2024 Self-Study Report (Draft)

University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus

Prepared for the Reaffirmation of Accreditation through Self-Study

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

July 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus 2024 Self-Study covers the period 2016-2024 with the goal of demonstrating compliance with MSCHE's standards and requirements of affiliation and advancing institutional improvement. The self-study discusses numerous topics concerning the institution's past and present as well as some of the initiatives developed to shape its future. It identifies insights, findings, and particular steps that can be taken to strengthen the institution.

The report aims to evidence compliance with seven standards and related requirements found in the 13th edition of MSCHE's *Standards for Accreditation, and Requirements of Affiliation*, as well as with the UPR-RP mission and, when appropriate, goals within the four institutional priority areas of the UPR-RP Strategic Plan, Commitment 2018-2023.

Following MSCHE's standard-based approach, the seven chapters include discussion findings that resulted from reviews completed by seven working groups, each of which covered a standard. The working groups were made up of faculty, non-teaching staff, and students. This process of analysis and self-reflection will inform the design of the UPR-RP's new Strategic Plan 2024-2029, led by planning specialist Dr. Eduardo Zavala. It has also produced findings that can be accessed by the campus community, including the leadership, to support institutional improvement at other levels.

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Standard I: Mission and Goals. This chapter offers evidence of alignment between the UPR-RP mission, the strategic goals of the campus, and recent priority projects. As shown, goals provide a roadmap for fulfilling the mission while advancing institutional improvement.

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity. Evidence shows that activities at UPR-RP are conducted with a strong commitment to ethics and integrity. The campus places importance on fostering a diverse and inclusive environment and has developed new initiatives in these areas. Policies and procedures put in place equitable measures for operations and are developed to counter bias and prevent conflicts of interest. As discussed, UPR-RP follows campus level regulations as well as those of the UPR System, and procedures at both of these levels reinforce compliance with Commonwealth and federal regulations.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience. This chapter outlines the extensive and diverse academic programs offered at UPR-RP, which are in harmony with the institutional mission and characterized by academic rigor and coherence that meet the expectations for institutions of higher education. Academic programs that hold accreditation from relevant professional bodies are fully committed to maintaining this status. The faculty members are highly qualified, possess (multi)disciplinary expertise, demonstrate strong teaching skills, engage in research activities, and dedicateto student success. Moreover, to support a wide range of student learning opportunities, the institution boasts comprehensive digital library services, a network of partnerships with community organizations, and ongoing initiatives aimed at the co-curricular enrichment of learning.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience. This section affirms that UPR-RP admits students based on a fair and rigorous admission process which is consistent with the institution's

mission and goals. The institution provides comprehensive administrative and academic assistance to students from the initial application stage through their years of study until graduation. Various support services are available for students at risk, such as tutoring, academic counseling, mentoring, and personal counseling. Moreover, prioritizing student well-being is evident in services and structured activities that enhance their academic journey.

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment. This chapter illustrates that UPR-RP has established degree and program objectives that are in line with institutional student learning outcomes, relevant educational experiences, and the mission. The campus has implemented a structured assessment process enhanced by technology through the Online Learning Assessment System (OLAS) program, which is developed and executed on-site. This program facilitates the utilization of assessment findings in decision-making processes. Additionally, the establishment of the Division of Institutional Research and Assessment (DIIA) within the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs ensures adherence to academic standards and fosters a culture of campus-wide assessment of institutional and student learning within individual programs. The outcomes of assessment have resulted in a continuous cycle of findings that inform standardized decision-making processes. Programs utilize assessment data to continuously enhance and adjust curricula and student learning experiences.

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement. This chapter highlights the UPR-RP's commitment to fulfilling its mission by effectively utilizing available financial resources. The campus has aligned its planning processes and resources to ensure they are adequate for implementing and supporting strategies, as well as flexibile, which is necessary to respond to opportunities and challenges, including the COVID-19 Pandemic. In response to reduced local government funding for the UPR System and the challenging financial landscape, UPR-RP has implemented various cost-saving measures and sought to increase external funding sources. The institution's planning priorities include securing external funding through grant awards and services, while also ensuring sufficient support for academic programs and efforts to enhance students' learning experiences.

