

## **Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, & Administration**

*The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.*

Institutional governance involves various university sectors (faculty, students, librarians, administrative staff, as well as systemically through the UPR Governing Board, UPR Office of the President, and other bodies described below). Each deliberative body has a set of regulations that define their respective areas of action and influence, as well as organize their operations and the participation of its members (e.g., [General Student Regulations](#) (GB Cert. 61, 2022-23), [General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico](#), [Plan De Reclutamiento Docente Del Recinto de Rio Piedras](#), [Guía para la creación, codificación uniforme y el registro de cursos en la Universidad de Puerto Rico](#) (GB Cert. 125, 2023-24), and UPR Instructions for the Application of Uniform Practices in Personnel Matters, which are part of the measures for financial control (Seriado R-2223-13 Presidente).

At the levels of both the campus and the UPR System, governance structures and practices assist the institution in achieving its mission and vision. They facilitate the effective creation and implementation of institutional regulations as well as objectives and goals related to strategic planning. Additionally, it recognizes the importance of periodic assessment and performance evaluations of the Chancellor and the senior administrators as a means of bolstering effective leadership.

### **General Governance Structure**

The [Law of the University of Puerto Rico \(Law 1 of 1966, as amended\)](#) establishes the institution's governance structure, guidelines for policy development, and decision-making roles and responsibilities of the UPR System and its eleven campuses. At the level of the UPR System, governance is the responsibility of three bodies that form part of UPR Central Administration: the Governing Board, the Office of the President, and the University Board. Central Administration coordinates operations important for all campuses, including the management of admissions, the creation and revision of academic programs, finances and budgeting, and information technology, among others.

At the campus level, the Office of the Chancellor is responsible for academic and administrative leadership. Her office oversees the Administrative Board, the Chancellor's main advisory board, the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Offices of four Executive Deans, as described below.

The internal regulations of these institutional governance bodies establish, among other norms, the scheduling of periodic meetings, including assemblies that provide a space for the participation and discussion among students, non-teaching staff, and faculty. These facilitate the availability of channels of communication that allow university leadership to address academic and administrative issues.

UPR-RP has numerous management and organizational tools that serve as resources for those who occupy positions of leadership. Central to these is the compilation of policies titled *General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico*, which is often referred to colloquially as *The Reglamento*. First filed with the Commonwealth Government in 1988, the current Reglamento establishes general provisions, describes the composition of the University System, and identifies which aspects of governance are the responsibility of Central Administration as which are under the purview of individual campuses. It also present policies and guidelines for the organization and operation of campuses as well as personnel regulations for non-teaching staff, faculty, officers, and other employees. Individual certifications are updated on an ongoing basis through the ratification of numbered Governing Board certifications that, if not new, replace or amend existing policy.

The review completed for this analysis indicates that policies and regulations are clearly articulated and transparent; it has also revealed that when additional clarity is needed, it is provided through updates to published policy or explanation to the body or unit responsible for implementation. Equally important, it has also shown that the actions that are the subject of many certifications have allowed the institution to respond to a variety of changes, including those associated with strategic planning and new developments in higher education, as well as challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, socioeconomic and demographic change in Puerto Rico, and ongoing cuts to the university's budget.

The latter reflects a commitment to adaptation that is evidenced both by the work of the bodies that update policy and regulations and by their implementation of new policies in the campus context. Changes and amendments are disseminated to the various sectors of the university community, where their connections to institutional improvement can be discussed and questions answered, and they are also made available to the public at large. This takes place through e-mail and institutional portals. The institutional websites of the UPR Governing Board and the bodies central to governance at the campus level (the UPR-RP Academic Senate and the Administrative Board) identify the regulations and procedures currently in place as well as those that have been recently approved.

### **The UPR Governing Board**

[The Governing Board](#) is the highest-ranking governing body of the UPR System. It consists of 13 members: a regular undergraduate student; a regular student enrolled in a UPR graduate program; two tenured professors with appointments in the System; the Secretary of Education (ex officio); a professional with extensive knowledge and experience in the field of finance; a resident of Puerto Rico distinguished for their social and community leadership; five residents of Puerto Rico distinguished in artistic, scientific, or professional fields; and, a citizen residing in Puerto Rico who is connected to Puerto Rican communities abroad. Additionally, under the Law of the Financial Advisory Authority and Fiscal Agency of Puerto Rico (AAFAF), the Executive Director of that agency, or their designee, is also a member given that the Governing Board functions under the supervision of the federal law known as PROMESA, as was determined by the Financial Oversight and Management Board that has been active in Puerto Rico since 2017.

