

Standard IV Support of the Student Experience

Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

Requirement of Affiliation 10: *Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.*

Requirement of Affiliation 15: *The institution has a core of faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's educational programs.*

4.1: Clearly stated ethical policies, practices, and processes to recruit, admit, retain, and facilitate the success of students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals provide a reasonable expectation for success and are compatible with the institutional mission.

Recruitment Processes

Recruitment actions are included in each academic unit's development plans, and for the undergraduate level, our campus follows the admissions policy and procedures of the UPR System. In the past several years, changes have been made to make higher education accessible to broader segments of the population. Reflecting ongoing efforts to comply with our mission, these actions reflect a commitment to recruiting a diverse population: students from public and private schools, homeschoolers, first-generation students, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The Admissions Office and the Student Recruitment Program in the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs work together on the annual undergraduate student recruitment plan with the objective of orienting, recruiting, and accompanying all candidates interested in studying at the Río Piedras Campus. Various members of our campus community contribute to orientations and other events coordinated by the Student Recruitment Office of the UPR System: Assistant Deans, department directors, professors, financial aid personnel, and current students. They visit public and private high schools, shopping malls, community centers, municipal and educational fairs, and college days at different institutions to provide information about the admissions process, academic programs, financial aid, and extracurricular opportunities.

In addition, every year, our campus holds an Open House that allows students and their families to learn about the campus, academic offerings, student support programs and services, financial aid (scholarships, grants, loans), the library system, museum, theater, athletics programs and facilities, requirements to join musical and theater groups, and student organizations, as well as opportunities to participate in undergraduate research and exchange programs. Each year from

August to June, a group of trained students guide groups on campus tours. Other successful strategies for recruitment are discipline-specific summer camps in which middle and high school students participate. They include Explore the Humanities, the School of Architecture's Summer Workshop, the School of Law's Summer Legal Workshop, Cybercamp, Film Scriptwriting, Career Planning Camp, and Podcast Production, among others.

In November 2023, the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs inaugurated the “Soy futuro Gallito” / “Soy futura Jerezana” initiative, which aims to increase campus visibility in public elementary schools and encourage youth to see higher education as part of their future. This is another effort to counteract declining enrollment in recent years due to higher immigration rates, lower number of births, and various socioeconomic changes.

Accomplishments stemming from the 2018-2023 Office of the Dean of Students' Development and Assessment Plan provide additional data about recruitment. Among these is a steady increase in school visits and other recruitment activities. These increased from 139 to 203 between AY 2019-20 and AY 2022-23. To promote opportunities in graduate studies, representatives of the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research (DEGI), and the different graduate programs visit various UPR campuses, organizing annual fairs as well as offering orientation and promoting programs. DEGI participates in our Open House and educational fairs in private agencies and universities. Additionally, different graduate schools conduct their own open houses and prospective student orientations.

Admissions Policies and Processes

Admissions processes on our campus respond to institutional policies and are initially executed by providing orientation on how to complete the admission application for both undergraduate and graduate studies. User-friendly videos, tutorials, and other relevant resources are available on our admissions website to assist admission application and processes. Applicants can also access these resources through their guidance counselors. The application for admission is online at <https://admisiones.upr.edu/> from October through the third week of January. This website and the UPR-RP Admissions office's website (<https://www.uprrp.edu/admisiones/>) present detailed information about the two admission routes (traditional or non-traditional) and help students identify the admissions route that best suits them. Since 2017, the application for admissions and other requirements can be completed online using a platform called Next, which marks an improvement in services offered to process applications and provide faster responses. Admissions policies are explained in several certifications, such as BT Certification 25 2003-04, which is known as *University of Puerto Rico Admission Policies and Standards for Students Coming from High Schools*.

Until AY 2022-23, students had to meet the following requirements for admission:

- high school completion or passing the equivalency exam offered by the Puerto Rico Department of Education;
- submission of the Academic Aptitude Test scores and the Achievement Tests in English, Mathematics, and Spanish or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT I and II), both offered by the College Board Entrance Examination; and

- compliance with the general admissions index or IGS of the academic program of interest.

The IGS was calculated using a formula that considered 50% of the high school GPA and 50% of the College Board or SAT scores in Verbal and Mathematical Reasoning. BT Certification 25 also allowed for the admission of students with exceptional abilities and talents. Applicants could be considered if their score was 20 points or less below the required IGS if they indicated in their application that they had exceptional talent or ability. The number of students admitted this way fluctuated from year to year, depending on a quota established by the program. Notification of admission for students with exceptional abilities and details about the appeal and reconsideration process were sent out each April.

From AY 2015-16 to AY 2022-23, the admission process included additional guidelines stipulated in GB Certification 50 2014-15. Consistent with the institutional mission, this policy sought to ensure student access and establish procedures that allow for the admission of individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Admission processes have responded to shifts in the social and historical context. For example, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the administration of the SAT II exam was canceled. A waiver was established so that applicants with the necessary IGS who did not take the SAT II could be admitted. This was implemented in 2020 and remains in effect today.

Pilot Plan for Undergraduate Admissions

UPR-RP continues to carry out initiatives that promote respect for diversity as a value and the inclusion of more groups in university life, including some who in the past found it difficult or impossible to be admitted. Accordingly, the UPR Governing Board further revised an admissions policy in GB Certification 33, 2022-23. This policy is directed at undergraduate students who would not be admitted under traditional admission criteria. It expects to increase the number of students from a wider array of socioeconomic backgrounds, consistent with our institutional mission's embrace of social equity.

GB Certification 33 establishes two routes for admission: traditional and non-traditional. It maintains some of the previous requirements, such as the stipulation that all applicants must have completed high school at an accredited or recognized institution and submitted evidence of the degree. While traditional admission still considers the IGS, the formula for calculating it has changed. The IGS is based on 60% GPA and 40% entrance exam scores. Each year, academic programs establish a minimum IGS, considering their quota and demand for such programs. Information on the IGS requirement is published on the Central Administration webpage and UPR-RP so applicants can determine their likelihood of admission to their program of interest. Applications are submitted to three programs at any of the campuses within the UPR System. The applicant's programs of choice are ranked in order of preference. Applicants who meet the minimum admission index are admitted in descending order, beginning with highest IGS and first-choice programs, until available spaces are filled. The applicant receives notification of admission or denial by the end of January. Traditional admission includes non-resident (foreign) applicants. In these cases, evidence of having completed an education equivalent to secondary education in Puerto Rico with a 2.0 minimum GPA and taking the entrance exam are required.

For non-traditional admission, an entrance exam is not required. Applicants must have a minimum 2.0 GPA and qualify for one of the following categories: 1) students with special talents or abilities (e.g., artistic, athletic, and/or academic); 2) participation in the “University Articulation” program; 3) participation in the “Dual Enrollment” program, 4) study in specialized schools, 5) socioeconomically disadvantaged background, 6) international students, 7) adult population (students over 23), or 8) students applying to the UPR Utuado campus.

Applicant evaluations and recommendations for admission depend on evaluation criteria already established by a committee in each college or school. These criteria include essays, portfolios, interviews, and letters of recommendation. Each college or school makes a recommendation for admission to its academic programs, and the Admissions Committee Coordinator certifies these recommendations to the Admissions Office. The Committee is appointed by the Chancellor and oversees the evaluation and referral of applications. The Admissions Office notifies the student of the final decision via e-mail in April.

The evaluation of applications through the non-traditional route is carried out after the traditional admission, which takes place in January. Therefore, applicants are identified in February, and referrals are made to the colleges. AS Certification 86, 2022-23 provides more information on the procedure to be followed for the implementation of GB Certification 33 and the definitions of each of the categories. This new admissions policy is in its initial phase of operation and is subject to changes as its results are assessed and improvements put into place.

Extended Admission for Undergraduate Students with Functional Diversity

Applicants with functional diversity who have been denied admission may apply for Extended Admission. GB Certification 111, 2014-15 pertains to these applicants. They undergo a differentiated evaluation of their academic skills and have areas of improvement identified to help them achieve their full potential for success. An institutional committee is established to conduct the evaluation comprised of members representing the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSEI), Admissions, the Dean of Students, the Dean of the College, and faculty members from the requested area of study. Once admitted, students receive support from OSEI and academic programs. The UPR Central Administration Admissions Office collects information and refers cases to the relevant campus. This policy is another element of our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Undergraduate Student Enrollment

Table 4.1 shows the number of incoming students enrolled in the first semester by college from 2017 to 2023. On average, 2,086 new students have enrolled annually in this period. Natural Sciences and Business Administration are the colleges with the highest number of students. The colleges of Business Administration and Communications and Information are the only two units to increase enrollment between the first and last year presented in the table. Also notable is that there is a 48% reduction in the number of students enrolled in the College of Education.

