

Informes de los Evaluadores del Periodic Review Report UPR- Ponce



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Reviewers

- **First Reviewer**

- Bill Baskin, Associate Provost and Director of Assessment, Purchase College, State University of New York

- **Second Reader**

- Valerie Lehr, Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs, St. Lawrence University

- **Finance Associate**

- Richard H. Rugen, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

Number of Recommendations Discussed by Standard

STANDARDS	MSCHE	UPR-Ponce
Standard 1: Mission and Goals	1	3
Standards 2 and 3: Planning, Resource Allocation, Institutional Renewal and Institutional Resources	1	7
Standards 4, 5, and 6: Leadership, Governance, Administration, and Integrity	0	4
Standard 7: Institutional Effectiveness	4	6
Standards 8 and 9: Student Admissions and Student Support Services	1	3
Standard 10: Faculty	0	2
Standards 11/12/13: Educational Offerings/Gen Ed/Related Educational Activities	0	2
Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning	0	6
Total recommendations addressed	7	33

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

- The new mission statement is appropriate and clear, but still appears somewhat generic, as the MSCHE Visiting Team commented about its predecessor. What is it besides location that distinguishes Ponce from other UPR campuses? What contributions does UPR-Ponce make and aspire to make to the Puerto Rican economy and society? Does the institution's mission include being a leader in the growth and development of Ponce and southern Puerto Rico? Asking these and similar questions might help the institution formulate a more distinctive campus mission statement next time around.

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

Suggestion 1

- As it enacts its newly revised mission and goals over the next several years, the campus should evaluate whether the current mission statement can be reformulated to convey its distinctive campus mission as the unit of UPR serving southern Puerto Rico.

Standards 2 and 3: Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal

- In response to the system-wide planning document, University of Puerto Rico: Ten Challenges 2006-2016 (familarly known as Ten for the Decade), the campus developed its own strategic plan, and the PRR documents the success with which UPR-Ponce has followed and executed it.
- As recommended by the Visiting Team, the campus has systematically linked assessment, planning, and resource allocation by establishing an Executive Committee for Institutional Renewal (ECIR), led by the Chief Executive Officer, and charged with alignment of planning, assessment and budgeting.

Cont. Standards 2 and 3

- Another milestone was the opening of a “stunning and utilitarian” new library building, the Adelina Coppin Library, which satisfies the Middle States recommendation concerning student study space.
- The campus is in the process of addressing the findings of the recent assessment of the library by the Association of College and Resort Libraries, findings that were generally very positive, particularly in relation to the quality of the staff, but also include a number of important suggestions.

Cont. Std standards 2 and 3

Suggestion 2

- The library should implement the ACRL review findings that it participate in the Lib Qual+ survey, develop a new mission statement, develop a new strategic plan, and reduce paper/electronic redundancy.

Cont. Standards 2 and 3

- Two additional self-study recommendations, that the UPR System administration and Board of Trustees periodically increase the institution's budget and student tuition rates, are not under campus control. However, UPR-Ponce has taken necessary steps, which need to be continued, to increase private funding and other sources of non-state revenue.
- The UPR-Ponce Administrative Board has approved a campus Information Technology Strategic Plan, in response to another self-study recommendation.

Standards 4, 5, and 6: Leadership, Governance, Administration, and Integrity

- Finding that the campus clearly met the institutional integrity standard in the 2005 evaluation, the team made no recommendations in these three areas.
- Despite recent changes in leadership, the PRR shows that UPR-Ponce has continued to implement its own self-study recommendations to increase the effectiveness of its leadership, governance, and administrative processes.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

- The institution's Chancellor leads the new Executive Committee for Institutional Renewal (ECIR). Its membership, responsibilities, and institutional position suggest that it will be successful in linking the budget allocation, planning, and assessment processes.

Standards 8 and 9: Student Admissions and Student Support Services

- An important UPR-Ponce Self-Study recommendation was to increase graduation rates. The strategies implemented in response to this recommendation appear to have paid off. After hovering around 30% for 2005 and 2006, six-year graduation rates increased to 35% in 2007 and 41% in 2009.
- These are impressive gains and institutionalization of student-service activities begun under a Title V grant should encourage this upward trend.

Cont. Standards 8 and 9

- As a next step, the institution may want to put more emphasis on four-year graduation rates, to reinforce the expectation that students should graduate in four years of full-time study.
- To implement its final recommendation in this area, the campus has established a protocol, which provides for the evaluation and approval of student transfer credits before enrollment.