### **Membership**

Most members of the Governing Board are appointed by the Governor Puerto Rico, with the advice and consent of the Senate of Puerto Rico. The exceptions are the student representatives and the two faculty representatives, who are elected by peers, and the AAFAF representative.

All members serve staggered terms and should remain in their posts until their successors are appointed, as established by law (the Law of the University of PR, Article 3.B). At the moment, one post is vacant.

### Responsibilities

According to the University of Puerto Rico Law, the work of the Board is to supervise the general functioning of the institution as a university system. It is responsible for formulating, examining and approving the guidelines that govern its orientation and development. Relevant to governance on our campus, the Board is also responsible for certifying our Chancellors, executive deans, and the deans of our colleges. The Board is responsible for approving the strategic plan of the UPR System and for ensuring that progress for meeting its goals is assessed. The Board represents the public interest in the University and is charged with ensuring the institution's protection against partisan political interests, or any other interest that undermines its autonomy. It should also protect it against anti-intellectual tendencies that oppose academic freedom, promote critical awareness as a strength, and contribute to the full development of the virtues of the student body.

The Governing Board is empowered to formulate policy affecting the units of the UPR System. Among these are financial policies that may affect its viability to execute and fulfill the mission and achieve its goals and objectives. As such, the Governing Board approves, through Certification, the annual operational budget for each unit within the UPR System and adopts standards regarding the rights and duties of university personnel. In recent years, the Board has submitted a consolidated budget for the entire UPR system to the Fiscal Oversight Board. Once approved, the Governing Board issues a certification of the annual operational budget. The latter action is usually done just prior to the beginning of the academic year.

Noteworthy considering current concerns about ongoing reductions to the UPR's annual budget, official regulations establish that the Governing Board is obligated to ensure the financial security and fiscal solvency and of the UPR System. Board members and the President work to create, update, and implement policies supporting the effective functioning of institutional units, addressing challenges and ensuring compliance with regulations and standards in the areas of both academics and administrative services.

The avoiding necessity of avoiding conflict of interest on the Governing Board is established in internal regulations, which emphasize that members will prioritize commitment to the institution's needs over personal interests. This is meant to guarantee integrity and transparency in all decisions made by the Board, to bolster professional ethics, and to ensure that members make decisions that are aligned with the interests of the institution and, more broadly, public education at the tertiary level.

### Committees and Meetings

The Governing Board establishes standing and special committees to organize its work. [Standing Committees](#) include: Appeals and Law and Regulation, Academic Affairs, Research and Innovation, Student Affairs, Financial Affairs, Retirement System, Audits, Development, and Infrastructure and Technology. The Committee on Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Affairs works to ensure the university's commitment to ensuring the high quality of teaching and learning.

Both standing and special committees meet as needed to review and be able to approve or make improvements to policies, actions, and determinations of the Governing Board. As

established in the Governing Board's Internal Regulations, the full board holds ordinary meetings monthly and may hold extraordinary meetings in accordance with [Article 8 - Board Meetings of the Internal Regulations](#).

In accordance with institutional policy amended by Law 25 of 2014, the Governing Board transmits its ordinary and extraordinary meetings. These are scheduled according to the annual calendar published each August. Meetings are broadcast on the You Tube channel [UPR Government Board Meetings](#) and also archived online for subsequent availability. The recording and transmission of meetings is one method for ensuring ongoing transparency and ensuring that members of the UPR community and the public at large can easily remain abreast of current discussions. The practice is aligned with the directive found in [Act No. 159-2013](#) (*Act to Order the Transmission of Meetings of the Boards of Directors on Internet Portals. . .*).

#### Questions about GB Actions and Publications

In accordance with its internal regulations, all Governing Board minutes are available for public examination, subject to the limitations and procedures established in the [Regulations on Access to Official Documents at the UPR, provided in the Certification 139-93](#). The Executive Secretary preserves the aforementioned certifications and makes them available for public examination by electronic publication. The review completed for this report indicates that these actions are up to date.

Anyone with a question regarding a certification issued by the Governing Board may contact the Board's Minutes and Records Office. Likewise, anyone seeking a certification can usually access it online. Past minutes and any certification not found online can be requested using a request form provided by the same office.