Since 2021, there has been a decline in the total number of enrolled students, which is due to various variables. Among the most significant are Hurricane María, the pandemic, emigration, school dropouts, and demographic changes. The hurricane caused many Puerto Rican families to emigrate to the U.S. and other countries, with an estimated 97,000 emigrants in 2017, including school-aged children and youth. According to the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics, 2,919 young people aged 18 to 19 emigrated in 2022 alone. These circumstances and the decrease in births have affected the number of youth who apply to UPR-RP.

Also contributing to current challenges, a larger percentage of public high school students have opted to discontinue their studies. According to the Department of Education, in AY 2020-21, 7.13% of high school students dropped out, and in AY 2022-23, which reported a lower enrollment of high school students, this figure reached 4.67%. This has also impacted the number of applications for admission.

Table 4.1: Incoming Undergraduate Enrollment by College and School AY 2017-18 to AY 2023-24

College or School	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Natural Sciences	511	522	637	639	578	418	505
Business Administration	428	466	456	493	495	447	448
Social Sciences	360	378	374	407	354	317	299
Education	325	276	208	220	198	143	156
Humanities	295	254	262	267	249	199	234
Communication &Info.	69	96	110	155	113	95	90
General Studies	57	67	70	101	88	61	49
Architecture	52	61	58	71	66	68	58
Total	2,129	2,169	2,217	2,361	2,143	1,749	1,839

Source: SAGA - database crosstab.dis (Data shows first-semester enrollment.)

Table 4.2 presents the number of applicants by the campus of their first choice for AY 2023-24. Río Piedras has been one of the campuses with the highest number of applicants and admissions; for example, in 2023, 87.39% of applicants were admitted. That year, admission to the Mayagüez campus surpassed the Río Piedras campus by 49 students. Note that these are the two of the largest campuses in the UPR system with different academic offerings.

Table 4.2: Applicants Admitted to UPR System, AY 2023-24.

Campus	Applicants	Students Admitted	%Applicants Admitted
Río Piedras	2,849	2,490	87.39
Mayagüez	2,988	2,539	84.97
Arecibo	919	894	97.27
Aguadilla	680	635	93.38
Cayey	723	728	100.66
Carolina	1,149	1,012	88.07
Humacao	823	794	96.47

Utado	238	219	92.01
Ponce	928	827	89.11
Bayamón	967	965	99.79
Total	12,264	11,103	90.53

*Source: NEXT (Total Applicant by Location and Preference Report for Freshman 2023-Senior 2023, Total Accepted Applicants by Location and Preference Report for Freshman 2023-Senior 2023)

Students admitted in recent years have reported different IGS. Table 4.3 shows that most students obtained an IGS from 320 to 201.

Table 4.3: IGS of Enrolled UPR-RP Students AY 2017-18 to AY 2023-24

IGS Scores	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
0-200	9 (0.4%)	13(0.6%)	12 (0.5%)	7 (0.3%)	1 (0.05%)	4 (0.3%)	8 (0.4%)
201-280	322 (15%)	591 (27%)	698 (31%)	787 (33%)	771 (36%)	598 (34%)	498 (27%)
281-300	486 (23%)	426 (20%)	452 (20%)	467 (20%)	478 (22%)	345 (20%)	351 (19%)
301-320	416 (20%)	450 (21%)	389 (18%)	459 (19%)	369 (17%)	334 (19%)	346 (19%)
321-340	408 (19%)	364 (17%)	372 (17%)	406 (17%)	359 (17%)	280 (16%)	356 (19%)
341-360	356 (17%)	234 (11%)	242 (11%)	191 (8%)	144 (7%)	141 (8%)	194 (11%)
361-380	122 (5.7%)	85 (4%)	49 (2%)	43 (2%)	19 (0.9%)	35 (2%)	49 (3%)
381-400	8 (0.4%)	5 (0.2%)	3 (0.1%)	1 (0.04%)	2 (0.1%)	2 (0.1%)	2 (0.1%)
in blank	2 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)	NA	NA	NA	10 (0.6%)	35 (2%)
Total	2,129	2,169	2,217	2,361	2,143	1,749	1,839

Source: SAGA - database crosstab.dis

Graduate Admissions Policy, Procedures, and Enrollment

Graduate studies are regulated by institutional policies framed in UPR-RP AS Certification 95, 2019-20. These policies delegate the responsibility of processing all applications for admission to the graduate programs to the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research (DEGI). Institutional policies detailing admission guidelines and retention efforts for the graduate level are listed by number and academic year of their approval and publication.

Students interested in applying for admission must have a bachelor's degree, a 3.00 GPA, and be fluent in Spanish and English. Some academic programs establish other admission requirements. Students complete an online application and submit all required documentation. The application is validated for compliance with all requirements and referred to each graduate committee that evaluates and determines the applicant's admission. When the decision of acceptance or denial is

issued, the NEXT platform notifies students by letter. There are two admissions periods during the academic year, one each semester. Therefore, the process is carried out for each semester, though fewer graduate programs open admission in the second semester. Table 4.4 presents all graduate admissions for AY 2016-17 through 2023-24. In summary, over 900 students are admitted each academic year.

Table 4.4: Admissions to Graduate Programs AY 2016-17 to AY 2023-24

	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021 -22		2022 -23		2023-24	
Semester	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2 nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
		830	273	783	212	783	212	823	211	809	246	732	228	736	219	742
Totals	1,103		995		995		1,034		1,055		960		955		976	

Source: DEGI database

Table 4.5: Incoming Graduate Enrollment AY 2016-17 to AY 2023-24

	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021 -22		2022 -23		2023-24	
Semester	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2 nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
		711	189	588	129	694	148	719	127	749	196	690	154	612	152	546
Totals	900		717		842		846		945		844		764		710	
% of students enrolled vs. admitted	(82%)		(72%)		(85%)		(82%)		(89%)		(88%)		(80%)		(73%)	

Source: SAGA DiiA

Currently (AY 2023-24), UPR-RP has 2,648 graduate students enrolled: 56% female and 44% male. Most new students in our graduate student population ranged between 21 and 23 years of age, mainly coming from San Juan and neighboring municipalities such as Bayamón and Carolina. Fifty-one percent stated that they are employed full-time and are the primary income earners in their households. Graduate school regulations allow students to study full-time or part-time and provide guidelines for each of these tracks. This was considered when amending the campus' graduate studies policy (AS Certification 38, 51, and 95). The regulations establish a time limit for

master's and doctoral programs based on the number of credits students enroll in each period and define them as full-time or part-time.

Also taken into consideration in the graduate policy is the opportunity to request deferred admission for students who cannot enroll in courses in the period they were admitted, and the graduate programs determine whether to grant the deferral for a maximum of one year. DEGI proceeds to inactivate the file in the Student Information System (SIS) and record deferred cases in their files.

Furthermore, DEGI conducts an online welcome orientations for incoming graduate students at the beginning of each semester. It also offers an online orientation course covering graduate studies policy and regulations, DEGI student services, and different support services on campus. The course also provides information about colleges and campus life.

Financial Aid Services

Costs of attendance, including tuition, fees, and other expenses, can be found on the UPR System's webpage and the UPR-RP's Financial Aid [webpage](#), for undergraduate and graduate students.

Regarding financial aid services for students, approximately 65%, or 7,250 receive financial aid, namely federal, institutional, and/or state funds. Among undergraduate students, 72% are Pell Grant recipients. This number is on the rise, with a 12% increase observed in the last decade. Of the Pell Grant recipients, 62% qualify for the maximum amount of support under FAFSA guidelines and approximately 77% can cover full-time tuition costs without any other aid.

Other programs that are important to financial aid are the Work Study Program which employs approximately 300 students each year, who gain experience on campus while earning money to pay for their studies. Approximately 6% of our undergraduate population receive Direct Loans. This totals some 550 students who borrow an average of \$1,600 each academic year. Approximately 31% of graduate students receive Direct Loans. This totals some 800 students who borrow an average of \$6,600 annually. For graduating students, exit counseling is provided, and resources explaining loan repayment responsibilities and related options are sent to relevant groups. The institution's Cohort Default Rate for the last three years reported is 0%. According to the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), "as a result of changes to borrower accounts due to the administration's executive actions, and provisions in the CARES ACT, no Direct Loan borrowers entered default since March 2020."