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration. This chapter provides an overview of the governance structure of the UPR System and the campus. Faculty and students are actively involved in decision-making processes at various levels, including departments, colleges, schools, the campus, the University Board, and the Board of Governos The governance system on our campus is shared and has been designed to efficiently and ethically represent its stakeholders, ensuring alignment with our mission and efforts to advance institutional improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, the only higher education institution in Puerto Rico with the Carnegie Classification of Doctoral University of Higher Level of Research (R2), is a state-supported institution of higher education licensed by the Postsecondary Institution Board (Certification CEPR 2026-4641). It was founded in 1900 as an industrial Normal School in Figaro to prepare an initial cohort of twenty teachers for work in the island's rural areas...In 1901, this Normal School moved to Río Piedras and was officially recognized as an academic institution by the legislature of Puerto Rico on March 12, 1903, under the administration of the Public Instruction Commissioner. At that time, the University of Puerto Rico absorbed the Normal School, which later became the School of Education. A total of 173 students enrolled for the first academic year (1903-1904), and the first graduating class (June 1907) consisted of thirteen students.

On March 7, 1942 a new university law was approved by the Puerto Rican legislature. This law granted the University of Puerto Rico greater autonomy, mandated its internal reorganization, and created a Council of Higher Education to oversee and accredit institutions of higher education. In order to provide study opportunities for more people, and responding to the accelerated growth and increasing diversity within the university, later more regional colleges were established. Between 1967 and 1970, eight regional colleges were created. Over the last 120 years, growth has been substantial in terms of both size and achievement, which have contributed to the University of Puerto Rico's status as a respected institution of higher education of notable prestigious.

Today, the University of Puerto Rico is the island's premier institution of higher education and Puerto Rico's leading public university. A Governing Board oversees the system, and its membership, which is described in detail in Chapter 7, includes an ex-officio representative of the Financial Advisory Authority and Fiscal Agency known as (FAAFA). FAFAA emerged as part of the government debt restructuring and the economic development process mandated by the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) enacted by the US Congress in 2016.

The president is the chief executive officer of the UPR System. Appointed by the Governing Board, this official presides over the University Board, the Executive Vice-President of Academic Affairs and Research, and the Director of Finance, Planning, Development, and Budget Office. The President is an ex-officio member of all the UPR System academic senates and administrative boards. In collaboration with the University Board, the President coordinates and supervises the university's work. Dr. Luis A. Ferrao Delgado, former Chancellor of our campus, was appointed President of the University of Puerto Rico in July of 2022.

In July 2022, Dr. Angélica Varela was appointed Interim Chancellor of UPR-RP, and she joined the self-study process related to institutional accreditation; in February 2023, she was confirmed Chancellor by the Governing Board.

UPR-RP is the oldest and largest of eleven campuses of the UPR System. A public land-grant research university, by law, it must uphold the general mission of the University as set out in the Law of the University of Puerto Rico of January 20, 1966. Success in doing so has led the institution to play a central role in creating knowledge, fostering research, and creating Puerto Rico's middle class. As a public research-oriented comprehensive doctoral institution, our campus is distinguished by diverse academic offerings that include 61 undergraduate programs, 47

master's degrees, 17 doctoral programs, 4 postgraduate certificates, a professional certificate, and offerings in the Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies.

Today our reputation extends beyond the Caribbean region and national borders, crossing languages and academic disciplines. It is bolstered by the solid formation and professional success of UPR-RP graduates as well as the accomplishments of first-rate faculty members committed to the goals of a tertiary education of excellence. Experienced non-teaching staff members provide support and services that enrich course offerings, campus activities, and the intellectual and professional formation of students.

Our institution has a long tradition of welcoming academic, scientific, and government leaders from the U.S., the Caribbean, Latin America, and other parts of the world to join us in our academic endeavors and the enrichment of the educational experience of our students. The Nobel laureate Juan Ramón Jiménez graced our classrooms as a professor; more recently, distinguished Puerto Rican U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor inspired us with her passion for justice, Palestinian-American literary theorist Edward Said expanded our understandings of culture and power, U.S. public intellectual and author Cornel West deepened our understanding of the importance of equality and difference in our complex societies, and the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, visited to offer a master lecture to the campus community in our theater.