#### New Policies and Reports to the Governor

[Policies, regulations and certifications approved](#) by the Board are published online along with [pending proposals and regulations](#). The Board must submit annually to the Governor and the Legislative Assembly a report on its management and the state and finances of the University (Article 3.H.10 University Law). However, [the reports found on the Governing Board page date only from 2013 to 2016](#). At the time of this writing, it is unclear whether subsequent reports have been completed.

Additionally, the Governing Board implements a procedure to monitor and comply with legal and regulatory provisions regarding audit reports by the Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico, the Internal Audit Office of the Governing Board, and external auditors ([Certification 102-2009-10](#)). Accordingly, the Audit Coordinator of UPR-RP periodically monitors officials and units responsible for these to address deficiencies outlined in internal external audit reports, such as outstanding information requests and necessary administrative changes.

#### **The UPR President**

The President of the UPR System is appointed by the Governing Board after consultation with the university community. As the chief executive officer of the entire UPR System, they have a wide range of duties which include: Enforcing objective, rules, and regulations. In addition, they [represent the institution at public functions and legislative hearings, chair the University Board, and oversee budgetary and development plans.](#)

Our current president, [Dr. Luis A. Ferrao Delgado](#), was appointed on July 1, 2022. He worked as a faculty member in the Department of Social Sciences of the College of General Studies since 1988. After holding the position of Dean of the College of General Studies, he served as UPR-RP Chancellor from 2017 to 2022. Dr. Ferrao graduated with a bachelor's degree in history from UPR-RP, and his master's degree in Latin American Studies at the Latin American College of Social Sciences, FLACSO, Mexico. In 1988, he completed his doctoral studies in Political Science at the Autonomous University of Mexico-UNAM. His postdoctoral studies in Advanced Studies in Contemporary History and International Relations were carried out at the University of Paris I- Pantheon Sorbonne.

Part of the day-to-day work of a President is to maintain a continuous and transversal dialogue with the rectors of the university system. Likewise, an open and frank dialogue is maintained with the Fiscal Oversight Board, the Governor's Office, and the Legislative Chambers. The president presides over or is a member of the public corporations attached to the UPR.

### **The University Board**

The University Board, as specified in Article 2 of the Law of the University of Puerto Rico, establishes that its main function is to keep the university system integrated, with respect to its overall planning, and to advise the President in coordinating the operation of the different institutional units in their academic, administrative, and financial aspects. The [University Board has a set of internal regulations](#) that governs its functions and duties.

The University Board consists of thirty-eight members: The President, eleven Chancellors, eleven faculty representatives elected by the Academic Senate of each campus, eleven student representatives elected by each Student General Council, the Finance Director of the Central Administration, and three officials designated by the President. Its main responsibility is to advise the President in coordinating the operation of the various institutional units in the areas of academics, administration, student affairs, and finances.

[The University Board holds ordinary and extraordinary meetings.](#) Ordinary meetings are held monthly in person between the months of September to June (excluding January). In case of emergency situations, meetings are held virtually. Extraordinary meetings are called by the president or at the request of one-seventh of the members.

Among its essential responsibilities and functions are: Evaluate the systemic strategic plan of the University of Puerto Rico submitted to it by the president and formulate the recommendations that it deems pertinent regarding it, for the consideration of the Governing Board and Evaluate the draft integrated budget. for the University System, as formulated by the president of the University, to be submitted to the Governing Board. In the past decade, its Regulations have been amended nine times, as evidenced in its certifications.

### **The UPR-RP Chancellor**

Regarding campus-level governance, leadership, and administration, Article 4 of the University of Puerto Rico Law describes it as an institutional unit with academic and administrative autonomy that will act within the bounds of its regulations and those established at the campus level, and the resolutions of the UPR Board of Trustees (now called the UPR Governing Board).

The UPR-RP Chancellor, who is appointed by the Governing Board after being nominated by the President, is the chief executive officer at the campus level, where they exercise both administrative and academic authority. The General Regulations and Article 7 of the [University Law](#) detail specific responsibilities, including the following: (i) guide and supervise the

university staff and the teaching, technical, research and administrative functions; (ii) formulate the budget proposal; (iii) represent the campus at events, ceremonies, and academic activities; (iv) preside over the Academic Senate, the Administrative Board and faculty meetings; (v) appoint and hire the staff and officials (deans, directors of departments and other dependencies assigned to colleges); and (vi) resolve appeals filed in response to decisions made by deans.

