

# University of Puerto Rico in Ponce



# Self-Study Report



Submitted to the  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
and the Puerto Rico Council on Higher Education  
February 2005

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In light of significant changes undergone by the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce (UPR-Ponce) since its last Middle States Association evaluation visit, and in order to facilitate a collaborative review with the Puerto Rico Council on Higher Education, the institution undertook a comprehensive self-study framed by the accreditation standards set out in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*. This decennial self-study has provided the UPR-Ponce with the opportunity to reflect on its many accomplishments, assess its effectiveness and set the agenda for the revision of the strategic plan.

In early 2003, the university established a 16-member Self-Study Steering Committee and eight sub-committees with broad constituent participation. The goal of these sub-committees has been to examine the extent to which UPR-Ponce is meeting the accreditation standards. In order to optimize the benefit of such analysis, these standards were viewed within the context of our mission and goals. The following is a brief summary of some of the major findings of the report, organized by the fourteen standards listed in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*.

## **Standard 1: Mission and Goals**

UPR-Ponce has been consistent in using its institutional mission and goals to guide departmental and program missions and goals and ensuring that its institutional policies and procedures are consistent with them. The opportunity to examine the mission and goals statement provided the community with a space to reflect on its many positive points and to determine ways to make it more effective in directing institutional decision-making.

## **Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal**

The institution has made great efforts to implement planning initiatives since its last accreditation visit in 1995, and has been successful in aligning its plan with its mission and goals. Nonetheless, the planning process should be further elaborated so that assessment, planning, and resource allocation are better articulated.

## **Standard 3: Institutional Resources**

UPR-Ponce provides adequate institutional resources to support its mission and goals. Sound fiscal management and the establishment of clear policies and procedures for the budget allocation process have provided UPR-Ponce with the means to support its academic programs and student and administrative services. The management procedures have been recognized by the Puerto Rico Comptroller's Office, granting UPR-Ponce the highest score of all units in the UPR system for three consecutive years. During the last five years, the institution has also successfully improved its means to increase its institutional resources through additional funding sources, which have contributed to financing institutional renewal initiatives.

#### **Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

One of the institution's strengths lies in its clear rules, regulations, and policies for providing appropriate direction and facilitating the effective governance and functioning of the institution. Governing bodies' by-laws and policies have provided multiple means of ensuring that the institution keeps itself focused on accomplishing its mission and goals. The by-laws and policies generated by the governing bodies are amply shared with the community through print and electronic media.

#### **Standard 5: Administration**

UPR-Ponce has a well-defined organizational structure with clear lines of organization and authority to facilitate its efficiency and effectiveness. Duties and responsibilities of institutional administrators and academic leaders are clearly established in UPR General By-Laws. While administrative changes have posed challenges for the institution, the stability provided by the intermediate administrative structure (academic department heads and directors of student support and administrative services offices) have allowed the institution to function efficiently and effectively.

#### **Standard 6: Integrity**

As stated in its By-Laws, UPR-Ponce promotes sound ethical practices and respect for individuals through its teaching, research, service, administrative practices, use of technology, and labor relations. Evidence supports that the UPR-Ponce is honest and truthful in its public relations announcements, advertisements, and recruiting and admissions materials.

#### **Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**

UPR-Ponce has made noteworthy progress in implementing a more structured approach to assessment in most major areas of institutional endeavor, especially during the last five years. Increasing awareness of assessment on campus has resulted in greater participation by university faculty and staff in assessment activities. Most of the UPR-Ponce units have developed and implemented assessment plans based on mission and goals to determine their effectiveness and, therefore, that of the institution. Academic units and student services offices have been actively involved in assessment practices, and assessment of student learning has become the center of program assessment processes.

#### **Standard 8: Student Admissions**

UPR-Ponce admissions policies, procedures, and practices are clearly stated, fully understood, widely communicated, consistently implemented, and periodically reviewed. They are consistent with, and contribute to, the fulfillment of the institution's mission and goals. The careful selection of students whose goals and aspirations can be achieved at the institution have resulted in first to second year retention rates that are higher than those reported nationally for institutions within the same Carnegie classification as UPR-Ponce. Graduation rates at the institutional level are close to those reported nationally and compare favorably to other UPR units.



### **Standard 9: Student Support Services**

One of the major goals in UPR-Ponce's mission statement is "to provide students with appropriate and timely services complementary to academic life." To this end, the institution provides adequate support services to help students achieve their academic and personal goals. Results of the assessment of student satisfaction with these services have been used to improve them.

### **Standard 10: Faculty**

UPR-Ponce has a faculty that is well-qualified, experienced, primarily tenured, and primarily full-time. Its roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in institutional rules and regulations. The standards and procedures for their appointment, promotion, and tenure are well articulated, and the institution provides multiple means for the advancement and development of its faculty. They actively participate in teaching, research, and service in order to help the institution comply with its mission. The fact that UPR-Ponce faculty members are excellent teachers is evidenced by institutional measures.

