



10 de agosto de 2006

COMUNIDAD UNIVERSITARIA

Saludos y bienvenidos a un nuevo año académico. Tenemos motivos para sentirnos orgullosos y complacidos pues a pesar de todas las limitaciones que enfrentamos con nuestra planta física, los esfuerzos realizados por todos(as) rindieron frutos. No sólo salimos bien en la visita del CES, sino que *Middle States Commission Association on Higher Education* hizo un análisis de nuestro informe que nos pone en un excelente lugar. Este es el logro de todos, pues cada uno desde su posición contribuyó con su trabajo a alcanzar la meta. Es bueno que todos(as) lean el informe por lo que he pedido su publicación.

Esto nos debe servir de estímulo para alcanzar nuevas y más altas metas. Estoy segura de que si continuamos trabajando como un sólo equipo podemos colocar a la UPRB en el lugar en que todos queremos verlo.

*¡Felicidades y Adelante!*

*Irma Schmidt*  
Irma R. Schmidt Soltero  
Rectora Interina

eam

Anexo

Report to  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students  
of  
University of Puerto Rico – Bayamon

Prepared following analysis of the institution's  
Periodic Review Report

First Reviewer:

Dr. Edward B. Weil  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
William Paterson University  
Wayne, New Jersey 07470

Second Reviewer:

Dr. Dennis J. Callas  
Provost  
SUNY College of Technology at Delhi  
Delhi, NY 13753

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## Overview

At the time of the reaffirmation of accreditation in 2001 of the University of Puerto Rico – Bayamon, a follow-up report was requested that documented financial resources to “ensure the maintenance and renovation of current facilities and development of new facilities as stated in the institutional master plan.” After receipt of the follow-up report in 2003, a progress letter was requested to further document steps taken to ensure financial resources; the progress report was accepted in 2004. The latter document described approval by the University of Puerto Rico Board of Trustees and central administration of major capital projects including renovation and maintenance of the air conditioning system; evaluation of health and safety issues pertaining to the science laboratories; and the construction of three new buildings: completion of the Student Center; Natural Sciences; and Science and Technology.

The 2006 Periodic Review Report and the accompanying documents provide a thorough and frank update to the 2001 self-study and evaluation team report. The PRR is responsive to the recommendations of the evaluation team and demonstrates that effective consideration has been given to each recommendation.

Soon after completion of the 2001 accreditation process, a new Chancellor was appointed who undertook a thorough review of the administrative structure, enrollment patterns, academic standards, and strategic planning. Among the documents included with the PRR is the *Strategic Plan, 2003-2009*, a comprehensive digest of academic, administration, enrollment, technology and institutional advancement goals and activities. There is a strong implication that these are tied to budget planning although that actual process is cited for each goal and activity to be “in progress”.

The University of Puerto Rico – Bayamon offers associate and bachelor degree programs in Technology, Business, Education (including Physical Education), and Biology, as well as programs designed as foundations for ultimate transfer to other UPR campuses. Since the decennial report, a conscious decision was made to reduce enrollments to a level more appropriately aligned with resources and to raise admission standards commensurately.

The institutional process resulting in the completion of the PRR was begun in the summer of 2003 and involved a broad cross section of the campus. It is clear to the reader that the PRR process engendered new initiatives in a several areas, as well as forthright evaluations of the status of various activities directly in response to the 2001 MSA reports. As such, the PRR is a useful as an historical document, as a status report, and as updated basis for future campus development.

## Major Challenges and Opportunities

The various documents included with the PRR are strongly indicative of an active planning process underway at UPR – Bayamon. Beyond the *Strategic Plan 2003-2009*, documents have been compiled which refine the planning process and align the actual strategic plans with University of Puerto Rico planning, presidential goals, MSA standards, budgeting, and assessment procedures. The realization of these institutional activities provides both challenges and opportunities as UPR – Bayamon evolves to new levels of independence and sophistication.

The PRR provides a comprehensive summary of “Outcomes” that go beyond those that are directly responsive to the recommendations of the 2001 evaluation team. These demonstrate that UPR – Bayamon continues to dedicate efforts and resources to the advancement in areas of technology, research, grants, program review, and facilities construction and maintenance.