Our Chancellor, Dr. Angelica Varela Llavona, was appointed on an interim basis on July 1, [2022](#), and ratified by the Governing Board in February 2023. Her formal education and professional experience attest to her qualifications for this position. Varela Llavona, who completed postdoctoral work at Harvard, holds a doctorate from Ohio State University, a master's in Public Administration and Social Work, and a bachelor's in Psychology from the College of Social Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico. She have served as a member of various working committees, such as the Accreditation Committee for Middle States Council of Higher Education, the Council on Social Work Education Accreditation Committee, the Public Administration Reorganization Project Committee, and the Comprehensive Sustainable Strategic Development Planning Committee for Puerto Rico. In the realm of public service, she has served as Secretary of the Department of Family Affairs, Sub-Secretary in the Department of State, and Executive Director of the Center for Specialized Government Management Studies in the Office of the President of the UPR. Additionally, Varela Llavona has held several positions in the Municipality of San Juan, such as Special assistant, Department of Human Resources Deputy Executive Director, Director of the Division of Program Evaluation and Analysis, and Social Services Specialist.

The Chancellor has the support of administrators with formal authority represented by the deans of our colleges as well as the executive deans (i.e., Academic affairs, Administrative Affairs, Student Affairs, and Graduate Studies and Research). These members of her team provide direction regarding day-to-day operations; they also work to ensure compliance with institutional regulations and making progress towards the goals in annual and long-term strategic plans.

The Chancellor discusses issues related to the campus in monthly meetings with the UPR President. Topics such as budget, infrastructure (including recent power outages on campus), and special projects related to research and internationalization (including memorandums of understanding with institutions of higher education in Spain) have been discussed recently. Also, I compliance with the UPR System's General Regulations, the Chancellor submits annual reports on institutional activities to the President and Governing Board. The Chancellor's performance is evaluated in intervals of four to six years.

The General Regulation of the UPR (Certification [55, 2022-23 Governing Board](#)), which establishes the provisions applicable to all appointment consultation processes (Article 40), delegates the campus-level tasks associated with the selecting the Chancellor to the Academic Senate. The process begins with the establishment of a search committee of seven members, six elected academic senators, and one student senator. One of the consultation committee's main responsibilities is to establish the evaluation criteria for the candidates to occupy the campus chancellorship. For both consultations carried out on our campus in 2018 and 2022, the following eight criteria were established: minimum requirements, research or creative work, experience in academic management, teaching, effective communication, administrative management, leadership and service (Certifications [35, 2018-19 Academic Senate](#) and [28, 2022-23 Academic Senate](#) ). These criteria work to ensure that the candidates have appropriate credentials and professional experience. In addition, they facilitate the comparison of each

candidate's credentials. Each candidate presents a work plan in a set of public presentations, thereby allowing them to identify the priorities and strategies for institutional improvement that they would undertake.

Regarding the process for selecting the Chancellor, non-teaching staff also play a role, as they constitute a consultation committee of three employees elected to consider and evaluate candidates. Both consultation committees present a report on the advantages and disadvantages of the candidates to the Governing Board and the President, for their analysis and final decision.

The process promotes the participation of the entire university community (students, faculty, and non-teaching staff, among others) through mechanisms such as forums, public hearings with potential candidates, surveys, and circular letters disseminated by emails. The assignment of specific roles and functions to different groups (participants who provide their input, consultants who report objectively, and those who approve the appointment) contributes to the participatory nature of the process.

### **The Administrative Board**

The [Administrative Board consists](#) of the Chancellor, the four executive deans, the college deans, two senators elected from among its non-ex officio membership; and an elected student. The Chancellor's primary advisory board, it oversees the preparation and approval of the operational budget to be submitted to the Central Administration, approves the strategic plan, and oversees the granting of tenure to faculty and non-teaching staff, in accordance with article 8 of the UPR's *General Regulations*.

### **The UPR-RP Academic Senate**

The UPR-RP Academic Senate is the academic community's official forum for discussing general issues of interest to the operations of the campus and for matters over which it has jurisdiction (Article 11.C of the University Law). Its members participate in institutional processes by establishing academic standards, collaborating with other bodies of the University System, and fulfilling the responsibilities conferred by the General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico. Additionally, its [internal regulations](#) serve as a guide for the institutional work that it carries out.