Cont. Standards 8 and 9

Suggestion 3

- Given increasing student debt and difficulty in funding a college education, the institution should consider a stronger focus on four-year graduation as the norm.

Suggestion 4

- In responding to NSSE results, the institution should consider how to add enriching educational experiences and improve academic support services for students beyond their first year.

Standard 10: Faculty

- The Self-Study's two recommendations, whose implementation the PRR also documents, provide for strengthening faculty development activities to increase teaching effectiveness, and enhancing student engagement efforts, both of which may also positively affect retention and graduation rates.

Standards 11, 12, 13: Educational Offerings, General Education, and Related Educational Activities

- The campus has made a smart move by aligning the graduating student profile with student learning goals, thereby meeting one of the institutional recommendations under Standard 14.
- A number of surveys and other indirect assessment means are already in place; the institution is concentrating on identifying and using existing classroom best practices for direct assessment. Implementing direct assessment is key and building on existing practices is a sound plan. **However, an intermediate step seems lacking.**

Standards 11, 12, 13

Recommendation 1

- The campus should operationalize and consolidate its 18 general education attributes by reformulating them in terms of student learning outcomes and integrating them with major program assessment.
- In the process of operationalizing these 18 attributes, the campus might profitably explore whether it can group them as objectives under a smaller number of more general student learning outcomes. Developing rubrics and a simple assessment mechanism, perhaps online, would help advance this process.

Major Challenges and/or Opportunities

- This report responds only to the PRR document and does not address the recent student strike settlement, which will pose a major challenge to UPR-Ponce.
- That said, most of the challenges and opportunities the PRR cites are not unique to UPR or the Ponce campus, but characteristic of contemporary public higher education in the US, viz. declining public support, and the expectation to do more with less, in a context of ever stricter accountability. Keeping up with technology; facilities maintenance and expansion; academic program development; and faculty development, research, and scholarship are all cited by the PRR, and all belong to this context.

Major Challenges and/or Opportunities (cont.)

- Thanks to its prudent and efficient planning and fiscal management, UPR-Ponce seems to have weathered the financial downturn well. Internal reallocation has increased the percentage of the budget allocated to the academic programs from 35% in AY 2004-2005 to 45% in AY 2008-2009, a truly remarkable achievement. UPR-Ponce's successful track record, together with its plans to continue this reallocation, suggest that at the time of the PRR, the campus was well positioned to cope with continued economic instability.
- The first recommendation above addresses general education, another perennial challenge identified by the PRR.

Major Challenges and/or Opportunities (cont.)

- The institution has responded strongly to the 2005 Visiting Team's recommendation to enact "a clear system for allocating resources to both conducting assessment and funding the necessary changes that have been identified as needs and actions the institution indicated it would like to pursue." However, the Visiting Team further recommended that the institution also "use its assessment results for prioritizing goals."