The Financial Aid Office strives to maintain effective communication with students, before and upon admission and FAFSA submittal. Prior to admission, students are invited to visit institutional facilities for assistance in submitting FAFSA and learn about other financial aid opportunities. After a student submits a FAFSA and an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) is received, an academic student record is created in the Financial Aid Office. A student's eligibility is evaluated for all federal and institutional aid. Communication with students takes place through email, telephone calls, social media, and official web interphase accessed through portal.upr.edu, where users can promptly find all student aid notices. Information is updated every 24 hours. This portal accesses the web application NEXT, which students can use to upload all documents needed for completion and verification of their FAFSA application. If an original paper document needs

to be reviewed or a student needs to sign a document in the presence of their financial aid advisor, this is done during a short visit to the office. Original paper documents are scanned and returned, to maintain a completely digital file.

The institution is committed to offering appropriate and necessary guidance that benefits the financial literacy of all students. Inactive students, including transfer applicants, graduate students, and those who skip a semester are identified with the assistance of the Registrar's Office. The institution enforces a policy (GB Certification 108, AY 2018-19 and GB Certification 55, AY 2016-17) of reviewing academic progress to determine eligibility for federal financial aid. Students can find out how to apply for an academic progress review on the [website](#) of the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs and for graduate students on Student Affairs at the DEGI [webpage](#).

There are four categories of student financial aid: federal, state, institutional, and private. The federal level offers scholarships and grants, work-study programs, and direct loans. At the state level, there are legislative merit-based scholarships and tuition exemptions under Law number 203 of 2007, Charter of Rights of the Puerto Rican Veteran of the 21st Century. Opportunities for funding at the institutional level include scholarships from the UPR Endowment Fund (undergraduate and graduate); the Special Scholarship Fund (undergraduate and graduate); research grants (graduate); teaching assistant scholarships (graduate); merit-based scholarships (undergraduate and graduate—for athletes; members of musical, theatrical ensembles or groups; and honor students). In addition, some tuition reductions are offered, as established by GB Certification 47, AY 2019-20, and the Scholarship Fund Law 4 2022, to mitigate recent increases in tuition fees. There is also a tuition exemption for student representatives in governing bodies (undergraduate and graduate) and for graduate students in the Academic and Formative Experiences Program (PEAF). Finally, annual agreements with private institutions, such as banks, provide additional scholarships in specific fields of study.

The COVID-19 pandemic offered an opportunity to review the Financial Aid Office's processes and adopt technologies that allow for remote service. All processes and file upkeep have now been transformed into internet-accessible processes and digital file archives. The Microsoft Teams virtual platform was implemented to guide students and the general population. This alternative is still offered but many students prefer face-to-face contact when seeking guidance. As part of ongoing efforts to improve these services, the Financial Aid Office's reception (help desk) has been redesigned to enable individual attention and direct communication in a multipurpose, flexible space that focuses on student support. In addition, the Financial Aid Office created an initiative called FAFSA Days, aimed at current students and the general community that aligned with recruitment efforts, and provides clear and relevant information on how to apply for financial aid.

DEGI offers graduate students the opportunity to participate in an Assistantship Program (PEAF). It allows students to serve as research or teaching assistants or participate as professional assistants. Students receive an economic stipend plus a partial tuition exemption. Approximately 15%-18% of the graduate student population participates in this program. Some academic programs have had the number of positions that they offer in this program reduced in recent years due to budget cuts. Notifications indicating whether a student has secured a position are sent out relatively late, at times after the beginning of the semester. This not only makes planning difficult,

but it makes our graduate programs less attractive than they would be otherwise, especially to applicants who base their decision to enroll on securing economic support.

Another form of financial support that DEGI provides comes from the Thesis and Dissertation Fellowships and the Extraordinary Execution and Academic Merit Fellowships. In both instances, students receive a financial stipend to help them focus on their research and complete their degree on time. Anywhere from 6 to 20 students benefit from these programs every year. In the last five years, the number of fellowships granted has stayed about the same since it depends on the allocated budget.

While students receive information and guidance on applying for financial aid, processes do not always run smoothly. Therefore, when students feel their requests are not managed appropriately, they cannot reach their financial aid officers, or don't receive an acceptable response, the Assistant Dean of Student Services Office assists them. Any claim or complaint is channeled through the Assistant Dean. Many of the efforts to improve services and respond to students' concerns regarding lack of staff or access to staff have been addressed by creating a help desk. We are in a transition period where students are beginning to trust the new processes. Unfortunately, the Financial Aid Office is no exception in encountering budgetary and staffing challenges.

Educational Practices and Student Support Services to Enhance Retention

In line with the UPR-RP mission and new undergraduate admissions policy to promote inclusion and greater access for a wider array of high school students, including members of non-traditional populations, educational practices and student support services to enhance retention are undergoing review and improvement. The Office of the Dean of Student Affairs oversees campus-wide services offered by counselors, psychologists, social workers, and peer counselors. Accordingly, it collaborates with campus colleges and schools to carry out various activities to positively impact retention, such as emotional wellness and academic success strategies workshops, and support groups. Colleges and schools provide support services through orientation officials, assistant deans of student affairs, and academic advisors.

Placement at the proper level is one area that has received special attention in recent years. Students who appear to be inadequately prepared for study at the level for which they have been admitted are identified in the admissions process. These include students interviewed in the alternative admission processes and those who apply through the non-traditional route and the extended admission. All admitted students' College Board or SAT scores in Verbal and Mathematical Reasoning are also examined to identify those who may need more support. Accordingly, students who need to have their skills bolstered are placed in basic skills courses in Spanish, English, and Mathematics in the College of General Studies during their first year. Students who took Advanced Placements exams prior to the admissions process, and scored a 4 or above, automatically receive 6 credits for entry level Spanish, English, and/or Mathematics courses and are allowed to register in second-year courses in these fields of study if required by their colleges and majors.

The College of General Studies issued a certification in September 2023 that establishes that students with a score of 459 or less in English are placed in intensive basic English, a course that

is accompanied by a lab; similarly, students with a score between 237 and 430 in Spanish are placed in intensive basic Spanish course with an additional lab. The strategy in these cases is to help students acquire the necessary competencies to continue to core courses.

For over a decade, two of our colleges have coordinated summer programs that provide opportunities to improve competencies in math. The College of Natural Sciences offers its incoming students the chance to reinforce their math skills and pass mathematics courses through a Summer Math Immersion Program. The Mathematics Department administers a diagnostic test to determine math skills and competency levels, then students are placed in different courses depending on their results and their need for additional academic and personal support to achieve their educational goals. Similarly, the College of Business Administration invites their incoming students with a math score equal to or less than 610 to take a mathematics basic skills course (MECU 1000) during the summer.