The Academic Senate consists of 66 members which include 13 student senators elected by their peers; the Deans of Academic Affairs, Administration, and Student Affairs and college deans; the director of the Library System and the President of the General Student Council are ex-officio members. The Student Ombudsman participates as an invited permanent member. The Senate serves as the primary advisory body for academic matters, budget issues, policy development, and student issues. Its functions include providing general guidance for teaching and research programs, coordinating the initiatives of our colleges and corresponding departments. It establishes the general standards for admission, tenure, promotion, and leaves for faculty members, in correlation with those established in the UPR System regulations.

The Academic Senate establishes the criteria for appointing each of the administrative deans through certifications, ensuring that the Chancellor has the assistance of qualified administrators (Certifications [AS Certification 20, 2019-20](#); [Number 21, 2019-2020](#); [Number 22, 2019-2020](#)). These appointments are made through a direct consultation process led by an ad hoc committee composed of members of the Academic Senate (Certification [Number 103, 2022-2023](#)). The work schedule established by the committee and the participation mechanisms in this process, such as providing comments via email or letters and public hearings, are communicated to the

campus community through a [circular letter](#). Results of the process and the appointment of the administrative deans is communicated to the community through certifications that are announced by email.

In terms of its organization, the Chancellor presides over the Academic Senate. The body has six permanent committees: Agenda Committee, Academic Affairs Committee, Claustal Affairs Committee, Student Affairs Committee, University Law and Regulations Committee, and the Committee to Recommend Academic and Honorary Distinctions.

In recent years, senators have analyzed and evaluated issues such as tuition increases, budget, requests for teaching and non-teaching positions, and infrastructure projects, among others. These issues are sent under certification to the President so that they can be raised before the Governing Board. In addition, the Senate has faced situations such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and a global pandemic that have created obstacles for moving forward with some anticipated institutional improvements. Senators have responded by pivoting to address urgent matters and assisting the Chancellor and other high-level administrators in solving problems caused by these emergencies.

### **The General Student Council**

The UPR-RP General Student Council consists of members from the student councils of each college and school on campus. Students representatives who are elected by their peers contribute to governance at all levels, and their participation functions as a means of ensuring that the administration is aware of student experiences, including challenges that they face. Their participation in governance helps to ensure that the UPR-RP environment us one that is conducive to learning, dialogue, and academic achievement. The General Student Council promotes widespread student participation and also helps to disseminate information about matters of institutional interest, as its members engaging the institution with voice and with vote.

### **Administrative Units**

UPR-RP has the Office of Legal Counsel to advise the appointing authority, the Chancellor. Under this office is the Contracts Unit which is responsible for reviewing and ensuring that contracts and contracting processes are carried out in accordance with the law, regulations, and current guidelines. The Title IX Office is part of the Office of Compliance and Audits; among its functions to ensure that personnel and students are treated with equity and justice.

Other units, including academic departments and programs and administrative units, have the authority to define internal policies, norms, and procedures to fulfill their responsibilities in accordance with the UPR-RP mission and goals and, when applicable, external regulations. These units are led by experienced personnel who are qualified to perform the roles and responsibilities that they have been assigned. The UPR-RP administrative staff have the required credentials in their areas of expertise, which is in compliance with UPR regulations. Given the large number of retirements and limited number of hires in recent years, UPR-RP leadership has turned to mechanisms such reclassifications, differentials, extra compensation, and overtime have been used to reduce the negative impact on academic and administrative services.

### **Employee Unions**

UPR-RP also has trade union organizations, such as the Brotherhood of Non-Teaching Employees, the UPR Workers Union, and the Puerto Rican Association of University Professors,

which was unionized recently. Representatives of these groups dialogue with administrators on a regular basis.

### **University Autonomy**

The University Law (Article 4.A) recognizes the authority of the institutional units that make up the UPR System, noting that they will operate with academic and administrative autonomy within the norms provided by the Law and the University Regulations.

Autonomy allows UPR-RP leadership to make decisions to address situations on campus, to comply with current regulations and regulations, and to avoid any adverse situations or obstacles that would negatively affect academic and administrative services. In addition, it allows campus leadership to submit to the President any request that entails authorization from the Governing Board, including budget allocation, petitions for teaching and non-teaching positions, amendments to regulations, and proposals for the permanent improvement infrastructure projects.