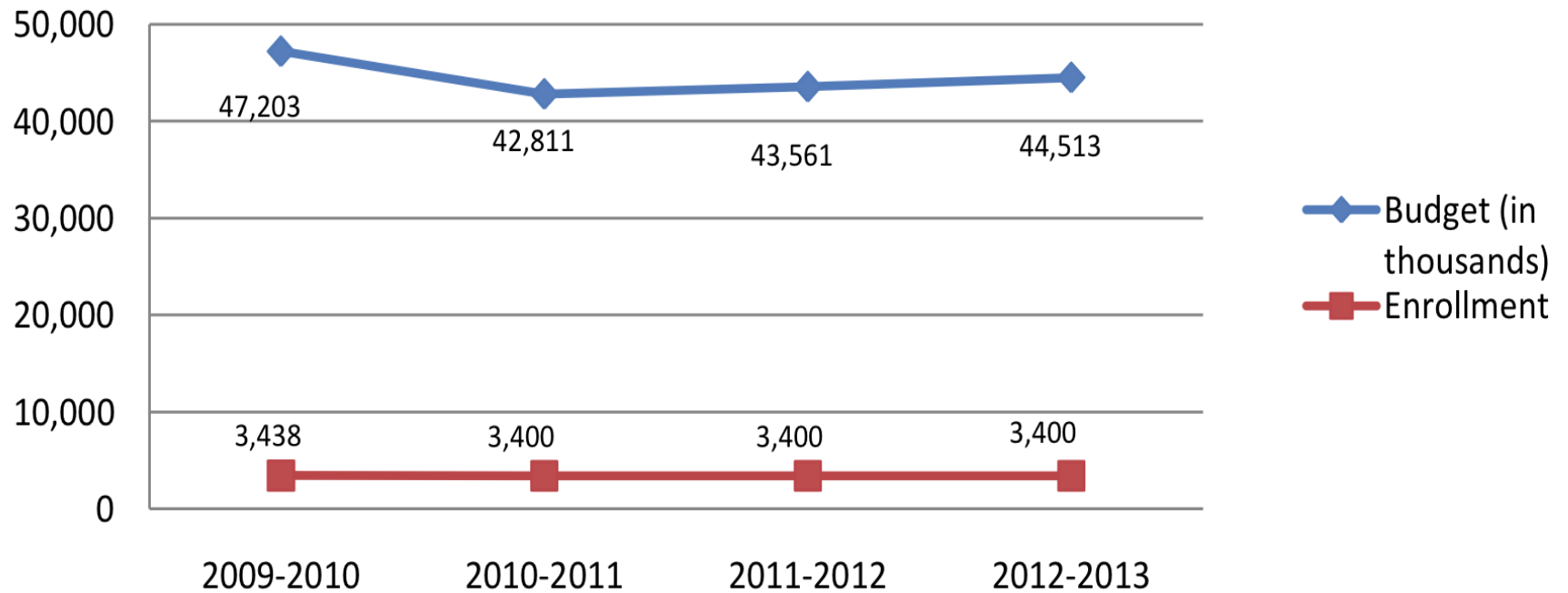
Recommendation 2

- The campus should explore how to further concentrate institutional improvement efforts by using assessment results to help prioritize the goals, objectives, and action steps articulated in its strategic plan and other planning documents.

Enrollment and Finance Trends and Projections

- Despite the recession, UPR-Ponce has successfully managed to internally reallocate resources from the administrative to the academic sector, a trend that the campus wisely intends to continue. PRR Figure 4-5, illustrates the relation between budget and enrollment, which appears to be sustainable over the next five years:

Figure 4.5
UPR-Ponce's Budget (in thousands) and Enrollment Projections
Academic Years 2010-2011 to 2012-2013



Assessment Process and Planning

- The campus has implemented the corresponding Visiting Team recommendations and structurally reinforced an already vigorous process by reorganizing assessment into a pyramidal institutional structure, headed by the Executive Committee for Institutional Renewal (ECIR), with a broad base encompassing both the assessment of student learning and the non-academic sectors of the institution.

Assessment Process and Planning

- Reorganization and expansion of the Office of Planning and Institutional Research (OPIR) satisfies another MSCHE recommendation.
- In terms of major program assessment, UPR-Ponce has met a UPR system mandate and adopted a best practice by having all eligible academic programs accredited and reviewed by their outside professional accrediting bodies. The campus is to be congratulated on this significant achievement.

Assessment Process and Planning

Suggestion 5

- Where possible, the institution should expand its assessment document map to include a performance snapshot of every important institutional function.

Periodic Review Report Fiscal Analysis

Financial Status

- The most important capital improvement since the 2005 self study and visit was the completion of the library renovation, allowing for reoccupation of the building. UPRP has been able to update the information technology infrastructure to support administrative and academic programs and operations, and to carry out modest capital improvements throughout the campus. This has been accomplished despite limited capital resources from the state.

Planning and Budget

- UPRP has instituted a strategic planning process which has more linked the planning with the allocation of limited resources, as recommended in the 2005 self study.
- The university has sustained the percentage of operating funds to support the academic programs while lowering the percentage for administrative support.
- The University of Puerto Rico has recommended, and the Board of Trustees has approved tuition increases, with the provision that entering student cohorts will have the same tuition rate over a six year period.

- Finally, the University of Puerto Rico has increased its fund raising efforts resulting in the increase in grants and gifts.
- UPRP is projecting a stable budget, despite declining state support, through increasing other sources of revenue.
- The university has demonstrated the ability to increase revenues from these sources; the challenge will be to maintain this increase.

Findings and Suggestions

- UPRP has begun to stabilize and strengthen its financial position.
- The university should continue to adhere to its strategic plan, even as the leadership team changes.
- The university should aggressively seek alternative sources of revenue to support not only the academic programs, but also to maintain the physical plant.
- Failure to follow a regular maintenance plan will result in increasing costs to renovate and repair facilities.

Lo próximo...