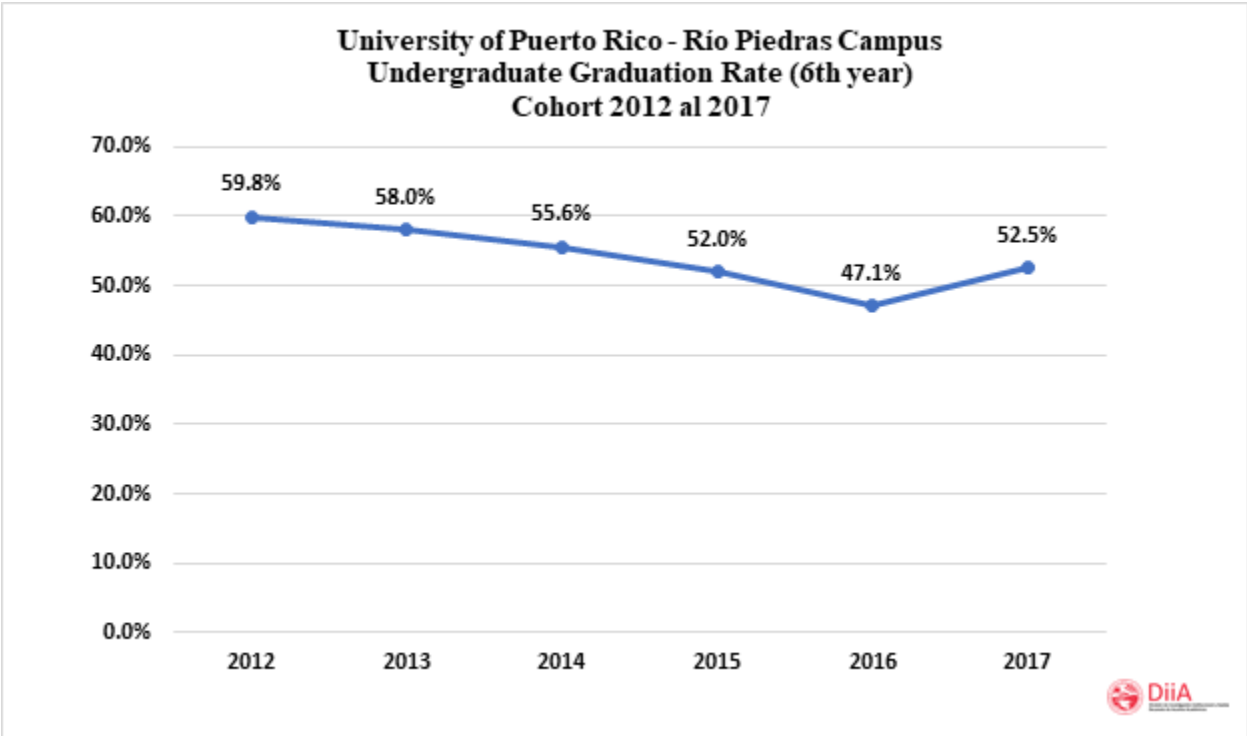
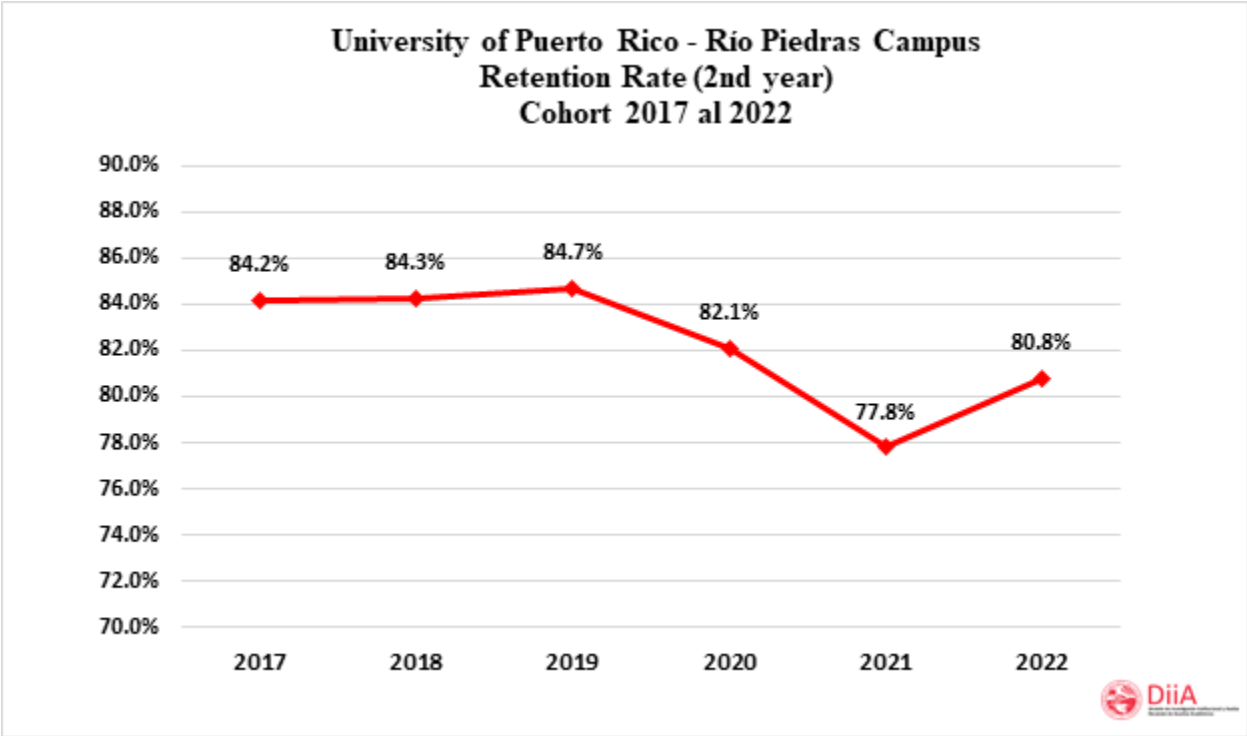
From August 2024, these efforts include the Title V Project STEM Strengthening the Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs of Hispanic Students in Puerto Rico under the Interdisciplinary Research and Undergraduate Learning Resource Center (CriiAS). A summer bridge program for students transitioning from public high schools to the College of Natural Sciences will allow participants to strengthen their skills in math and sciences and receive other support services during their course of study, providing tutoring in math, chemistry, biology, and other courses that are part of general education. While this project starts with Natural Sciences, it is expected that within two or three years it can be expanded to other colleges and schools on campus.

Regarding undergraduate retention, Table 4.6 and graph show that from AY 2017-18 to AY 2020-21, 82% or more of first-year undergraduate students continued to their second year. This rate is higher than the average retention rates reported by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for comparable four-year public universities in the U.S., which is 81%. While our campus strives to increase this rate, our relatively solid performance in this area can be attributed to effective support services, careful placement in general education courses, and students' dedication to their studies, among other factors. Moreover, it should be noted that retention for the AY 2021-22 cohort was 78%. This rate is lower than the average retention rate of comparable four-year public universities in the U.S., 81.2% mainly due to the effects of the pandemic.

Table 4.6: Retention and Persistence Rates for Full-time Undergraduates, AY 2016-17 to AY 2022-23

Cohort	Number	Cont. to 2 nd year	Cont. to 3 rd year	Cont. to 4 th year	Cont. to 5 th year	Cont. to 6 th year	Cont. to 7 th year	Cont. to 8 th year
2016-17	2,686	77%	67%	60%	49%	18%	5%	2%
2017-18	2,113	84%	73%	66%	52%	19%	6%	--
2018-19	2,129	84%	73%	67%	51%	21%	--	--
2019-20	2,175	85%	72%	63%	51%	--	--	--
2020-21	2,234	82%	69%	61%	--	--	--	--
2021-22	2,103	78%	66%	--	--	--	--	--
2022-23	1,722	81%	--	--	--	--	--	--

Retention and Persistence is based on August enrollment.



Graduate Student Retention, Persistence, and Graduation

At the master's level, retention and persistence rates have remained relatively stable in the last few years as noted in Table 4.7 despite notable challenges stemming from the natural disasters in Puerto Rico, budget cuts, and the COVID pandemic in which many programs had to move online. These rates should be compared to time to degree in the same period given that some curriculum changes strove to make programs more attractive by aligning them with changes in higher education. In addition, enrollment should be examined for each program as well as at the level of college and school to determine whether drops in enrollment are distributed relatively evenly or clusters in specific areas. This could help establish a proactive response to lower numbers of students, in areas such as publicity, recruitment, and opportunities for research and professional development.

Table 4.7: Retention and Persistence Rates for Master Level, AY 2016-17 to AY 2022-23

Cohort	Number	Cont. to 2 nd year	Cont. to 3 rd year	Cont. to 4 th year	Cont. to 5 th year	Cont. to 6 th year	Cont. to 7 th year	Cont. to 8 th year
2016-17	412	73%	56%	26%	13%	6%	2%	2%
2017-18	424	76%	57%	25%	13%	4%	2%	
2018-19	516	80%	61%	32%	14%	6%		
2019-20	543	81%	63%	31%	12%			
2020-21	675	78%	56%	25%				
2021-22	539	72%	50%					
2022-23	467	77%						

Persistence is based on August enrollment.

DEGI provides an online orientation course for newly admitted graduate students and all students who are completing online academic programs. Additionally, each year DEGI prepares webinars and workshop orientations about graduate policy for students and program coordinators. Student advising is part of all professors' academic load, and some graduate programs have lists of professors-advisees. However, in some instances, graduate coordinators and student affairs officers provide academic advising when there are gaps in this area.

