

**UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO IN PONCE
CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE**

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION REPORT
SUBMITTED TO MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

Introduction

The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce (UPR-Ponce) received a letter from Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) regarding a possible violation of the *Requirements of Affiliation, Standards, and Commission Policies* as a result of the difficult fiscal challenges that face the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the University. The Government of Puerto Rico will reduce substantially the subsidy granted to the University.

The Central Administration of the UPR identified several opportunities for reductions of expenses and sources of income such as the tuition increase. Students of 9 of the 11 campuses decided to organize various protests to express their opposition to the budget reductions which eventually led to a strike. This situation affects the second semester academic calendar for the 2016-2017 academic year.

On April 20, 2017, MSCHE requested UPR Ponce to submit a *Supplemental Information Report* documenting the institutional situation.

Academic Calendar

Current Term. It is important to state that the current academic semester began on January 17, 2017, as scheduled (Administrative Board Certification 2015-2016-63).

Holidays and Breaks Scheduled. According to the official calendar, the following were the holidays and breaks that were originally scheduled for this semester:

- February 20th- Presidents' Day
- March 22nd- Emancipation of Slavery
- April 10th to 15th- Holy Week
- April 21st and 22nd- Intercollegiate Athletic League competitions
- May 12th and 15th- Academic Recess (for students to study for final exams)

Current Term Ending. The January-May academic semester was scheduled to end on May 23, 2017, including the final exams period.



Students' Strike

Date Vote Taken. On April 5, 2017, UPR-Ponce students attended the National Students Assembly in which 9 of the 11 campuses participated. The strike began on April 6.

Time Period. Students voted for an indefinite strike.

Operations on Campus. Because of this situation, academic and administrative operations have been affected.

In the academic area, on-campus researchers have access to the institution to continue working in their projects. Students have been attending the internships and practicums that are done off campus. An e-mail was sent to department chairs with instructions to inform their faculty about this matter. Other activities that have continued include: athletes, band, and flag girls participation during the *Intercollegiate Athletic League Competitions*; UPR Ponce's Concert Chorus offered the *Suor Angelica and Cavalleria Rusticana* opera concert, the Mascarada Group (theater students) is preparing a play to be held on May 27, the personnel working on the project GET by STEM is preparing the Summer Camp for high school students as well as a workshop on using Moodle platform for online courses development for faculty members. Although some academic and extracurricular activities have continued, classes have not been offered since April 6.

In the administrative area, the Deans with their staff have been coordinating essential administrative operations. Some of these include: first-year students' admission and orientation processes, compliance with IPEDS Spring collection, MSCHE institutional profile, Clearing House Enrollment Status, PRISE program Report, 2017-2018 first semester academic classes schedule preparation, payroll procedures, and utilities payments.

Scheduled Days Missed. Because of academic interruptions before April 6, thirteen and half days have been missed. Since April 6 up to May 5, classes have been interrupted for eighteen days. However, UPR-Ponce is seriously committed to complying with the contact hours established for this term.

Plans to Make Up Classes. Once classes are resumed, the Administrative Board will amend the academic calendar to assure that academic credit is granted for this semester and to guarantee that the institution maintains the integrity and rigor of instruction.

Danger for the Academic Term. At this time, the completion of this academic semester is not in risk. To assure this, the academic calendar will be extended.

Summer Term. The institution will not be able to offer the summer session; however, the courses required for the Physical Therapy, Engineering, and Athletic Training Programs will be offered as originally scheduled. The semester will be extended into the summer session to complete the current regular term.

Eligibility for Participation in Title IV Student Aid Program

Date Institution Lost Eligibility. Because of the strike, the U.S. Department of Education sent us a letter on April 20, 2017 informing that UPR-Ponce is not eligible for Title IV student aid programs.

Status of Application for Reinstatement of Title IV Programs. The UPR Ponce will submit the required application for reinstatement to Title IV Programs once the stoppage concludes and the institution resumes its academic and administrative operations.

Effect to Institution's Financial Situation. Actually 74% of UPR Ponce students receive Pell Grant. Changes in Title IV eligibility will have a negative impact on the UPR Ponce's financial situation in addition to the reduction it is already facing in the Government subsidy. Consequently, UPR Ponce may experience a reduction in student enrollment.

As shown in our most recent Self-Study Report in 2015, multiple strengths have enabled UPR-Ponce to place itself in a prominent position among the public institutions of higher education. We have demonstrated numerous occasions our commitment, integrity, and an excellent quality of academic offerings and services. UPR-Ponce has continuously shown compliance with MSCHE standards of excellence.

We recognize our actual situation. We are working very hard to complete this semester successfully and comply with our responsibilities as an excellent public institution of higher education.