The UPR-RP has a diverse faculty with academic degrees awarded by world-class universities. The institution has made strides to support internationalization and increase diversity. Today 52% of the faculty are female and 48% male. Our faculty includes several professors who have recently received prestigious international awards and prizes, among them recipients of awards from the Fulbright Foundation; the American Council of Learned Societies; the International Latino Book Award, sponsored by Empowering Latino Futures; an Honorary Doctorate from University of Calculta; the Award for Faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions from National Endowment for the Humanities; *Isabel La Católica* Award, sponsored by the Puerto Rico Spanish Consulate; and the PEN Translates Award , among many others.

Our Most Important Constituents

Each year a large number of the most talented and academically promising students among Puerto Rico's high school graduates choose the UPR-RP as the place to complete their higher education. Upon enrollment, they have access to the most comprehensive academic offerings anywhere in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, with a wide range of majors and opportunities for coursework on par with large public research institutions in the mainland U.S. and in Latin America. They have access to high quality educational resources and support services that help them succeed. Our campus serves approximately 12,000 students annually. Recent figures show 8,935 undergraduates and 2,621 graduates. This population makes the UPR-RP the largest degree-granting institution in the Caribbean.

Our students are educated at an institution committed not only to academic quality but also to economic accessibility. They attend the most affordable university on the island, with students who began in 2012 paying $157.00 per undergraduate credit, $205.00 per graduate credit-master degree, and $215 doctoral degree. While tuition has increased in recent years, scholarships and grants are available to economically disadvantaged students who would not be able to study otherwise, consistent with the mandate established by the Law of the University of Puerto Rico, namely, that no qualified person should be barred from studying at the institution due to a lack of

financial resources. Tuition waivers are granted to graduate students who are employed as research and teaching assistants.

Our institution nurtures the formation of professionals in the arts, humanities, business, and science, thereby providing the country with a substantial portion of its most talented journalists, writers, teachers, architects, actors, musicians, historians, lawyers, medical professionals, and public relations specialists. For example, two-thirds of Puerto Rico's Certified Public Accountants are graduates of our College of Business Administration. Our institution graduates the eighth-highest number of doctorates in chemistry in the U.S. and the Caribbean—more than Harvard, Purdue, and UCLA.

Accreditation has proven useful to our ongoing pursuit of institutional improvement, and it can be considered a sign of commitment to a student experience that aspires to achieve excellence. This is true of institutional accreditation by MSCHE and the accreditation of over 75 our academic programs and services, which are accredited by a variety of more than 25 local and international agencies. Moreover, accreditation has nurtured a culture of improvement and opportunities for reflection and transformation in the pursuit of excellence.

Our Contributions to Society

In the last decade, the UPR-RP's ongoing contributions to Puerto Rican society have strengthened its position and commitment to excellence. The institution takes special measures to enrich faculty and students' involvement in its immediate local context. The Center for Urban, Community, and Entrepreneurial Action (CAUCE in Spanish), for example, promotes the physical, social, and economic revitalization of the Río Piedras community, our immediate context, with the help of local businesses, community organizations, and development and housing projects. Founded in 2003, it provides a range of services, from orientations about legal services to free workshops, tutoring, and classes for members of the community of all ages.

Another important contribution to society is our School of Law's Legal Assistance Clinic, a requisite part of the curriculum for all law students. The clinic provides *pro bono* legal services in the areas of intellectual property, patents, community economic development, and sexual and gender discrimination. It fosters in our law students an understanding of Puerto Rican society that provides grounding for the practice of law.

UPR-RP recently established the bachelor's degree in General Studies for incarcerated individuals, in partnership with the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Nineteen students have completed the program with a 48% graduation rate. In addition, twelve of these graduates have participated in a preparatory course for the master's program in Cultural Management and Administration at the College of Humanities. As this and other initiatives profiled in the forthcoming chapters show, the institution's vision of education is one in which excellence and productivity in research and related professional activities complement and reinforce one another.