### **Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

The educational offerings of UPR-Ponce reflect and promote its mission and goals, and are of sufficient content, breadth, length, and academic rigor for college level programs. The curricular sequences of the academic programs foster coherent learning experiences, enhance development of research and independent thinking, and promote a synthesis of learning. Program assessment revealed that, in general, academic programs are effective in providing skill building and attitude development, and presenting clear student learning outcomes. Some programs face challenges regarding persistence and graduation rates.

### **Standard 12: General Education**

Multiple evidences were found that UPR-Ponce's curricula are designed to help students acquire and demonstrate proficiency in general education competencies. Even so, the institution recognizes that the conceptual framework of the general education component is not clearly defined at the institutional level. Evidence from the NSSE 2004 demonstrates that seniors at UPR-Ponce praised the institution for developing their speaking, analytical reasoning, and information technology skills. They also recognized that the institution prepared them to be able to work effectively with others.

### **Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**

The institution identifies students who are not fully prepared for college-level study and provides support services to prepare them to be successful in their educational goals. The Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies provides citizens of the southern region with educational opportunities that contributes to their continuing professional and intellectual development. Experiential learning experiences offered by the institution meet the standards of rigor consistent with good educational practices.

#### **Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**

Numerous strengths are evident in the area of assessment of student achievement at UPR-Ponce. For the past five years, the institution has engaged in a wide range of student learning assessment activities that have resulted in creating an emergent campus wide assessment culture and awareness at all levels. The Institution has made significant progress in enhancing both the depth and breadth of its student learning assessment program. Faculty members participate in developing and implementing assessment activities. They have taken ownership of these activities through their participation in departmental assessment committees, use of classroom assessment techniques, selection and development of assessment tools, and establishment of criteria for success in assessment plans.

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO SYSTEM**

The University of Puerto Rico (UPR) was founded in 1903 and incorporated as a public enterprise in 1924. The University Law of 1966 reorganized the institution to facilitate its continuous growth. It is a coeducational higher education university system consisting of eleven institutional units distributed throughout the island; three campuses, Río Piedras, Mayagüez, and Medical Sciences, and eight university colleges in Cayey, Humacao, Aguadilla, Arecibo, Bayamón, Carolina, Ponce, and Utuado. The UPR community consists of approximately 70,000 students, 5,801 professors, and 8,044 nonfaculty staff. UPR offers some 580 academic programs at the doctorate, master, first-level professional, baccalaureate, and associate degree levels. All the system units are accredited by the Middle States Association and have the Puerto Rico Council on Higher Education (PRCHE) license. One-hundred twenty-two (122) programs have professional accreditation.

The organizational structure of the UPR is described in Article 12 of the UPR General By-Laws. This structure underwent an important change in 1999 with the authorization of the dissolution of the Regional Colleges Administration (RCA) by the Board of Trustees (Certification 1999-2000-009). The Arecibo, Bayamón, and Ponce Colleges were declared autonomous units in 1998 (Certification Number 1997-98-102), while the Aguadilla, Carolina, and Utuado colleges became autonomous in 1999 (Certification 1998-99-77).

### **A BRIEF HISTORY**

The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce (UPR-Ponce) is located in the city of Ponce in the southern coast of Puerto Rico, approximately 67 miles from the capital city of San Juan. It was originally established as Ponce Regional College on June 27, 1969, and commenced its operations in August 1970. At that time, it began offering a number of associate degrees and transfer programs. In 1981, it received authorization from the Puerto Rico Council on Higher Education (PRCHE) to offer baccalaureate degrees in Secretarial Sciences (later Office Systems) and Business Administration. Thereafter, Certification 170 (1981-82) of the PRCHE changed the name of the institution to Ponce Technological University College. In 1984, four-year degrees in Computer Information Systems and in Arts in Elementary Education were also authorized by the PRCHE. Additional baccalaureate programs in Athletic Training and Arts in Social Sciences with majors in Forensic Psychology, and Psychology and Mental Health were also approved by the PRCHE in 1995 and 1998, respectively. As recently as 2002, the Council also authorized UPR-Ponce to offer a baccalaureate degree in Natural Sciences with majors in Biology and Biomedical Science.

In 1998, the Board of Trustees granted the institution its autonomy from the Regional Colleges Administration and changed the institution's name to Ponce University College. In April 2000, the Board's certifications 1999-2000-103 and 103A dictated that the College be known as the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce.

As part of the UPR system, and the only public institution of higher education in the southern part of the island, UPR-Ponce is committed by law to serve Puerto Rico and the southern region

by transmitting knowledge of sciences and arts to the community, by contributing to the development of ethical and aesthetic values with special emphasis on Puerto Rican and Western cultures, and by stimulating creative dialogue in the search for truth. The emphasis of the academic programs is on undergraduate education at baccalaureate, associate, and transfer levels to satisfy the needs of the community.