In recent years, ensuring the integrity and autonomy of the university system, as stipulated by law, has been a challenge for the Governing Board. This due to the fiscal crisis and decisions made by the Fiscal Oversight Board, which reviews and determines the budget but does not necessarily always provide the institution with funding to complete the projects and transformations it suggests should be prioritized. The institution has demonstrated its commitment to its established practices of shared governance, strategic leadership, and effective administration by maintaining fiscal discipline, increasing external funds, executing numerous cost-saving measures, and making adjustments to expenses. This has allowed it to protect its academic offerings and to maintain its institutional accreditation and the accreditation of its academic programs, in addition to other functions. Among these achievements, the renewal of the license to operate as a Higher Education Institution in Puerto Rico granted by the Board of Postsecondary Institutions (JIP) stands out.

The Fiscal Oversight Board has insisted on becoming involved with decision-making that was traditionally under the purview of the UPR leadership. It has issued statements suggesting that implementing changes that it endorses might lead to a more robust, or at least predictable, budget. In June 2024, the UPR President issued a statement imploring members of the Fiscal Oversight Board to recognize that “The University cannot endure anymore cuts,” pointing out that operations of individual campuses will be at risk if it executes the reductions the Board has announced. Moreover, Ferrao underscored that the UPR System has complied with its mandates. The latter include: the reduction of payroll, the implementation of a plan of shared services between campuses, the establishment of a new billing system, and the further development of the Information System known as Next.

### **University Reform**

The Multi-sectorial Commission for University Reform seeks to improve the structure and functioning of the university, including some issues related to Standard VII. The Commission filed the University Reform Project (P. del S. 172) before the legislative assembly of Puerto Rico in 2023. This project was presented with the consent of much of the university community and the participation of representatives of each of its sectors (i.e., faculty, students, administrators and non-teaching staff). However, this reform did not pass and was not supported by the leadership based in UPR Central Administration. Nevertheless, its contents address issues related to institutional improvement in the realm of governance and leadership:

- (i). Maximize the fiscal, administrative, and academic autonomy of the university system and the institutional units that comprise it, and to guarantee its depoliticization.
- (ii). Maximize the principles of merit and accountability, within the exercise of responsible autonomy, as components of a culture of transparency and continuous evaluation of its main administrators.
- (iii). Achieve effective participation as it relates to the decision-making of the different university sectors, complying with the principle of representativeness, and provide guidance for the exercise of fiduciary management of the governing bodies.
- (iv). Decentralize the UPR System, within a framework that clearly articulates its units, achieving the streamlining of decision-making regarding academic structures and programs of study in different campuses that comprise it.
- (v). Require the effective exercise of a planning and streamlining processes and decision-making by reviewing the functions and structures established by law.
- (vi). Enable institutional renewal and depoliticization through the establishment of fixed terms for the highest positions of governance, allowing these to be long enough to ensure continuity and the completion of their plans and projects of institutional improvement.
- (vii). Guarantee robust public financing that supports campuses in complying with their missions.
- (viii). Strengthen and enrich the university's capacity to achieve local and international accreditations and recognitions that nurture ongoing institutional improvement and the high quality performance by academic and administrative units.

### **Audits**

In March of 2024, the Office of the President announced that it complied with the timely submission of the audited financial statements and the reports required for the use of federal funds, known as the Single Audit Report, for the fiscal year 2023.

Also related to financial integrity and management, internal audits allow for the evaluation and compliance with university laws and regulations. These require the monitoring of administrative processes related to finances and compliance with the external audit conducted by the Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico. Both sets of process reinforce, transparency, the efficient use of resources, and effective controls. In 2022, a CP-22-10 report by the Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico identified the following as areas for improvement:

- Multiple (rather than bulk or one-time) purchases of non-personal goods and services
- Absence of provisions in Purchasing Regulations, and internal procedures related to non-updated disbursement operations
- Deficiencies in the authorization of purchase orders with advance payments
- Deficiencies related to purchase disbursements

Corrective actions were analyzed, proposed, and accepted by the agency as a means of ensuring UPR-RP's closer compliance with regulations.

### **Non-Teaching Staff Classification and Training**

In 2023 UPR-RP began updating the Classification and Remuneration Plan for non-teaching and trusted personnel, which had not been reviewed since 1977. This review, which has been

partially completed, will allow for the tempering of the job descriptions of these employees to the current needs, skills, experiences, and appropriate compensation.

