional services as an aid to handle, examine, and manage financial and qualitative essential information needed for audit processes. In the same way, regular and close communication among management, external and internal auditors,

component units, and other specialists and consultants to reach an overall leaner process is still happening in a continuous way.

The University of Puerto Rico continues working with a local financial consulting services firm to assist management in accounting and pre-audit matters as well as in the analysis and processing of vital information. Other smaller firms are still supporting the University in managing the functional and technical matters related to the audit process. The Internal Audit Office still uses a strategic and tactical approach to support the external auditors in their procedures and to enhance the audit process.

Moreover, the University has institutionalized the processing of monthly financial accounting and reporting which assists management in understanding performance metrics and enhances its ability to measure productivity and key performance indicators. The University continues producing monthly reports such as Cash Flow Statements, Liquidity Reporting, and Budget to Actual Reports, among others.

Finally, an evaluation of budget alignment per academic department was done taking into consideration enrollment and courses during the 2019-2020 academic year. The evaluation was sent to the Budget Office in Central Administration and the Chancellors and used in the 2020-2021 budget assignment and distribution.

Financial Statements Status

The University of Puerto Rico commissions and undergoes an annual independent audit of its financial statements and Report on Expenditures of Federal Awards as required by the Uniform Guidance, the latter commonly referred to as Single Audit. Submission of those reports come as a requirement of 34 CFR § 668.23- Compliance audits and audited financial statements, and those of other key stakeholders for the University. These reports, for the fiscal year ended on June 30, 2020, are currently underway with a work and monitoring plan that supports management's underlying expectation to have the reports available by March 31, 2021, which is the due date to submit them to the U.S. Department of Education.

Financial Update- UPRRP

UPRRP continues to implement enhancement measures to improve financial processes and reporting. These measures will ensure compliance with schedules from Central Administration and the completion of the 2020 Audited Financial Statements on a timely manner. The Official Calendar for financial processes was revised and institutionalized. This calendar is continuously aligned with the schedule followed by Central Administration (CA). Appendix 7 contains the closing of cycle calendar, and the schedule for auditing samples. Close communication between offices, such as Finance, Accounting, the Deanship of Graduate Studies, and their counterparts

in CA were redefined as a crucial systematic component of financial cycles. Presently, campus MSCHE ALOS's receive notifications from CA and provide internal follow up if needed.

Personnel workshops on purchases and external funds, among others, to align processes along all units involved, and strengthen efficiency and accuracy were completed as planned. Overtime was approved for accounting personnel on a hybrid modality once the Pandemic started to ensure compliance with calendars.

On October 31, 2020 closing of the accounting cycle was accomplished as scheduled, and currently samples are being submitted to the auditors as required. At present, UPRRP complies with the requirements of financial information from Central Administration and Auditors.

Budget Tables and Assumptions

UPRRP has implemented multi-year financial plans that produce balanced budgets (Standard VI). Balanced Budget Tables for Fiscal Years 2019-2020 and 2021-2023 (Projected) are included in Appendix 8. Several assumptions are listed below:

1. FY 2021 - The operational Budget of UPRRP is stable, yet the Campus had to assign \$19.1 million to the pension fund.
2. FY 2021 - Operational Budget was approved by the Administrative Board; \$7.4 million surplus due to previous year cost reductions were added to the FY 2021 budget.
3. No tuition increase in FY 22 and FY 23.
4. FY 2022 - Assumption: No additional governmental cuts, as was petitioned by the Governor and the UPR President to the Fiscal Board.
5. Expenditure reductions contribute to achieve stable budget projections for FY 2022 and FY 2023.
6. FY 2021-2023 - Projections for new revenues have been affected by the Pandemic and the economic downturn, so implementation of new initiatives, such as UNEX, is in progress. Distance Education projections start at FY 2022; other initiatives from FY 2023 on.
7. CARES ACT FUNDS have been a direct help to faculty and students, and for the development of distance education initiatives. Sound use of these funds supports academic innovation and has resulted in significant investments in the Campus technological infrastructure. Discussed under section: Changes related to the Coronavirus in this report and included in the Budget Table- Appendix 8.
8. The UPR model of revenue distribution to Campuses specifies that revenue from on-line graduate programs enrollment remains on Campus. Three on-line master's programs have been created since September 2019, as well as others are in progress. They are presented ahead under the Distance Education section. Revenue projections are included in Budget Table: Income from New Initiatives- Distance Learning Income.
9. CARES Act funds will be received to support Campus reopening in the in-person regular Modality from FY 2022 on.