## **UPR-PONCE AT A GLANCE**

UPR-Ponce offers 9 bachelor's degrees and 10 associate degrees. It also offers transfer programs in 24 areas of specialization. Courses are offered on a 15-week semester basis, and several courses are also offered during the summer term. The institution's total headcount enrollment for fall 2004 was 3,661. Eighty-three percent of the student population studied full-time, approximately 70% received some form of financial aid, and 66% was female. Sixty-seven percent of the student body was enrolled in bachelor degree programs, 14% in transfer programs, and 9% in technical programs. The remainder was classified into other categories. The four-year programs with the highest enrollment were Elementary Education (28%), Accounting (11%), Office Systems (10%), and Management and Computerized Information Systems (8% each). As for the technical programs, Civil Engineering Technology in Drafting had 41% of the enrollment, Civil Engineering Technology in Construction had 29%, and Physical Therapy had 22%. The transfer programs with the highest enrollment were Education (23%), Chemistry (16%), and Humanities (14%).

The student body is served by 254 nonfaculty staff and 202 faculty members. Seventy-eight percent of the faculty members are full-time employees of the institution, 80% of whom are tenured. Full-time faculty distribution by rank is as follows: 27% are full professors, 16% associate professors, 30% assistant professors, and 26% instructors. Seventeen percent of full-time faculty members have a doctoral degree.

## **ABOUT THE SELF-STUDY**

In anticipation of the reaccreditation process, two faculty members attended the MSACHE Self-Study Institute held in November 2002. Upon their return, they briefed the Chancellor, Deans, and key personnel on the information obtained. A chair and a co-chair were appointed to lead the Steering Committee in December. Together with the Dean of Academic Affairs, they attended the MSACHE Quality Assurance Conference and pre-conference workshops.

In early 2003, Chancellor Jaime Marrero appointed the Self-Study Steering Committee. It was constituted as follows:

- Jaime García, Ed.D., Professor, Chemistry and Physics Department, *Chair*
- Ivonne Vilariño, M.A. Ed., Assistant Professor, Education Department, *Co-Chair*
- Edda Arzola, M.A., Associate Professor, Director of Spanish Department
- Carmen Bracero, M.A. Bus. Ed., Professor, Office Systems Department
- Ruth E. Calzada, M.A. Bus. Ed., Professor, Office Systems Department
- Mary Ann Velázquez, M.Ed., Counselor I, Counseling and Guidance Office
- Blanca Vega, M.B.A, C.P.A., Assistant Professor, Business Administration Department
- Alma Acosta, M.A., Professor, Spanish Department

- Betsabé Pérez, M.S., Associate Professor, Director of Chemistry and Physics Department
- Lourdes Torres, Ed. D., Assistant Professor, Office Systems Department
- Elizabeth Lugo, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, English Department, *Editor*
- Isaac Colón, M.B.A., Director of the Budget Office
- Aida Hernández, B.B.A., Dean of Administrative Affairs (Ex Officio)
- Rosa M. López, M.S., Professor, Mathematics Department, and Dean of Student Affairs (Ex Officio)
- Lizzette Roig, M.S., Professor, Chemistry and Physics Department, and Dean of Academic Affairs (Ex-officio)
- Dennisse Dedós, Student, Business Administration Department

Following a training session, they set to work on the Self-Study Design which was completed in April 2003. In the meantime, the faculty was briefed on the process and a Web page was created to keep the college community informed of accreditation requirements and self-study activities (<http://upr-ponce.upr.edu/msa>). Once the self-study subcommittees were named, the following training activities were offered to all their members: *Training Workshop for Subcommittee Members; Research and Documentation of Accreditation Reports; The Accreditation Process and Student Outcomes Assessment: A Successful Experience; Data Compilation Strategies; Outcomes Assessment Workshop; and Reaccreditation Process: Opportunity for Renewal*. During the self-study process, additional useful workshops were offered as need arose. Moreover, other activities were organized for faculty and department heads to address issues confronted in the course of the self-study process.

On November 9, 2004, Dr. Wilfredo Nieves, Chair of the MSACHE Evaluation Team, visited the UPR-Ponce along with Dr. Ramón Claudio, Co-Chair, and Mr. Máximo Caballero, PRCHE analyst. They met with different university groups in anticipation of the Self-Study visit.

### **Self-Study Organization**

In light of diverse changes that have taken place at the Institution during the last ten years, and in order to facilitate a collaborative review with the PRCHE, UPR-Ponce chose to undertake a comprehensive self-study. Its goal was to carry out an integrated review of the institution's standing in relation to the fourteen standards of excellence that guide the MSA community and to set the agenda for the revision of the strategic plan. The data collected was to be used judiciously to enhance the teaching-learning process and to make the Institution more committed to being both efficient and effective in the services it provides. To that end, the following objectives were established:

1. To identify strengths and weaknesses in reference to MSA higher education accreditation standards and to use findings to engage in a proactive strategic planning process.
2. To identify the scope and effectiveness of assessment efforts currently used.
3. To produce an accurate self-study report that will provide MSA and PRCHE with the information and analysis necessary to make a decision about our institution's re-accreditation.
4. To formulate recommendations that will set the agenda for institutional improvement in the next five years.