Similarly, the listing of “Challenges” are both procedural and programmatic. Some of these are clearly selected from strategic planning documents and have resulted from the ongoing discussions. Their intention is to generate considerable advancement of the institution in the areas of research, technology, enrollment management, information management, personnel effectiveness, campus health and safety, and assessment. In addressing such challenges, the PRR refers to various “initiatives to overcome challenges and obstacles.” This listing provides ten affirmative steps that can be taken by the institution as priority initiatives as it proceeds to implement the goals and objectives outlined in other planning documents.

As will be described later, steps toward the implementation of an institutional assessment system had been stalled due to administrative changes although some assessment activities proceeded within some programs. The PRR acknowledges that assessment activities continue to be a major challenge.

Perhaps not as explicitly stated are budget challenges which will be described further below.

## Response to Recommendations from the Accreditation Team Report and Institutional Self-Study

The accreditation team appropriately noted that the recent evolution of UPR – Bayamon from a technological college should be reflected in an updated mission statement. As a result, a committee developed the revised mission and vision statements, as well as a listing of educational goals. These statements, approved by the faculty in 2004, are included in the PRR. They clearly articulate the relationships between the degree programs in technological education and the significance of the humanities, liberal arts, computational, and communication skills.

Similarly, with the establishment of an autonomous institution with a new mission, governance structures and administrative structure, there is a commensurate need for effective communication. The accreditation team recommended “more direct and frequent communication”. Three newsletters have been established, one each from the Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of Student Affairs, and the Assistant Dean for Continuing Education. In addition, although the need for further development is stated, the university web site has been a major source for internal communication. Further improvement in communication is included as a goal within the institutional strategic plan. Two major documents have been compiled and published since 2001, which provide guidance to faculty and students on institutional policies and procedures: *Manual del Estudiante* and *Manual de la Facultad de la Universidad de Puerto Rico en Bayamon*.

The accreditation team report provides an extensive discussion of issues pertaining to institutional effectiveness and the development of assessment activities. Building upon strategic planning initiatives, it is noted that the university had begun to address assessment techniques and methodologies and to consider utilizing critical thinking and the integration of technology as two benchmark initiatives. Along with the establishment of an “Assessment Component” with a coordinator to revise the Institutional Assessment Plan, these two activities were seen as vital steps in advance of an institutional assessment effort. Beginning with the Department of Education, department chairpersons were asked to incorporate assessment initiatives as part of their academic program reviews and annual reports.

With regard to institutional effectiveness, it was suggested by the accreditation team that the role of the Office of Planning and Institutional Research be expanded to support various assessment efforts and that necessary institutional resources be provided. Similarly, the team suggested the expansion of the role of the Placement Office in collecting assessment-related data. With assessment efforts apparently well underway, the accreditation team suggested that such effort focused on the areas of critical thinking, technology and, perhaps, information literacy rather than multiple assessment measures. In response to the accreditation team recommendation that assessment techniques be closely monitored, the PRR indicates that such activities were interrupted in 2003 and not re-instituted until 2005. Assessment activities will be discussed further below.

At the recommendation of the accreditation team, an active cycle of program reviews has been implemented with common program review components, based upon the requirement set forth by the UPRB Academic Senate, the Council on Higher Education, and as facilitated by the guidelines from the Office of the Vice President for Academic in the University of Puerto Rico central office. A table within PRR provides the status of each program review.

Two recommendations were provided regarding communication to students. These have been addressed by the development of a newsletter published monthly by the Office of Student Affairs, the development of the web site, the publication of the Student Handbook which is revised every two years, and the recent revision of the catalog which can be accessed through the web site and is now in CD format. It should be noted that the catalog is published for three years, which may be too infrequent for a campus that is in the process of change.

It was also recommended that improvements be made to transfer procedures and that planning for various student services be subject to future assessment activities. The PRR states that the university is in the process of implementing the Board of Trustees policy requiring all transfer programs to have articulation agreements in place. UPRB participates in such programs when degrees can only be conferred at other UPR campuses, such as engineering, the humanities, social sciences and chemistry.