The Audited Financial Statement for FY 2019, the latest to this date, is included as a separate document in <http://www.uprrp.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2002-3396862-University-of-Puerto-Rico-2019-Single-Audit-Report-FINAL-1.pdf>.

External Funds

Despite the escalating crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, UPRRP continues to excel in its external funding procurement agenda. Since June 30, 2020, more than 55 proposals requesting over \$25 million have been remotely developed and submitted. If granted, these monies would expand the Campus' potential and generate indirect costs for operations. Decisions on submitted proposals are delayed because of the pandemic. Below are some examples of the awards and MOUS that have already been approved. Appendices 9 and 10 list all proposals submitted/approved, and the MOUS resulting in donations:

- a \$700,000 grant awarded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, over a three-year period, to support faculty development in the Afro-Diasporic program.
- a \$1,146,658 subcontract from Alabama A&M University under the Scholarly Partnership in Nuclear Security (SPINS). SPINS, funded by the National Nuclear Security Administration, which is a consortium of three MSIs and three Department of Energy (DOE)/NNSA labs.
- a \$1,324,588 subcontract from Cornell University under the project "Mid-scale RI-2: A first-of-its-kind X-ray facility for new science at the high magnetic field". Funded by the National Science Foundation. Partnership also with Florida State.
- The Graduate School of Information Sciences and Technology was one of the 32 awards made by the Institute of Museum & Library Services, under the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program-Community Catalysts. Funding totaled \$100,000.
- An agreement was signed in July, 2020 with Banco Popular of PR for \$1M to the School of Business for reconstruction of the Auditorium, remodeling of the Bloomberg Trading Room and software licenses.
- A Bank of America agreement for \$250,000 a year for four years starting March, 2021. Objective: to target low income minority students with high academic performance- offer workshops to obtain a certificate/micro-credential or a graduate degree in business.

Appendix 11 summarizes definite steps taken to strengthen the Alumni office to promote donations and other types of alumni relationships as an additional source of new revenues.

Distance education and other substantive changes

Transformation to a Distance Education Campus

As previously stated, UPRRP informed MSCHE about the measures put in place prior to March 30, 2020 to respond to the Coronavirus Pandemic. It must be noted that since September 2019, the modality of Alternative Methods - Distance Education is included within UPRRP's scope of accreditation. Thus, UPRRP is classified by MSCHE as approved to offer programs in the distance education modality since that date.

The preparation carried out throughout the second semester of 2019-2020 empowered UPRRP to complete approximately 1,600 courses and 3,000 course sections in the distance education modality. The official calendar and class schedule for the second semester of 2019-2020 was followed and it ended successfully, similarly for the first semester of 2020-2021.

On-Line Academic Courses

During the Summer of 2020, the DAA led an expedite campus process that culminated in the official registration of more than 1,000 courses in the three modalities: Hybrid, Online and In-person, as is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Courses Submitted by UPRRP /Approved by Vice-presidency of Academic Affairs (VPAA) in Three Modalities

Undergraduate Courses	Graduate Courses	TOTAL COURSES
Approved by VPAA by August 2020	Approved by VPAA by August 2020	
581	271	852
Approved by VPAA by January 2021	Approved by VPAA by January 2021	
171	64	
Total Undergraduate 752	Total Graduate: 335	1,087

A student satisfaction survey administered by the DAA at the end of the first semester of 2020-2021 evidenced the great challenge faced. It revealed (n=1,110): none of the students responding had taken an online course before; 75% had not even taken a hybrid course; and, close to 90% took at least 3 courses online during that period. Results show that course content was achieved in three or more courses enrolled for 80% of responding students. Likewise, over 70% expressed that the objectives were completed. Over 60% answered that they would continue to enroll in online courses.