5. To strengthen the use of qualitative and quantitative data to support the analysis of the institution's educational effectiveness.
6. To make all members of the UPR-Ponce more knowledgeable about the institution in order to promote their continuing commitment to its mission and goals.

Eight subcommittees, based on the fourteen standards of *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, were appointed to address the charges set for them. Seventy-two members representing UPR-Ponce's faculty, student, and nonfaculty staff constituted these working groups. Each one was chaired by a Steering Committee member chosen for her proven expertise or interests. A roster of members of each of the subcommittees follows.

#### **Subcommittee on Mission and Goals (Standard 1)**

Edda Arzola, (Chair), M.A., Associate Professor, Spanish Department  
 Carmen Cádiz, M.Ed. TESOL, Professor, English Department  
 Jaime García, Ed.D., Professor, Chemistry and Physics Department, Chair of the Self-Study Steering Committee  
 Sandra Moyá, M.S., Associate Professor, Biology Department  
 Yasmín Adaime, M.Ed., J.D., Counselor III, Counseling and Guidance Office Director  
 Celia González, M.P.H., Lab Technician I, Chemistry Department  
 Christine Jiménez, Biology student

#### **Subcommittee on Planning, Resource Allocation, Institutional Renewal, and Institutional Resources (Standards 2 and 3)**

Carmen Bracero, (Chair), MA. Bus. Ed., Professor, Office Systems Department  
 Myrna Bracero, M.B.A., Assistant Professor, Business Administration and Computer Science Department  
 Norma Rivera, M.Ed., Associate Professor, English Department  
 Pedro J. Ramírez, M.B.A., Assistant Professor, Engineering Department  
 Doris Torres, M.A. Bus. Ed., Associate Professor, Office Systems Department  
 Isaac Colón, M.B.A., Director of the Budget Office  
 Francisco Hernández, B.S., Occupational Health and Safety Officer  
 Lilliam Padilla, B.B.A., Accountant IV, Pre-intervention Office  
 Bárbara Diou, Accounting student

#### **Subcommittee on Leadership and Governance, Administration, and Integrity (Standard 4 to 7)**

Ruth Calzada (Chair), M.A. Bus. Ed. Professor, Office Systems Department  
 Hannia Laó, M.Ed. TESOL, Assistant Professor, English Department  
 Lizzette Roig, M.S., Professor, Chemistry and Physics Department  
 Héctor Lamboy, M.Ed., Professor, Social Sciences Department  
 Angelita Guzmán, M.A., Bus. Ed., Professor, Office Systems Department  
 Dennisse Rodríguez, B.A., Administrative Secretary V, Academic Senate  
 Reina González, M.B.A., Executive Officer III, Chancellor's Office  
 Waleska Padilla, Athletic Training student

### **Subcommittee on Institutional Assessment (Standard 7)**

Mary Ann Velázquez, (Chair), M. Ed., Counselor II, Counseling and Guidance Department  
Francisco Toro, B.B.A., Assistant III, Library  
Ivonne Vilariño, M.Ed., Assistant Professor, Education Department, Co-Chair of the Self-Study Steering Committee  
Sylvia Moraza, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Social Sciences Department  
Ibis Fournier, M.A. Bus. Ed., Instructor, Office Systems Department  
Judith Martínez, B.B.A., Director of the Finance Office  
Héctor L. Santiago, Elementary Education student

### **Subcommittee on Admissions and Student Support Services (Standards 8 and 9)**

Prof. Blanca Vega (Chair), M.B.A., C.P.A., Assistant Professor, Business Administration and Computer Science Department  
Héctor I. Zayas, M.B.A., Associate Professor, Business Administration and Computer Science Department  
José Almodóvar, M.B.A., J.D., Professor, Business Administration Department  
Onix Rivera Toledo, M.S., Assistant Professor, Education Department  
Lourdes Ortiz, M.A., Lab Technician, English Department  
Manuel Luciano, M. Ed., Counselor II, Counseling and Guidance Office  
William Rodríguez, M.A., Director of the Admissions Office  
Jenny Colón, Statistics Assistant, Planning and Institutional Research Office  
Ada Herencia, B.B.A., Financial Aid Officer IV, Financial Aid Office  
Yahaira Colón, Accounting student

### **Subcommittee on Faculty (Standard 10)**

Alma Acosta, (Chair), M.A., Professor, Spanish Department  
Ivonne Rodríguez, M.S., Instructor, Chemistry Department  
Roberto Colón, Ph. D., Librarian IV, Library Director  
Luis Sánchez, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Social Sciences Department  
Enrico Encarnación, M.S., Instructor, Allied Health Sciences Department  
Yolanda Guzmán, B.B.A., Executive Officer, Academic Affairs Office  
Juan A. León González, Forensic Psychology student