The evaluation team report provided extensive reviews of each academic program including General Education, with lists of strengths, concerns and programmatic suggestions. It should be assumed that these points are considered as the departments engage in program reviews. In the case of programs in the sciences and technology, the team concurred with the self-study regarding the urgency for laboratory and equipment upgrades. Further, there was concurrence with the self-study findings regarding insufficient number of computers and lack of space for additional hardware. In summary, several recommendations were offered to secure funding for equipment and laboratory upgrades. Presumably, this issue resulted, in part, in the recommendation to the Commission that it request a follow-up report on the maintenance and renovation of facilities. In follow-up correspondence it is duly noted that plans are underway for new buildings for the natural sciences and science and technology.

In response to the recommendation regarding funding for laboratories and equipment, the PRR notes that the University has secured some funding from corporations. Further, specific annual budget allocations for equipment are noted, as is the implementation of a technology fee to support technological resources. The chancellor appointed a committee to annually consider the plan to purchase technology equipment.

A recurring theme throughout the PRR is the need to raise standards for the hiring of new faculty members and to improve opportunities for faculty members to pursue research activities in order to raise the academic profile of the institution as it continues to evolve. The accreditation team recommended that an institutional budget be allocated for this purpose and that it be communicated broadly. A committee has been established to

review proposals for funding support according to recently promulgated policies and procedures.

The accreditation team raised various questions regarding the state-supported budget and the ability of the institution to function effectively subsequent to fiscal autonomy. A particular concern focused on the adequacy of the budget to meet planning objectives. The team recommended the establishment of the Office of External Funding. The PRR confirms the establishment of this office and cites efforts in the development and funding of grant proposals to federal, state and municipal government agencies, as well as to private business. It is noted that the development of an alumni office is also a high priority.

After consideration of the recommendation from the accreditation team to "seriously consider holding the line on enrollment growth", UPRB has moved to annually reduce enrollments from 5,651 in 2001-02 to 4,672 in 2005-06. This could be reduced further to between 4,300 and 4,500 students in the context of physical facilities available and commensurate budget allocations. These enrollment reductions reflect both decreases in applications due to competitive institutions and the implementation of higher admission standards.

Although, the accreditation team recommended increased funding for the library acquisitions, annual budget allocations actually decreased. Adjusted annual budget allocations have resulted in fluctuating expenditures depending upon discretionary funding available. The library has attempted to maximize offering by purchasing computerized data bases and the rights to access such databases. Such resources can be accessed from off campus.

UPRB has responded effectively to the recommendation that plans be developed to address health and safety issues. CASSO, the Puerto Rican agency which addresses occupational hazards and security, was engaged by the University to evaluate health and safety issues and to provide guidance for policies and procedures such as the handling and disposal of chemical substances and other regulations of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In Fall 2005, UPRB addressed "an environmental crisis caused by the proliferation of mold, mildew and fungus". With funding from the University of Puerto Rico central office, conditions in buildings have been corrected over the current academic year.

With regard to financial resources, the accreditation team recommended that a contingency planning be put in place to address the additional funding needs for the operation of new buildings. The PRR states that such budget requests are submitted by individual campuses to the UPR central office.

The PRR effectively demonstrates that the University has implemented annual library literacy workshops aligned to the offerings of academic departments, as was recommended by the accreditation team. Similarly, the campus has maintained the

catalog by production of 2003-06 print, web and CD versions and is in the process of preparing 2006-09 versions. As recommended, adequate funding has been allocated.

### Enrollment and Financial Status and Projections

According to the PRR, state funding is generally predictable and stable. A table depicting annual budget allocations and enrollment indicate annual budget increases despite planned enrollment reductions. In addition, it is stated that annual increases subsequent to the initial allocations average about 7%. Further, allocations for major capital improvements are subject to specific budget requests which are ultimately finalized as components of the Permanent Improvement of Facilities Plan.

Enrollment adjustments reflect the reduction or elimination of admissions to various associate degree programs. Although business and computer science programs have experience some enrollment declines, education and biology programs have demonstrated some enrollment increases. Articulation agreements for transfer programs have improved enrollment predictability in some program areas.