Moreover, our commitment to Puerto Rican society and research in diverse disciplines is bolstered by significant external funding. In academic year 2023-2024 the UPR-RP received $69M in external funds, with more than $22M coming from competitive grants awarded by agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Health, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Achievements such as these are linked to institutional priorities identified in our strategic plan, Commitment 2018-2023, which, as detailed in Chapter 6, underscores research and fiscal sustainability as priorities.

Self-Study Design and Review

In conjunction with the work done for the completion of this report, seven working groups were established. Members of each met repeatedly over a period of approximately a year to study and discuss the details of institutional accreditation and the process to be followed by our campus . In addition, two workshops about accreditation process were offered, and a virtual meeting with Dr. Melissa Hardin, Lead Vice President for Accreditation Relations of MSCHE. Among the tasks that have been completed by working groups is the development of questions in three main areas: compliance, ongoing assessment, and institutional improvement. The steering committee made recommendations about how best to address the questions that they formulated and discussed these with the groups. Later discussions about findings and drafts continued with working group chairs.

The self-study process is an opportunity for the UPR-RP to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for action and improvement in the areas of the seven standards. The main task is to consider changes and developments for the period 2016-2024 with an eye on the future. This exercise can help both the administrative leadership and campus constituencies better understand connections between our current context and the institution's mission, while paying special attention to student learning, the strengths and needs of faculty, shifting societal needs, and the effectiveness of our curricular offerings and administrative structure.

The establishment of a committee to oversee the process leading to MSCHE reaccreditation took place in the second semester of AY 2022-23. Dr. Luis A. Ferrao Acting Chancellor at the time, appointed the Self-Study Steering Committee. Two Deans of Academic Affairs, Dr. Nivia Fernández (until May 2023), and Dr. Mirerza González (August 2023-present) have contributed to this project.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	English	Spanish
ACOI	Authorization to Take Courses in Other Institutions	Autorización para Tomar Cursos en Otras Instituciones
ACUDEN	Integral Childhood Care and Development Administration	Administración para el Cuidado y Desarrollo Integral de la Niñez
APPU	Puerto Rican Association of University Professors	Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarios
CAUCE	Center for Urban, Community, and Entrepreneurial Action	Centro de Acción Urbana, Comunitaria y Empresarial
CDLC	Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies	Centro para el Desarrollo de Competencias Lingüísticas
CEA	Center for Academic Excellence	Centro para la Excelencia Académica
CEDESP	Center for Studies and Research on Puerto Rican Higher Education	Centro de Estudios y Documentación Sobre la Educación Superior Puertorriqueña
CEPR	Puerto Rico Council on Education	Consejo de Educación de Puerto Rico
CFO	Chief Financial Officer of the University of Puerto Rico	Director Financiero de la Universidad de Puerto Rico
CGS	College of General Studies	Facultad de Estudios Generales
CIIPE	Institutional Committee for the Implementation of the UPR-RP Strategic Plan	Comité Institucional para la Implementación del Plan Estratégico
CIP	UPR-RP Institutional Budget Committee	Comité Institucional de Presupuesto
CIPSHI	Institutional Committee for the Protection of Human Beings in Research	Comité Institucional para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación
DAA	Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs	Decanato de Asuntos Académicos
DARI	Office of the Assistant Dean of International Relations	Decanato Auxiliar de Relaciones Internacionales
DCODE	Department of Counseling and Student Development	Departamento de Consejería para el Desarrollo Estudiantil
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DECEP	Continuing Education and Professional Studies Division	Division de Educación Continua y Estudios Profesionales
DEGI	Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research	Decanato de Estudios Graduados e Investigación