### **Subcommittee on Educational Offerings, General Education, and Related Educational Activities (Standards 11 to 13)**

Betsabé Pérez (Chair), M.S., Associate Professor, Chemistry and Physics Department  
Irma Rodríguez, Ed.D., Associate Professor, English Department  
Rosario E. Ríos, Ph.D., Professor, Spanish Department, and Director of Title V Project  
Harry Nieves, M.A., Assistant Professor, Humanities Department  
Arelis Torres, Psy.D., Instructor, Social Sciences Department  
Lourdes Nieves, M.Ed., Professor, Allied Health Sciences Department  
Nellie Velázquez, M.L.S., J.D., Librarian III, Library  
Wilfredo Ortiz, M.S., Associate Professor, Mathematics Department

Neyla Rivera Caño, M.Ed., Instructor, Education Department  
Aida Pietri, M.S., Professor, Business Administration and Computer Science Department  
Hernando Valero, M.S., Assistant Professor, Business Administration and Computer  
Science Department  
Jorge Tirado, M.B.A., Administrative Official, Continuing Education and Professional  
Development Office  
José López, M.Ed., Lab Technician I, Mathematics Department  
José Pérez, Physics student

### **Subcommittee on Assessment of Student Learning (Standard 14)**

Lourdes Torres (Chair), Ed. D., Assistant Professor, Office Systems Department  
Ivonne Vilariño, M.Ed., Assistant Professor, Education Department, Co-Chair of the  
Self-Study Steering Committee  
Pier Le Compte, M.A., TESOL, Instructor, English Department  
Ivelisse Rodríguez, M.S., Assistant Professor, Allied Health Sciences Department  
Migdalia Santiago Erans, M.A., Assistant Professor, Spanish Department  
Marisel Sepúlveda, B.A., Instructor, Social Sciences Department  
Maribel Caraballo, B.A., Administrative Secretary V, Library  
Diana Rodríguez, Office Systems student

A special task force subcommittee was appointed by the Chancellor charged with editing the final Self-Study Report document, which was approved by the Self-Study Steering Committee. The following faculty members collaborated in this group:

Jaime García Ed.D., Professor, Chemistry and Physics Department, Chair of the Self-  
Study Steering Committee  
Ivonne Vilariño, M.Ed., Assistant Professor, Education Department, Co-Chair of the  
Self-Study Steering Committee  
Lourdes Torres, Ed. D., Assistant Professor, Office Systems Department  
Carmen Bracero, MA. Bus. Ed., Professor, Office Systems Department  
Fay F. Flores, M.A., Librarian IV, Library

### **Methodology**

In carrying out their charges, all subcommittees analyzed and evaluated available documents and used studies and statistical data provided by the Office of Planning and Institutional Research (OPIR). They also determined what additional information was needed, and they used various strategies to obtain more data. These involved elite interviews, data grids, and additional questionnaires to meet the specific needs of each subcommittee. For benchmarking purposes, data on retention and graduation rates available from the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange, housed at the University of Oklahoma, and data from IPEDS were used. The institution has highly benefited from its participation in the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement, which is a study designed to obtain information about student participation in programs and activities that the institution provides for their learning and personal development. Survey items on *The College Student Report* represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education, reflecting behaviors by students and institutions that are associated



with desired outcomes of colleges and universities. Participation rates for freshmen and seniors were 39% and 30%, respectively.

In order to optimize the acquisition of information through questionnaires, three instruments to assess constituents' opinions on academic, administrative, and student life aspects of the institution were designed. These instruments were reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee. During the first semester of 2003-2004, the OPIR validated and administered the questionnaires to full-time faculty, nonfaculty staff, and to random samples of students in their second, third or fourth year of study. Participation among constituents varied: 105 out of 156 full-time faculty members (67% response rate); 102 out of 236 full-time nonfaculty staff (43% response rate); and 440 students (100% of the selected sample,  $p < 0.05$ ), distributed as follows: sophomores- 40%; juniors- 27%; seniors- 26%; and others- 6%. The number of full-time nonfaculty staff who responded was so low, that their opinions should be judiciously taken and considered as reflective of those participating in the survey. This study is referred to as Self-Study Survey throughout the report and reflects the perceptions of those who answered the questionnaires. A list of supporting documents used in the Self-Study Report is included in Appendix A.

Subcommittee reports were submitted to the Steering Committee and then revised in light of recommendations made. After the Steering Committee improved the first draft of the Self-Study Report, the revised edition was posted on the Web page and printed copies were also made available. All constituents were encouraged to respond with suggestions, corrections, and more information. The Steering Committee Chair and Co-Chair presented a summary of major findings and recommendations to various groups: faculty by academic department, students, nonfaculty staff, and the Academic Senate. An open forum was also held to provide an additional opportunity for participation. Many of the recommendations received as a result of these important disclosure activities were analyzed and incorporated by the Steering Committee into the final version.