The PRR also includes a table projecting increases in anticipated budget allocations and modest enrollment decreases to 4,298 in 2010-11. It is stated that such budget increases largely reflect anticipated personnel costs due to mandatory salary increases.

Finally, it is mentioned that budgetary and enrollment planning will be determined, in part, by institutional assessment activities.

Appendix VIII, *Alineamiento entre el Plan del Presidente, el Plan Estrategico de la UPRB y el Presupuesto*, included with the PRR, summarizes how resources have been allocated to support specific goals and objectives cited in the *Strategic Plan, 2003-2006*. However, it is not clear whether such allocations were systematically made to support planning priorities or whether this is a retrospective compilation.

### Outcomes Assessment Processes

At the time of the 2001 accreditation site visit, the UPR – Bayamon, had appeared to have initiated comprehensive assessment processes under the leadership of an experienced assessment coordinator. With changes in leadership, these comprehensive activities apparently stalled, although some activities proceeded within individual programs.

The PRR provides a candid discussion of efforts in the area of assessment of student learning. Between 2001 and 2003, an attempt was made to assess the General Education program in the typical areas of critical thinking, content knowledge and skills. This activity, however, was suspended due to the resignation of the assessment coordinator.



Comprehensive activities were renewed in the summer of 2005 and have regained momentum as presented in various documents included with the PRR. Of particular note is Appendix X, *Alineamiento entre Estandares de Middle States, Plan Estrategico y el Plan de Avaluo*, which directly considers each of the 14 Middle States accreditation standards and provides a comprehensive format for the development of an assessment plan. It is stated on page 40 of the PRR that "There is a need to work more towards the development of a *culture of institutional assessment* as a coordinated, systematic, and sustained effort to disseminate results and how they are put to use".

In November 2005, the Student Learning Assessment Committee was reactivated under new leadership. Data were compiled regarding students' and employers' perspectives on the quality of education, the status of evaluative, data collected by individual departments, programs and student services and the utilization of assessment instruments by individual faculty members. These data are presented within documents included with the PRR and demonstrate that various assessment activities have been ongoing within some department and service areas, yet at varying degrees of development. With these data as a foundation the UPRB has developed a draft Institutional Plan for Student Learning (Appendix IZX– *Plan de Avaluo Institucional 2006-2010*) which at the time of writing of the PRR was under review for campus approval during 2006-07.

These thoughtful and comprehensive documents demonstrate that URPB has renewed its commitment to the assessment process and will engage extensively over the years prior to the next decennial visit by Middle States.

#### Linkages between Institutional Planning and Budget Processes

As previously mentioned, the *Strategic Plan 2003-2006* identifies numerous institutional and programmatic goals and objectives without indicating the means to ascribe implied budgetary support. The PRR indicates that it still remains to establish administrative procedures as outlined in the appended "Objectives for Budget Distribution and Letter to Deans dated June 16, 2005" (Appendix XIII). Thus, it appears that the institution is in the process of implementing a strategy that directly links planning and budget procedures.

The PRR describes planning procedures for major capital projects which are routed through the University of Puerto Rico system office.

#### Conclusions

The 2006 Period Review Report of the University of Puerto Rico – Bayamon is largely responsive to the recommendations of the 2001 accreditation team. Progress has been made in the areas of organization, communication, facilities, faculty development and program reviews. Important strategic decisions were implemented in the area of

enrollment management, as the University reduced its admissions to better align its enrollments with budgets and to improve academic standards. UPRB is a campus which is still evolving from its earlier mission and status but is showing signs of maturity as it effectively addresses issues pertaining to its mission, enrollment, curriculum, articulation, finances and assessment.

It is evident that the campus has continuously sought to address accreditation standards, although it was temporarily stalled in its assessment efforts. The PRR narrative and appended documentation demonstrates that this has been seriously addressed and that systematic assessment will occupy the attention of the campus for the coming years prior to the next decennial visit.

Questions raised by the Commission regarding support for capital projects and construction have been addressed.

It is suggested that new degree programs be considered that are mission related, as it is typical that institutions at this level of development can be responsive to new curricular opportunities.