DSA	Office of the Dean of Student Affairs	Decanato de Asuntos Estudiantiles
DTAA	Academic and Administrative Technologies Division	División de Tecnologías Académicas y Administrativas
ELASH II	English Language Assessment System for Hispanics II	Sistema de Avalúo del Inglés para Hispanos II
ESLAT	English as a Second Language Assessment Test	Prueba de Avalúo del Inglés como Segundo Lenguaje
EXADEP	Postgraduate Studies Admission Test	Examen de Admisión a Estudios de Posgrado
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid	Solicitud Gratuita de Ayuda Federal para Estudiantes
FIPI	Institutional Fund for Research	Fondo Institucional para la Investigación
FOMB	Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico	Junta de Supervisión y Administración Financiera para Puerto Rico
GDB	Government Development Bank	Banco Governmental de Fomento
GE	General Education	Educación General
GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test	Examen de Admisión para Graduados en Gestión Empresarial
GRE	Graduate Record Examination	Examen de Registro para Graduados
GSC	General Student Council	Consejo General de Estudiantes
GSP	Graduating Student Profile	Perfil del Egresado
GTAH	Ad-Hoc Working Group	Grupo de Trabajo at Hoc
HEPT	Humanities English Placement Test	Prueba de Ubicación en Inglés para las Humanidades
HRS	Human Resources System	Sistema de Recursos Humanos
IACS	International Association of Counseling Services	Asociación Internacional de Servicios de Consejería
IACUC	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee	Comité Institucional para el Uso y Cuidado de Animales
IGS	General Admissions Index	Índice General de Solicitud
iINAS	Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Initiatives	Iniciativas de Investigación y Actividad Creativa Subgraduada
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System	Sistema Integrado de Información Educativa Postsecundaria
IR	Institutional Research	Investigación Institucional
ISEP	International Student Exchange Program	Programa Internacional de Intercambio de Estudiantes
LIM	Children's Lab	Laboratorio de Infantes y Maternales
LS	Library System	Sistema de Biblioteca

NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	Administración Nacional de la Aeronáutica y del Espacio
NIH	National Institute of Health	Instituto Nacional de la Salud
NSE	National Student Exchange	Intercambio Nacional de Estudiantes
NSF	National Science Foundation	Fundación Nacional de la Ciencia
OAPI	The Office for Students with Disabilities	Oficina de Asuntos para la Persona con Impedimento
OCIU	Office for the Maintenance of University Installations	Oficina para la Conservación de las Instalaciones Universitarias
OEAE	Office for the Evaluation of Student Learning	Oficina de Evaluación del Aprendizaje Estudiantil
OLAS	Online Learning Assessment System	Sistema Digital para el Avalúo del Aprendizaje
OPASO	Office of Environmental Protection and Occupational Security	Oficina de Protección Ambiental y Seguridad Ocupacional
OPDF	Office of Planning and Physical Development	Oficina de Planificación y Desarrollo Físico
OPEP	Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting	Oficina de Planificación Estratégica y Presupuesto
PAAED	Academic Support Program for Special Skills Students	Programa de Apoyo Académico a Estudiantes con Destrezas
PACTIC	Administrative Project for Certification in Communication and Information Technologies	Proyecto Administrativo para la Certificación en Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación
PAE	Financial Aid Program	Programa de Asistencia Económica
PAEI	Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan	Plan de Assessment de Efectividad Institucional
PEAF	Formative Academic Experiences Program	Programa de Experiencias Académicas Formativas
PEAU	Evaluation Tests for University Admission	Pruebas de Evaluación y Admisión Universitaria
PECA	Continuing Education for Adults Program	Programa de Educación Continua para Adultos
PICIC	Project to Integrate Information Skills into the Curriculum	Programa para la Integración de Competencias de Información
PIE	Educational Initiatives Program	Programa de Innovaciones Educativas
PRAAR	Recruitment Program for High Performing Athletes	Programa de Reclutamiento de Atletas de Alto Rendimiento
PREI	Interdisciplinary Studies Program	Programa de Estudios Interdisciplinarios
PRREE	Recruitment and Retention Program for Student Success	Programa de Reclutamiento, Retención y Éxito Estudiantil

PSAE	Academic and Educational Services Program	Programa de Servicios Académicos Educativos
SAGA	Managerial, Academic, and Administrative Support System	Sistema de Apoyo Gerencial Académico Administrativo
SIS	Student Information System	Sistema de Información Estudiantil
UNICA	Association of Caribbean Universities and Research Institutes	Asociación de Universidades e Institutos de Investigación del Caribe
UPR	University of Puerto Rico	Universidad de Puerto Rico
UPR-RP	University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus	Universidad de Puerto Rico Recinto de Río Piedras
VU 2016	Vision University 2016	Visión Universidad 2016