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the institution's mission and goals in terms of the following: clarity, distinctiveness, congruency, relevance, adequacy, and use. It also studies the consistency of the mission statement with the aspirations and expectations of higher education.

## UPR-PONCE MISSION AND GOALS

The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce (UPR-Ponce) was founded in 1970 as Ponce Regional College by virtue of the 1966 University Law. The institution was charged with offering “college programs of study that encompass the first two years of a baccalaureate based on norms established by the UPR for these courses and to establish short-term career-oriented two-year programs of a technical nature” (1970 Catalog).

Through PRCHE Certification Number 179, 1981-82 Series, Ponce Regional College became Ponce Technological University College (PTUC), with its mission modified to offer baccalaureate degree programs of a technical nature. The first programs offered at this level were Business Administration and Secretarial Sciences (renamed Office Systems in its 1987 curricular revision). Other programs at this level were later incorporated into institutional offerings.

In 1993 and in preparation for the 1995 MSACHE reaccreditation visit, Prof. Pedro E. Laboy, then Dean-Director of PTUC, initiated a process to elaborate a new mission. Based on findings derived from using the *Educational Testing Services' Small College Institutional Goals Inventory* among faculty, students, and staff, and after holding public hearings among constituents, the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce formally approved in 1994 its Mission and Goals Statement (UPR-Ponce's Academic Board<sup>1</sup> Certification 93-94-02), which reads as follows:

The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce is a co-educational institution, the only unit of the public system in the southern part of Puerto Rico, which offers associate and baccalaureate degrees and transfer programs based on the needs and expectations of the Island. The College is committed, in its policies and practices, to the search for truth, the appreciation of universal humanistic and ethical values, placing special emphasis on the Puerto Rican and Occidental cultures, and respect for creative dialogue in the search for truth.

To that end, the institution recruits and retains faculty dedicated to the arts of teaching and advising; to the search for and dissemination of truth through scholarship, research, and creative endeavor; and to the service of the University and the community in general.

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<sup>1</sup> The Academic Board was the institutional equivalent of the Academic Senate when UPR-Ponce was part of the Regional Colleges Administration.

The institutional environment is challenging and conducive to providing students with the possibility of exploring the potential of their abilities and of understanding their responsibility for community service once graduated.

The principal focus of the curricular programs is undergraduate education at the associate and baccalaureate degree and transfer program levels in those areas that reflect the needs and aspirations of the Puerto Rican community in general and of the southern community in particular. Liberal arts and specialized fields are combined to nurture students and faculty with enriching intellectual experiences.

Moreover, recognizing its responsibility to the community, the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce provides a variety of continuing education, cultural enrichment, and community service programs.

Finally, our College recognizes its responsibility in promoting research as a means of searching for truth.

In order to achieve its mission, the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce has set the following goals:

1. To provide students with appropriate mechanisms for developing the skills needed in order to listen, to think, and to communicate effectively, orally and in writing, in both English and Spanish.
2. To enable students to develop the capacity for self-directed learning and independent study.
3. To prepare students for a specific occupation or professional career.
4. To provide the means by which students can overcome their academic deficiencies.
5. To provide students with appropriate and timely services complementary to academic life.
6. To systematically identify the need for new academic programs.
7. To evaluate and revise academic programs in order to adjust them to current needs.
8. To stimulate communication among students, faculty, and nonfaculty staff to foster significant participation in decision-making by all sectors.
9. To foster research as an integral part of the faculty's endeavors.
10. To provide opportunities for professional development to faculty and nonfaculty staff.
11. To provide citizens of the southern region with educational opportunities that contribute to their continuing professional, intellectual, emotional, and physical development.
12. To promote and develop community service activities that have a formative effect on students' lives.
13. To create an optimum environment for learning and teaching by strengthening auxiliary teaching services.
14. To establish administrative measures to improve efficiency and productivity.
15. To provide personnel with the necessary means for the continuous development of administrative and faculty functions.
16. To provide and maintain appropriate security measures for personnel, students, visitors, equipment, and physical facilities.

17. To provide and maintain a conservation and expansion program for physical facilities.

Although the Board of Trustees Certification Number 151 (1997-98 Series) granted UPR-Ponce its autonomy from the Regional Colleges Administration, the institutional mission and goals remained unchanged. The Certification stated: “This determination (of granting autonomy to the units) does not change the mission, goals and educational objectives of the colleges (among them Ponce) becoming autonomous.” Several attempts have been initiated to revise the mission since then, but none proved fruitful. This Self-Study hopes to sow the seeds for a reflective re-examination of the institution’s Mission and Goals Statement.

Dissemination of the Mission and Goals Statement was assessed. It was found that the statement is described in University Catalogs (from 1994 on), Strategic Plans, Annual Reports and UPR-Ponce’s Web page. Proposals submitted by the Office of External Resources and the Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies cite the Mission Statement to justify petitions for external funding (Exhibit 1). The Self-Study Survey reflects that 63% of the faculty understands that the mission is divulged, whereas 79% of the nonfaculty personnel and 55% of the students are familiar with the mission statement. While the Mission Statement is widely disseminated, continued efforts should be made to better familiarize constituents with it.