During the second semester of 2020-2021, UPRRP has continued operating using a distance education modality. Most courses were programed 100% online, except laboratories, internships or similar experiences which are being offered in a hybrid form, and most are being taught in the synchronic modality. The Google Meet app (60.4%) and the Moodle platform

(58.6%) were the most frequently used tools during the first semester of 2020-2021, as reported in the Academic Senate's Faculty Survey administered during the Summer of 2020. Almost 80% of faculty reported in-person or hybrid modalities as preferred.

Circular Letters from the DAA update access and new services each semester for the implementation of UPRRP's Distance Education Policy. Two examples are: <https://academicos.uprrp.edu/blog/2021/01/12/circular-3-2020-2021-inicio-del-segundo-semester-2020-2021/>, and <https://academicos.uprrp.edu/blog/2020/11/17/procesos-para-el-ofrecimiento-de-cursos-y-grados-academicos-en-linea-segun-la-oferta-academica-vigente/>

Professional Courses

The Division on Continuing Education and Professional Studies (DECEP) converted all its professional and training courses to an online modality, including the Fall Semester of 2020-2021 offerings targeting a variety of populations. <https://decepenlinea.uprrp.edu/>. More than 10,000 participants responded, many enrolled in courses related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Training courses were made available to non-teaching staff at no cost.

Plans Ahead

Appendix 12 lists on line programs projected sponsored by CARES funds: professional and academic certificates, master's, courses, among other. Revenue projections are included in Appendix 8 Budget Tables. It must be highlighted that during second semester 2020-2021 the Campus opened new tenure track positions that will impact all Faculties and Schools for research and academic innovation.

Other Accrediting Agency Status and Substantive Changes During Pandemic

The Rio Piedras Campus achieved two First-Time accreditations during the Pandemic. These are a Ph. D.in Psychology with Clinical area of emphasis (APA), and the University High School, UHS (Middle States). The Bachelor's in Nutrition and Dietetics was removed from probation and accreditation was reaffirmed. In January, 2021 AACSB reaffirmed accreditation of the Business School and its thirteen programs. The accreditation of the Graduate Program in Planning was extended by the maximum of years allowed, 7 years. Details in Table 4 below.

Table 4**Accreditation Status Changes During Pandemic**

Program	Accrediting Agency	Status Change and Date
Bachelor of Science with major in Nutrition and Dietetics	Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND)	Reaffirmation of Accreditation- Removed from Probation August 7, 2020. Continues accredited until June 30, 2028.
Ph D in Psychology with emphasis in Clinical	American Psychological Association (APA)	First Time Accreditation: October 2020
Master’s in Planning	Planning Accreditation Board (PAB)	Accreditation extended by the maximum allowed 7 years till 2024 after Progress Report submitted by the School in June 2020.
LL.M. Online Program in Oral Adversarial Criminal System	American Bar Association (ABA) acquiescence	May 14-15, 2020 The Council acquiesced in the application of the Law School for the establishment of the LL.M. in Oral Adversarial Criminal System.
University High School (UHS) Escuela Secundaria	Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools	First Time Accreditation: Accreditation Visit March 3-6, 2020.
School of Business: BBA (10), MBA, and the Ph D in Business (2) Finance and in International Business.	AACSB	Accreditation reaffirmed in January 2021.

Conclusion

UPRRP shows in this report that above all it is committed to academic quality and relevance for student success in harmony with MSCHE standards. The worldwide threats we share have demanded from the institution innovation, quick and effective responses, and, above all, “caring”, as essential elements in everyday operations. Amidst this reality UPRRP has shown that it is focused on those values, and on being a reliable and unique contributor to Puerto Rico’s development, especially in a time of turmoil and uncertainty.