Table 4.8 demonstrates higher retention rates at the doctoral level in the first five years. Yet, after that, there are several reasons doctoral students may fall behind in their studies: failure to collect all the data in their research, academic challenges, and changes in research focus, among others. At the same time, the reasons for pausing their studies are frequently related to health issues, family, work, and financial situations. Retention, persistence, and graduation rates could be improved if doctoral students had more solid ongoing academic advising, peer mentoring programs that support their research process, and a stipend program that allows them to receive financial support to focus on completing their degree.

Table 4.8: Retention and Persistence Rates for Doctoral Level, AY 2016-17 to AY 2022-23

Cohort	Students	Cont. to 2 nd year	Cont. to 3 rd year	Cont. to 4 th year	Cont. to 5 th year	Cont. to 6 th year	Cont. to 7 th year	Cont. to 8 th year
2016	103	83%	81%	75%	63%	55%	50%	33%
2017	119	90%	77%	69%	59%	48%	29%	
2018	135	85%	82%	77%	69%	50%		

2019	140	84%	76%	69%	44%			
2020	132	81%	73%	61%				
2021	144	86%	77%					
2022	108	81%						

Graduate programs support part-time master's students to help them complete their degrees in periods that range from 4 to 6 years, depending on whether the student is defined as full-time or part-time. Over 40% of graduate students complete their degree within these established limits as shown in Table 4.9. Yet, time to degree at the master's level has decreased in recent years.

Table 4.9: Graduation Rate Master Level AY 206-17 to AY 2020-21

Year	Number of Students	In 1 year	In 2 years	In 3 years	In 4 years	In 5 years	In 6 years	In 7 years
2016	412	1.7%	19.2%	40.3%	49.8%	56.1%	58.0%	58.0%
2017	424	0.2%	19.1%	41.5%	52.6%	57.1%	57.1%	
2018	516	3.1%	17.2%	40.7%	49.2%	49.2%		
2019	543	2.6%	24.1%	40.0%	40.3%			
2020	675	2.4%	12.0%	12.3%				
2021	539							
2022	467							

In contrast, at the doctoral level, until May 2018, the regulations granted 7 to 9 years to complete the degree. More time was granted to students entering programs with only a baccalaureate degree; however, when the regulations were revised (AS Certification 95 2019-20), the limit was reduced. It is now 7 years for full-time students and 8 for part-time students. Table 4.10 shows that students have completed their degree within the time frame established in the graduate policy. For instance, 20% of doctoral students from the AY 2017-18 cohort completed their degree in five years.

Table 4.10: Graduation Rate Doctoral Level AY 2016-17 to AY 2020-21

Year	Number of students	In 1 year	In 2 years	In 3 years	In 4 years	In 5 years	In 6 years	In 7 years
2016	103		1.0%	1.0%	5.8%	9.7%	15.5%	15.5%
2017	119		1.7%	6.7%	13.4%	20.2%	20.2%	
2018	135		0.7%	4.4%	9.6%	9.6%		
2019	140		0.7%	2.9%	2.9%			
2020	132	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%				
2021	144							
2022	108							

Table 4.11 breaks down master's and doctoral degrees conferred from AY 2016-17 to AY 2022-23. Despite the natural disasters occurring on the island, more than 20 PhD degrees have been awarded each year, which has allowed the campus to be recognized, along with other criteria, by the Carnegie Foundation as a Doctoral High-Quality Research institution.

Table 4.11: Degrees Awarded by Level AY 2016-11 to AY 2022-23

Academic Degree	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Doctorate	130	62	84	96	88	86	85
Master's	412	359	405	315	382	399	370

Source: DiiA website

Ongoing Actions to Address Student Persistence

The Counseling Department for Student Development (DCODE in Spanish), a unit under the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, collaborates with the execution of the socioemotional component to help students adapt to university life and successfully complete their degrees. DCODE houses three units that provide support for students including the Disabilities Office (OSEI, in Spanish) and the Peer Counselors Program (PdEO, in Spanish). DCODE personnel (counselors, psychologists, and social workers) provide individual and group counseling and psychotherapy for students, in addition to services such as career counseling, outreach activities, consultation, and crisis intervention. DCODE staff may refer students to academic advisors and the Assistant Deans of Student Affairs at each college or school for academic advising. Faculty and administrators sometimes refer students directly to DCODE services or ask for consultation to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations that support students' rights. During the pandemic, DCODE services were offered remotely, and they are now offered face-to-face and remotely, according to student preference. An automated system to handle requests, respond to students, and coordinate appointments was developed using the Powermate application in Microsoft 365 infrastructure.

OSEI is responsible for ensuring institutional compliance with, and enactment of, the rights of students with functional diversity. The unit provides services such as evaluation and coordination of reasonable accommodations, academic aids, sign language interpreter services, early course enrollment services, and mediation in conflict situations related to reasonable accommodations, among others. It also coordinates conferences and workshops on topics related to functional diversity for the broader campus community. OSEI follows GB Certification 133, JG 2015-16 and conducts a summer orientation for first-year students who registered to receive reasonable accommodation in the transition from high school to university. This orientation also includes students admitted through GB Certification 111, 2014-15 which requires a Student Retention Plan for Students with Disabilities or Functional Diversity. OSEI supports them by ensuring that they receive the reasonable accommodations they need to perform on equal terms. OSEI recently implemented an innovative support service called the OSEIbot, a virtual assistant, currently in the testing phase, designed to answer frequently asked questions about the services provided by OSEI. This tool assists students, faculty, and the entire university community by providing answers about our programs, resources, and procedures.

The Peer Counselors Program's (PdEO) mission is to train students who are in their second, third, and fourth year of study so they can serve as peer counselors to support first-year students' integration into university life through group guidance and orientation at the beginning of the school year. In AY 2019-20, PdEO offered guidance to 60.2 % of 2,217 students admitted. This

shows a shift given that in AY 2023-24, peer counselors offered services to 37.6% of the 1,839 admitted students. This decrease is due to different factors, one of which is the decrease in students willing to serve as peer counselors. Recruiting peer counselors each year is more challenging because they are not offered a consistent incentive as they were prior to 2015 (e.g., stipend and advance course enrollment). In 2015, on average, there were 60 peer-counselor students; in 2024, there are 27. The Program is in the process of certification by the National Association of Peer Helping Professionals, adding additional staff and exploring how to provide peer counselors with incentives for their participation in the program.

Another campus-wide service is the Center for the Development of Language Competencies (CDCL), supported by AS Certifications 51, 2007-08; 10, 2008-09; 22, 2009-10; and 102, 2000-01. The Center offers academic support services in writing, research, and reading, among others, to students. In AY 2021-22, it received 421 service requests, 290 of which involved text revision, the most requested type of support. Data show a considerable increase in individual tutoring, which is 25% of the services requested. Tutors create didactic materials in English and Spanish that form part of an extensive inventory of modules, infographics, videos, podcasts, and other resources that provide academic support and foster the inclusion of students of all backgrounds.

In August 2023, the Office of the Student Ombudsman (OPE), began its work on an initiative related to contributing to retention and persistence efforts called the Student Needs Study. It involves researchers from the Institute of Psychological Research, the Center of Social Research, and the Center of Educational Research with the primary objective of gathering scientific data that will shed light on the needs of the student community and factors that impact their academic achievement. This study is in data collection and analysis. It will be followed by a qualitative phase which is expected to be completed in 2024. The OPE aspires to use the results as the scientific basis for accessing economic funds and any other assistance needed to address student needs.

The Student Support Program (PSAE in Spanish), part of the federal TRIO Programs, supports incoming undergraduates through a summer bridge program of basic English, Math, and Spanish courses. PSAE also offers Introduction to University Life workshops and exposes students to different cultural and social activities. Once the academic year starts, student participants are enrolled in a once-a-week course where orientation, advising, and counseling are provided along with their regular courses. Every year, PSAE accepts an average of 100 students and follows up, specifically evaluating their persistence, until they graduate.

The Educational Innovations Program (PIE in Spanish) coordinates the Summer Institute: Strengthening Academic Skills to support incoming students in the transition to university life. It offers mini courses in the areas of English, Spanish, and Mathematics, workshops, and other educational experiences, such as technological skills, to ensure the best performance of admitted students. The Institute is open to all first-year students, traditional or non-traditional, although it focuses on students who need academic support. PIE also offers guidance to people over 23 who wish to begin university studies and apply through the non-traditional route.