### Use of Institutional Mission and Goals

The institution’s academic-administrative framework is based on the department structure. Table 2.1 classifies academic departments by the type of offerings:

**TABLE 2.1**  
**Academic departments by type of offerings**

Associate degree and transfer programs*	Transfer programs*	Transfer and baccalaureate degree programs*	Associate and baccalaureate degree programs*	Baccalaureate degree programs*	Service departments**
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineering Technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chemistry and Physics</li> <li>• Humanities</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biology</li> <li>• Social Sciences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allied Health Sciences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Administration</li> <li>• Office Systems</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Computer Science</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• Spanish</li> <li>• Library</li> </ul>

\* Academic departments with departmental and program mission statements

\*\* Academic departments with departmental mission statements

Three departments were chosen at random to determine congruency between institutional and departmental mission and goals: Business Administration and Computer Science (baccalaureate degree), Engineering (associate degree), and Mathematics (transfer program). Appendixes B-1 and B-2 show results related to this analysis. From the information gathered, it can be inferred that departmental mission and goals statements correlate with their institutional counterpart. A discrepancy is found between institutional goals and those of the Mathematics Department. The departmental goal which states “to provide students with the appropriate mechanisms for the development of quantitative reasoning skill” has no equivalent at the institutional level.

However, an analysis of all academic programs reflects that at least a one-semester course in Mathematics is required of all programs in order to develop this skill.

A similar analysis (congruency between institutional and programs' mission and goals) was applied to three academic programs: Baccalaureate in Business Administration (Management), Associate Degree in Civil Engineering Technology (Drafting), and the transfer program in Mathematics (see Appendixes B-3 and B-4). The analysis reflects that, while it can be ascertained that program missions and goals may be derived from the institutional equivalent and goals might be student-centered, the level of description of what needs to be achieved is uneven.

The institutional assessment model requires that intended outcomes to be examined in the yearly assessment plan be clearly articulated to mission and goals. Table 2.2 shows articulation among mission, goal(s), and intended outcomes to be assessed for an academic department, a student-services office, and an administrative office for academic year 2003-04:

**TABLE 2.2**  
**Articulation among mission, goals, and intended outcomes**  
**(2003-04 Assessment Plans)**

Department/ Office	Mission	Goal(s)	Intended outcomes
Education Department (Elementary Education Baccalaureate Program)	The institutional environment is challenging and conducive to providing students with the possibility of exploring the potential of their abilities and of understanding their responsibility for community service once graduated.	To prepare students for a specific occupation or professional career.	The internship students of the Elementary Education will demonstrate ability in classroom management in order to facilitate effective teaching.
Counseling and Guidance Department (Student services)			Freshmen students registered in EDFU 3005 will decide on a specific occupation by the end of the course.
Human Resources Office (Administrative Services)	The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce is a co-educational institution, the only unit of the public system in the southern part of Puerto Rico, which offers associate and baccalaureate degrees and transfer programs based on the needs and expectations of the Island.	To establish administrative measures to improve efficiency and productivity.	In coordination with the Information Technologies Office, prepare a program to register employees' training hours.

Source: Assessment Plans – Academic Year 2003-2004

An analysis of the articulation among mission, goals, and intended outcomes shows that:

- Mission, academic, and student services goals are clearly articulated.
- Intended outcomes are clearly related to institutional goals. Outcomes are used to determine congruency between expectations and what has been achieved to provide data for program improvement.
- Articulation of the mission with the administrative goals could be improved.

Table 2.3 presents an evaluation of the consistency of institutional policies and procedures with the Mission and Goals statement. To facilitate evaluation, the following categories were identified:

1. Institution’s commitment and philosophy
2. Curriculum
3. Aspects centered on faculty
4. Aspects centered on students
5. Aspects centered on support staff and administrative processes
6. Decision-making processes
7. Community services
8. Campus security
9. Maintenance, conservation and expansion of physical facilities

Findings in this table support the statement that institutionally developed policies are clearly aligned to mission and goals.