Training for non-teaching staff takes place on an ongoing basis. For example, during the first semester of AY 2019-20, seven workshops were offered by the Office of the Dean of Administration, impacting 155 administrative employees from different campus units. Training focused on preparation for the most complex techniques related to financial systems. During the second semester of the same year, training included topics such as purchasing, accounts codes, pre-intervention, management of projects with external funds, direct payment, contracts, stipends, among others. The training sessions were recorded and are available online through the Office of the Dean of Administration's website.

Another important campus unit is the DTAA, which provides technical assistance and training for all staff in the use of technology tools and provides technical maintenance and assistance to faculty and staff. In addition, the UPR System has appropriate regulations for the management of current information systems. Modifications and implementations have been made to the NEXT Portal to better meet academic and administrative needs on an ongoing basis.

### **Chief Executive Officer**

The University of Puerto Rico conducts periodic evaluations that demonstrate the efficiency of governance, leadership, and administration. The President and chancellors are evaluated by the Governing Board, as evidenced by Certification No. 95 of 2015-2016. Similarly, the UPR-RP Academic Senate conducts evaluations of the Chancellor's work through requests for information from her office and various academic and administrative units, which it evaluates and for which it makes recommendations. In addition, this body evaluates the performance of the Chancellor using an instrument designed for this purpose (see AS Certification 100, 2021-22 and SA Certification 137, 2021-2022).

The Compliance and Audits Office (OCAO in Spanish), which is under the supervision of the Office of the Chancellor, is responsible for providing support, coordination, and assistance in compliance efforts concerning federal and state laws, as well as institutional regulations. It aims to promote the highest standards of ethical conduct among employees. To achieve this, it identifies compliance requirements with binding regulations, presents reports to the Office of the Chancellor, and coordinates action plans with colleges, schools, and other administrative authorities on campus.

### **Institutional Research**

The [Division of Institutional Research and Assessment](#) (DIRA) also plays a crucial role in the periodic assessment of governance, leadership, and administration. This office considers the effectiveness of various administrative and academic endeavors, leading to more informed decision-making and to fulfillment of institutional mandates and accrediting agency requirements, among others. The DIRA is responsible for generating, receiving, analyzing, disseminating, and safeguarding official institutional data collected from students, faculty, and non-teaching staff. In compliance with its mission, the DIRA publishes [annual reports on the institutional effectiveness](#), in accordance with the UPR-RP strategic plan.

## **Findings & Next Steps**

### Findings

- UPR-RP is governed and managed in a way that allows the institution to achieve its mission and objectives, effectively benefiting the institution, its students, and the broader communities that it serves.
- Stakeholders who make up the university community have a voice through their duly elected representatives, members of various bodies who make decisions related to governance and the need engage and respond to the reality faced by UPR-RP.
- At UPR-RP, shared governance is strengthened through open and effective communications, including when there are divergent opinions diverge on issues of institutional interest.
- The assessment of management and leadership structures is required by policy; it occurs periodically through self-assessment and professional accreditation processes of undergraduate and graduate programs.
- The control of financial decisions by the FOMB has impacted the autonomy of the University, as well as operations and stability, since the cuts imposed in most cases are neither formulated within its governing structures nor harmonized with the real needs at the academic and administrative levels of the institution.

### **Next Steps**

- The UPR-RP Academic Senate should consider doing an annual self-assessment exercise that assists in centralizing the protocols and practices that make the body most effective, as well as those that allow it to swiftly assist in realizing institutional improvements. This exercise might include a review of certifications issued in the previous year and their respective effects on academic operations and student success. Results could be shared on the Academic Senate's website.
- The UPR-RP Governing Board should consider doing an annual self-assessment exercise that assists in centralizing the protocols and practices that make the body most effective. This exercise might include a review of certifications issued in the previous year and their respective effects on the annual budget, academic operations, and student success. Results could be shared on the Governing Board's website.
- The recent reduction in UPR-RP personnel due to retirement has had a significant impact on institutional operations and efficiency. This decrease has affected both administrative and academic functions, which has resulted in a greater workload for staff that negatively impacts workload and the speed of processes.
- Given that the institution is experiencing a considerable number of retirements, which implies a challenge with regard to the transfer of knowledge and the continuity of

administrative operations, successions, transitions, and training new leaders require attention.

- An action plan should be developed for ensuring that administrative processes are responsibly modified and monitored so that UPR-RP receive FEMA funds more quickly given that most of these have not been received even seven years after the hurricanes Irma and María caused major damage to campus infrastructure and installations.