Specific college actions are exemplified by the Academic Accompaniment Program (PAA) of the College of Communication and Information, which could be replicated in other undergraduate programs. The PAA is a service, research, and teaching support project in which a team of graduate students and advanced undergraduates offer individualized tutoring to students with identified

needs. It focuses on effective communication, critical thinking, lifelong learning, and other domains. It is a transformative action established at the close of the AY 2018-19 student learning assessment cycle.

Following the PAA model, in the first semester of AY 2022-23 academic year, the College of General Studies implemented the Academic Accompaniment Program through the CDCL. The initiative's focus is to offer academic support in writing, critical thinking, and research to General Studies undergraduates. One of the program's goals is to ensure that students, including some older adults, feel supported and meet the graduation requirement of preparing a creative work or a research project that is potentially publishable and reflects academic excellence. They receive guidance in the use of technology, the Moodle platform, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, computer management, writing and style guides, and database use, among other resources.

Institutional Policies and Services to Enhance Student Success

Regarding institutional policy, the UPR Governing Board has implemented institutional policies designed to enhance student success and facilitate the achievement of their educational and professional goals, including certificate and degree completion, transfer to other institutions, and post-completion placement. The following certifications address these needs:

Certification 128, 2022-2023 pertains to articulated transfer programs and the movement of students between campuses to ensure they have the best possible access to the University's academic offerings. Enabling the beginning of university studies on a campus closer to the place of residence through articulated transfer programs is one way to achieve this. Strengthening non-articulated transfers and reclassifications also helps those who change their minds about continuing to study at their home campus or a particular program and switch to another campus or academic program more aligned with their interests. Articulated transfer assists students' movement between campuses with minimum obstacles when the agreed conditions for transfer are met.

Additionally, AS Certification 118, 2022-23 modified the uniform grade review procedure to facilitate a fair and more agile process and dialogue between the parties. Students' right to request a review of their grades is considered in the UPR General Student Regulations. The certification is important because it provides a transparent and ethical procedure that seeks to show congruence between what the professor presents in the syllabus and how the student is evaluated during the semester.

Moreover, the Registrar's Office has continued to focus on strengthening the effectiveness of student support services through communication technology and digital platforms. In 2015, it began recording attendance and grades through the NEXT portal. In August 2020, the Registrar's Office added partial withdrawals to the NEXT portal, and in summer 2022, total withdrawals and the filing and payment of graduation applications. Since August 2022, students have been able to access the application and pay for reclassifications (changes in majors), readmission, transfers within the UPR System, second majors, minors, professional certifications, and second baccalaureate. In the case of applications for graduation, students receive notifications of the status of their degree audit through NEXT, as well as receipt of degree recommendation from the colleges or schools; when

necessary, they are notified of the missing requirements that are needed to complete the degree. This service is available to all degrees.

Course registration is done using the Putty and Tera Term applications. Instructions and tutorials on how to access and manage these applications are accessible through the MiUPI Electronic Services Portal. The portal was first made accessible to all UPR students in the 2009-2010 academic year and has developed different features since that initial date over a decade ago. With this platform students have 24/7 unlimited access to select and register courses, to pay for registration or apply for payment extensions, and to see their grades and class programs from the comfort of their homes or any other scenario through their cell phones and/or electronic equipment. Other services that students can complete on MiUPI are academic progress reports, requests for institutional transcripts, car seals, graduation applications, medical plan options, any pending debts receipts, among others. This student platform is constantly updated and is now in revision to comply with security standards included in recent internet navigation systems. DTAA is in charge of the platform maintenance.

The Student Information System (SIS) has also been updated with the current curricula, and access has been provided to administrative staff to support academic advising processes so they can better guide students on academic progress and compliance with their curricular sequence. Aware of the multiple challenges students face with the use of these applications, the Division of Academic and Administrative Technologies (DTAA in Spanish) is preparing to transform the system using a more adaptable/user-friendly platform in NEXT that communicates with other electronic services while providing students with automated academic evaluations and consultation surveys of courses required to comply with the curricular sequence before the course selection period.

Career Guidance, Exploration, and Planning

DCODE's counselors provide career guidance, exploration and planning, occupational information, and testing. DCODE collaborates with the Employment Office (EO) by offering career development workshops (e.g., Resume and CV preparation, preparing for job interviews, and career planning, among others). In 2021-22, 163 students attended academic and career planning workshops, and in 2022-23, 441 students participated in these workshops. DCODE also offers additional support to graduate students by running three support groups for graduate students who are working on their thesis/dissertation; 43 students have participated in one of the three support groups held in 2022-23 and 2023-24. DCODE counselors also collaborate with the Center for Academic Excellence (CEA) offering specific webinars and workshops on academic success, stress management, and career planning.

The Employment Office, under Programs and Initiatives of the DSA, supports students in preparing for job searches, obtaining tools for professional development and training, and reviewing resumes. It serves as a liaison between students and professional recruiters, inside and outside Puerto Rico, to increase exposure to employment opportunities. EO divulges more than 1,000 employment opportunities every year through Facebook Empleo UPR RP, Instagram, IUPI al Día, and mass emails. The office also coordinates career development workshops with DCODE and offers appointments to clarify doubts about resumes, interview processes, or other queries related to job searches. In 2021-22, it coordinated 7 workshops, with an average of 25 students attending each, and 19 students benefited from resume correction. In 2022-23, 5 virtual workshops

were offered, one of them by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), with an average of 21 students attending each, and 37 students requested resume revision. In 2023-24, 5 in-person workshops were offered, but with relatively low attendance of 5 students per workshop. Virtual workshops have proved to be more successful after the pandemic.

Additionally, EO coordinates the visits of different employers that offer information sessions or are interested in connecting with academic departments to establish collaborative agreements. In 2022-23, 6 information sessions were conducted by employers such as Teach for America, TSA, and Southwest Key Programs. In 2023-24, 5 information sessions with the FBI, U.S. Department of State, SPB AmeriCorps, and various school districts impacted 64 students. EO is responsible for organizing the campus's annual job fair. Every year, an annual average of 500 students and recent graduates participate to interact with an average of 50 local and U.S. employers.

The ENLACE Program of the College of Business Administration offers business administration students the opportunity to engage in career and internship fairs, have first work experience, participate in co-operative education through Co-op courses and placement, and interact with business and other employers.

One of the components of the Title V Projects mentioned earlier, STEM: Strengthening the Social, Emotional and Academic Needs of Hispanic Students in Puerto Rico, will offer career advising early on (sophomore year) to tie the academic curriculum to work-based learning experiences and internships, as well as to establish a Career Counseling Center with participation from local business leaders and mentors. The project will provide workshops and conferences on topics related to having a work/life balance, time management, how to choose a thesis topic, career planning, and internships, among others.

The campus also continues to have an Internationalization Plan that responds to the prioritization of initiatives worldwide, as well as expanding opportunities within the US and its territories. The policies outline much of the work done by the Office of the Assistant Dean of International Relations (DARI in Spanish). DARI offers academic support services for student and faculty exchange with institutions abroad. They also provide the opportunity for internships, though student exchange is the area of greatest interest. New areas are being evaluated, such as the creation of COIL courses (collaborative online international learning) with partner institutions. In the AY 2019-20 academic year, the campus had 175 students leaving and 57 students arriving on exchange. Due to the pandemic and the moratorium from the UPR Central Administration, we had no participants during the 2020-2021 academic year, but the program campaign remained online using Teams and email. There was no mobility in the first semester of AY 2021-22; only 62 students left, and 33 arrived in the second semester. As a result, the numbers increased in AY 2022-23; 137 students left, and 46 students arrived on exchange.

Additionally, the Interdisciplinary Research and Undergraduate Learning Resource Center (CRiiAS) offers opportunities and experiences to undergraduate students for their research and creative development. Activities include training workshops, mentoring, summer research and creation experiences, research and creation conferences, and opportunities for publication of creative and research projects.

Regarding support for master and doctoral students, the Graduate Network (GN) provides workshops, training, technological equipment loans, and individual and group study rooms. It also offers an important meeting and study space for these students. The experiences it cultivates enrich the education of graduate students.

4.2: Policies and Procedures Regarding Evaluation and Acceptance of Transfer Credits, and Credits Awarded Through Experiential Learning, Prior Non-Academic Learning, Competency-Based Assessment, and Other Alternative Learning Approaches.

Admission processes comply with policies of the UPR-RP Academic Senate, such as Certification 150, 2013-14 which describes traditional admission processes and the rules for readmission and transfer. It also considers student exchange programs. Students coming from other local institutions, the U.S., and abroad file the application in the Admissions Office. Requirements and instructions to complete the transfer admission application are available on the Admissions Office main webpage and [online brochure](#). Transfer admission is granted by the college of interest on a space-available basis. A transfer student's course evaluation process is validated when they have completed at least 12 credits on campus. To facilitate procedures between universities, GB Certification 30, 2023-24 was approved. National and international universities that participate in exchange and study abroad programs have established digital processes to expedite course approval for courses taken by students during their academic mobility experience. However, before students participate in exchange programs, they are required to determine which courses in the host campus will be credited when they return to the home campus. This exercise should include various options for courses in case those proposed are not being offered or enrollment has reached its limit when they arrive at the host campus.

Alternative Learning Approaches

AS Certification 88, 2003-2004 establishes the parameters and procedures to award credits through three alternative modalities or learning approaches. (1) Accreditation of college-level courses before beginning studies in the system; (2) Accreditation of approved courses through advanced placement (AP) tests administered by the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB); and (3) Accreditation of approved courses through achievement exams prepared and administered by the academic departments of the Campus (Graduate and Undergraduate). These alternative pathways allow students to advance courses to further their academic goals.

The Adelanta Program of the Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies (DECEP) provides students in 9th through 12th grade, including homeschoolers, the opportunity to complete college level courses while still in high school or during the summer before admission. These courses will be accepted as part of the official academic curriculum. Adelanta offers a selection of courses that are part of the General Education component of all UPR's bachelor's degrees. If the courses taken with Adelanta are used to complete high school requirements, then they cannot be considered toward the requirements of a bachelor's degree. Accordingly, the student's high school must certify in writing that the university courses were not used towards completing high school's graduating requirements. Following Certification 88, the courses taken with Adelanta are credited into the academic record after the student completes a minimum of 12 credits with a 2.00 GPA and requests the program to certify this credit completion. The maximum number of credits that a student can advance is 25% of all the credits of a BA.

At the graduate level, only new admissions are offered. However, AS Certification 95 2019-20 allows 1/3 of the total number of courses from outside the institution. These courses must be passed with a B or A grade no more than five years before admission. Once students are admitted, they submit evidence of courses approved for evaluation. When the graduate program determines the courses can be credited, they send a letter and transcript to the Registrar's Office, endorsed by the relevant deans, so the Registrar's Office can validate those courses.

4.3: Policies and Procedures for Safe and Secure Maintenance and Appropriate Release of Student Information and Records

The Registrar's Office is the unit that safeguards the information and manages the processes that show students are in good standing in their academic program, in addition to ensuring that both active and inactive students and university officials have access to updated, timely and relevant information related to academic records. It and other units follow the Institutional Policy on Privacy of Educational Records, and they comply with the provisions of the Buckley Amendment, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, as amended. This law protects the private nature of student educational records and establishes the right of students to inspect and review such records. It also provides guidelines to correct information through informal and formal hearings. Students can file complaints with the Department of Education in case of infringement on these rights. A process is established for releasing information from student records at the DCODE. A Consent to Release Information Form must be completed by the student authorizing the release of specific information by the professional, including the date, name, and specific information to be disclosed and the time limit for disclosure. Otherwise, the only exceptions taken into consideration for releasing information without written consent are those mandated by federal and state statutes and norms, including the Mental Health Law #408, as amended and approved by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in October of 2000.

The Medical Services Department follows the protocols and privacy regulations established by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA). All procedures and records evaluations are confidential and unavailable without the patient's authorization. Starting in 2019, the collection of medical documents is completed through the digital platform NEXT, where students upload their documentation. Electronic medical records comply with the confidentiality parameters of the HIPPA Act and the Access to Privileged and Confidential Information Act. The Financial Aid Office safeguards financial records on a secure online platform that can only be accessed by authorized personnel. The financial information pertains to scholarships, grants, loans, work-study, academic progress revision records, and information entered by a financial aid officer.

4.4: Regulations for Athletics, Student Life, and Other Extracurricular Activities

Most of the units and organizations that contribute to extracurricular and co-curricular activities, university life, and athletics are under the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs. These and other programs, including musical groups, the UPR-RP Theatre, and the Center for Academic Excellence, among others, are integrated into the university structure and budget, and subject to the same principles and procedures as all the other programs. Co-curricular events contribute to a vibrant university culture and shape students' academic formation and personal growth.

An example of this integration is found in the Social, Recreational, and Institutional Events Unit, which produces more activities than any other unit on campus and promotes students' active participation in campus life. It organizes events aimed at recruiting new students, welcoming admitted students, inserting them into university life, and all other activities that contribute to their retention and enjoyment. The events include concerts, competitions, workshops, and fairs, among many others. Likewise, this unit coordinates one of the most important events in institutional life: the annual commencement ceremony. This unit also organizes three institutional groups: the UPR Tuna, the UPR Dance Team, and the Abanderadas Team. Additionally, it oversees managing the social media networks of IUPI Al Día to publicize activities and services that the Office of the Dean of Students and other programs offer. Some of the most well-known institutional events are Welcome and Orientation for New Admission students, Open House, IUPI Anniversary, and the Athletics Jousts and Sports Festival of Puerto Rico. In 2021, it celebrated the first *Semi Open House*, which included a car tour inside the campus accompanied by an audio that future students and families could access from their cell phones. Similarly, that year, it held a virtual graduation and a *Drive-In* for the graduates with music and artistic entertainment by stilt walkers. Through social media and virtual presentations, these activities foster student belonging by highlighting music ensembles and students' creative and artistic work.

The campus Athletics Department is committed to recruiting and retaining talented student athletes and supporting their academic success. Policies and procedures for athletics including recruitment practices are clearly established and posted on its website. Both men and women athletes play and represent 14 official sports. Team sports consist of up to 15 athletes, and headcount by individual sports in both genders varies from year to year. The Athletic Department coaches and administrative personnel are active advisors to their students. The program is developing a Student-Athlete Handbook expected to be completed by December 2024. This resource will help strengthen the support students need to achieve their academic, athletic, and personal goals.

UPR-RP currently offers over 80 student organizations, including groups focused on science, community service, religion, professional practice, and creative subjects. The Student Organizations Unit cultivates opportunities for the enrichment of students' academic and professional careers. These organizations provide students with a more comprehensive view of the society to which we belong. A detailed description of student organizations is discussed in Standard III.

The General Student Council (CGE) serves as the highest form of student representation on campus, as stipulated by Article 10 of Law 1 of 1966, the Law of the University of Puerto Rico. Student representation is currently organized by colleges and schools, with CGE representatives selected through elections. The CGE is charged with improving students' quality of life, defending their interests in different administrative forums, and guaranteeing the protection of their rights. It has developed initiatives that make students feel safe and more comfortable on campus. These initiatives include El Comedor de la IUPI (in collaboration with Quality-of-Life Program), where over 250 students eat weekly and shop for non-perishable food at affordable prices. Moreover, CGE awards annual scholarships to students. These initiatives serve as our direct support for students, ensuring that they have resources to help them remain healthy and safe while studying.

The Quality-of-Life Program, dedicated to promoting healthy lifestyles, education regarding the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs, campus safety, and road safety, has strengthened its support of the student experience. Between 2018 and 2023, it increased its collaboration with public and private entities to provide educational material, health screening clinics, disease prevention, educational talks, and food donations for students in need.

Also notable is the *COME IUPI* initiative, which started in 2019, and gave way to the Food Security Program; currently it has 101 student participants who benefit from the distribution of healthy food without charge. To support this Program and the Healthy Lifestyles Initiative, Quality of Life maintains its partnerships with other off-campus initiatives and institutions such as Mesón de Amor, Banco de Alimentos, MERCK, Farmacias Yarimar, Movilización Comunitaria del Municipio de San Juan, Comedor de la Kennedy, and AMGEN.

The Office of the Student Ombudsman has carried out a series of efforts and strategies with positive impact on the daily lives of the student community, providing them with a sense of support on their path to success. This is reflected in various actions, among which the following stand out:

- Face-to-face and virtual workshops and educational forum dealing with inclusion, gender violence in all its forms, violence, and cyberbullying. During AY 2022-23, it offered several educational workshops with governmental and non-profit entities on diversity and inclusion, domestic violence, stalking, cyberbullying, sexual violence, human trafficking, sexual consent, and the rights of the trans community, among other topics. OPE has an educational work plan for each academic year.
- A space for free HIV testing in collaboration with non-profit organizations and the Quality-of-Life Program, ascribed to the UPR-RP Medical Services Department
- Orientations on OPE services for first-year and readmission students, graduate students, peer counselors, and professors to promote and create awareness about its services and topics relevant to the rights and duties of the student body through presentations and information tables.
- Social network publications on Instagram and Facebook to inform the university community about student rights and responsibilities. Publications with pertinent information that impacts student life, and their academic and personal environment, are displayed and distributed. These efforts are aimed at making students feel accompanied and supported on their paths to academic and personal success.

4.6: Periodic Assessment of The Effectiveness of Student Support Services

To assess participants' progress and develop a system for conducting evaluations of the effectiveness of direct counseling services, DCODE uses the Counseling Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS) developed by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) used in counseling centers. It is a 62-item instrument with distinct subscales related to psychological symptoms and distress in college students. Its 34-item version can be used as a brief assessment instrument at any point in treatment.

To evaluate student satisfaction with DCODE services, all students who received individual and group counseling are sent a Counselor Evaluation Form via email at the end of each month. From 2021-2024, 95% of students agreed or completely agreed that they were satisfied with the services

they received. Also, students who participate in outreach activities are administered a Group Activity Evaluation Form. Evaluation reports are prepared each semester for individual counseling and groups and regularly discussed with staff during supervision meetings. Both the Director and the Assistant Director revise case records to evaluate the effectiveness of direct counseling services and to ensure quality control of records using a Records Quality Control Form. Appendix X includes all evaluation forms for each DCODE unit.

To evaluate student satisfaction with the services provided by OSEI regarding reasonable accommodation, at the end of each semester all students seen at OSEI receive a Satisfaction with Overall OSEI Services Evaluation Form via email. Another form to evaluate satisfaction with individual interventions by the counselor in rehabilitation is sent after a student has had his/her first interview with a counselor to evaluate and coordinate reasonable accommodations. In 2023, a large proportion (96%) of surveyed students reported that they would recommend OSEI services to other students.

The Peer Orientation/Mentor Program sends an evaluation form to all first-year students who received services from a peer mentor to assess effectiveness. Peer mentors evaluate all workshops, retreats, and psychoeducational groups they participate in as part of their training to become peer mentors using forms designed specifically for each activity.

Units such as the Student Recruitment Program, Employment Office, and Student Organizations evaluate their activities, workshops, and events to know their impact and assess what strategies should be implemented to best meet students' needs. Likewise, DARI collects information to evaluate office services and its employees' performance through a Google form that students complete on a computer in the reception area or access through a QR code. DARI uses the information to improve the quality of services and adopt recommended measures, whenever possible, to meet the needs of students and visitors.

There are offices such as the Financial Aid Office, Department of Medical Services, Athletic Department, Registrar's Office, Admissions Office, DEGI, and Bursar's Office that do not conduct periodic assessments of the effectiveness of their services through data collection, but they have improved many of their services using information technology based on experience, conversations with students and best practices in similar institutions. It is noteworthy that in AY 2023-24, the Financial Aid Office and Department of Medical Services began conducting student satisfaction surveys.

Student support services offered by orientation officials, academic advisors, department directors, and student affairs offices in general should also benefit from a structured evaluation. There are ongoing actions to implement a mechanism to receive feedback from both employees and students regarding the challenges they face in these and other support services units. For example, student satisfaction surveys with appropriate metrics and evaluation are under development, with members from different service units, colleges, and schools participating.

Findings

- The UPR-RP complies with Standard IV criteria.

- The implementation of MiUPI has greatly facilitated administrative processes for students that took much more time to complete in past years. Campuswide digitalization processes are in place and will continue to develop to facilitate due diligence both for campus personnel and students alike.
- Career guidance, exploration, and planning have proven very successful in student retention, persistence, and graduation rates. DECODE staff and academic advisors are committed to continued student service in line with the university's mission.

Next Steps

- Even when Pell Grant funds may cover all tuition costs, university life does not only consist of this one element. The question remains whether students can still afford to study at UPR when you consider room and board, books, and other expenses. The university administration will work on providing more mechanisms to ensure sustainable conditions for retaining and graduating students.
- The lack of availability of various institutional support services (DECODE, ODEI, PdEO, among others) outside the regular hours in which the campus offices operate is recognized as a challenge and an area of potential improvement that might bolster student retention. These offices will meet to consider a pilot project that offers extended hours on a trial period to determine sustainability and viability. This includes strengthening the resources of the Employment Office and DCODE career counseling services.
- Recruiting peer counselors each year is more challenging because they are not offered a consistent incentive as they were before 2015 (e.g., stipend and advance course enrollment). In 2015, on average, there were 60 peer-mentor students; in 2024, there are 27. An alternative would be to certify the program and add additional university staff through the National Association of Peer Helping Professionals, in addition to exploring how to offer incentives.
- The Academic Accompaniment Program (PAA) of the College of Communication and Information Technologies could be used as a model for other undergraduate programs.
- DTAA acknowledges the multiple challenges students face using the Putty and Tera Term applications and is preparing to transform them into a more adaptable or user-friendly platform in NEXT that communicates with other electronic services.
- DEGI will provide additional training to graduate program coordinators to advise and guide their students more effectively and improve its strategies to support students' understanding of graduate regulations that affect retention. The development of DEGI online resources to complement the existing online catalogs will assist in attracting more applicants. This entails adding information about the career paths of program graduates, anticipated employment opportunities, and profiles of graduates whose opportunities for professional success were bolstered by their graduate education at UPR-RP. This information will also be included on the websites of specific programs to provide students with a clear and

tangible understanding of the benefits of program completion. Only some doctoral programs graduate their students in seven years. More funding allocation will be explored so a larger number of students may complete their degrees in a timely manner.

- Changes to the PEAFF program will be considered to facilitate early notification that these positions have been secured.
- The transfer admissions application for students coming from other local institutions, the US and abroad is not yet online, so one of the projects of the Admissions Office is to convert it to this modality, using the Next platform.
- Closer attention will be paid to persistence in the third year. Since 2017, the third-year retention rate has been decreasing. For instance, for the AY 2021-22, persistence to the third year fell 4% to 69%. One of the measures for increasing persistence and retention is implementing academic or student accompaniment models in all colleges and schools. For these models to be successful, the institution's fiscal reality must be addressed. Strengthening academic advising and peer mentoring are recognized as effective strategies, as well as adapting student support services hours, remote services for distance learning students, and extending tutoring services and summer bridge programs to all colleges and schools.
- Given that the off-campus initiatives that collaborate with the Quality-of-Life Program are subsidized through donations and the multiple challenges to meet demand by increasing the number of student participants, campus administration will identify additional support, including external funds to train more staff and volunteers.
- The Employment Office does not function as a placement office. Due to budget cuts and unit restructuring, it no longer has staff to support and expand individualized services or develop accurate job placement data. Allocating adequate resources will strengthen its outreach and better benefit students as they prepare for professional careers, compete in the labor market, and meet the challenges of professional sustainability and the emerging scenarios of the job market.
- Each academic program will interview its outgoing students to collect reliable and specific data about their plans upon graduation and/or gather information about the company, agency, or organization where they will be employed, the position they will be filling, or the university they will be attending for graduate studies. The data will be placed in electronic files per semester/academic year to be used for reports and as evidence of student progress, as well as time to degree standards.
- Programs will confirm the personal email address students will use after their institutional email expires so that the Alumni Office and others can follow up with them. The Senior Exit Interview used currently does not collect this specific data. The Registrar will provide a list of degree applicants to academic departments or programs for them to interview their students. The interview should be brief and may be conducted by phone, video, email, or in person. To ensure students participate in the interview, each department will devise a

creative incentive or way of encouragement. This information will allow us to answer questions about our local and international positioning, and to prioritize areas to strengthen and identify graduate programs where our graduates tend to continue their studies.

- There is no detailed information available from UPR Central Administration regarding the maintenance of the building areas and infrastructure of UPR-RP student residencies, their reconstruction status, and approximate date of availability. The chancellor will request this information and provide periodic updates to the campus university community.
- Some offices (Financial Aid, Department of Medical Services, the Athletics Department, Registrar's Office, Admissions Office, Bursar's Office, Assistant Deans of Student Affairs offices, and academic departments) do not periodically assess the effectiveness of their services using evaluation instruments. These offices will create and distribute evaluation instruments, with specific instructions on how to complete and submit, by the end of the Spring 2025 semester.