**TABLE 2.3**  
**Consistency between institutional policies and procedures**  
**and UPR-Ponce’s Mission and Goals Statement**

Thematic category	Institutional policy/procedure documents supporting the thematic category
Institution’s commitment and philosophy	Declaration of assessment purposes at UPR – Ponce (A.S. Cert. 2002-2003-61); Outcomes Assessment Plan and UPR-Ponce Graduating Students Profile (both documents under Academic Senate consideration)
Curriculum	Changes to the Associate Degree in Physical Therapy Curriculum in order to address criteria for the reaccreditation of the program by the American Physical Therapy Association (A.S. Certs. 2000-2001-06 to 09); Assessment and Evaluation of Academic Programs Plan (Deanship of Academic Affairs, 2002); Guidelines for the assessment of student learning (Deanship of Academic Affairs, 2003); Report on the evaluation of academic programs (Business Administration, Office Systems, Computer Science, Elementary Education, and Social Sciences Baccalaureate Programs, and Industrial Technology Associate Degree Program) (Deanship of Academic Affairs, 2004); Approval of minor curricular changes to the Biomedical Sciences Baccalaureate Program (A.S. Cert. 003-2004-22)
Aspects centered on faculty	Faculty Manual; Academic responsibilities of faculty related to norms and criteria for course offering and changing course grades (A.S. Cert. 2001-2002-18); Guidelines for granting academic distinctions (A.S. 2001-2002-23); Norms and procedures for faculty recruitment (A.S. Cert. 2002-2003-60); Norms, criteria, and procedures for faculty evaluation (A.S. Cert. 2002-2003-77); Instruction Manual for Documenting Faculty Promotion Portfolio (A.B. Cert. 2001-2002-3); Procedure for granting faculty tenure (A.S. Cert. 2004-2005-15)
Aspects centered on students	UPR-Ponce Student By-Laws (A.S. Cert. 2000-2001-59); Procedures for changing course grades (A.S. 2001-2002-17); Norms on retention indexes, suspensions, and probations for students at UPR-Ponce (A.S. Cert. 2002-2003-32); Protocol for the establishment of procedures to officially excuse students from their academic responsibilities (A.S. Cert. 2002-2003-45)
Aspects centered on support staff	Submission of support personnel’s tenure documents twenty days before effective tenure date (A.B. Cert. 2002-2003-77); Completion of ten hours of professional improvement on a yearly basis (A.B. Cert. 2003-2004-21)
Decision-making processes	Strategic Plan; Institutional Effectiveness Plan
Community services	Brochure of the Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies’ offerings

Thematic category	Institutional policy/procedure documents supporting the thematic category
Campus security	Transit By-Laws (A.B. Cert. 2002-2003-49); University Police Procedures Manual (A.B. Cert. 2003-2004-36); Basic plan for emergency operation at UPR-Ponce (Deanship of Administrative Affairs); UPR-Ponce's Operational Emergency Plan for Storms and/or Hurricanes; Occupational Safety Program (Gardening, Administrative maintenance, Academic building maintenance; Refrigeration, Plumbing, Auto mechanics, Painting, Cabinet-making, Supply, and Printing areas)
Expansion and maintenance of physical facilities	Physical Facilities Maintenance Plan; Physical and Programmatic Development Plan*

\* In phase 1 (data collection) of a four-phase project  
A.S. = UPR-Ponce's Academic Senate; A.B. = UPR-Ponce's Administrative Board

## Evaluation of the Mission and Goals Statement

Evaluation of the current Mission and Goals Statement of UPR-Ponce was pursued, taking into consideration the following: fundamental elements of a Mission Statement, relationship of goals to mission, and adequacy of the goals. Besides using the Self-Study Survey to question faculty on these issues, a group of four external evaluators were invited to analyze the institution's Mission and Goals Statement. The evaluators chosen have the following qualifications:

Evaluator 1	Master's degree in English; seven years of experience heading the Office of Planning and Institutional Research of one of the UPR System units; expertise in strategic planning, mission revision, and self-study processes
Evaluator 2	Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling and Guidance; seventeen years of experience in Planning and Institutional Research; expertise in Institutional and Program Assessment, and Strategic Planning
Evaluator 3	Master's degree in Social Planning; seven years of experience in Institutional Research and Planning; eight years of experience in social and economic planning; expertise in the preparation and implementation of strategic and assessment plans
Evaluator 4	Ph.D. in the Social Context of Education; eight years of experience in Institutional Research; expertise in assessment of general educational skills and implementation of student tracking systems

Appendix C presents findings related to criteria examined, institutional constituents' and external evaluators' perceptions of compliance, and external evaluators' comments. Agreement was established as follows: at least 70% of the faculty members who responded and three of the external evaluators agreed or partially agreed on a criterion when both groups assessed it; or all external evaluators totally or partially agreed on a criterion which was assessed. A synthesis of findings based on the assessment shows that the UPR-Ponce mission:

- Promotes positive attitudes and patterns of behavior in the community.
- Facilitates or stimulates the decision-making process in relation to planning, design and development of programs and curricula, and definition of program results.
- Clearly establishes the institution's functions and purposes.
- Specifies the population that UPR-Ponce serves.
- Is perceived as student-centered, while concerns are raised about not including explicit language about the importance the institution places on the assessment of student learning and student outcomes.
- Specifies the institution's social commitments.

- Could be enhanced to:
  - Facilitate the decision-making process in relation to resource allocation.
  - Reflect the institution’s particular character and individuality.

UPR-Ponce institutional goals:

- Are consistent with the mission, but they should be better aligned.
- Guide the institution in determining their achievement.
- Could be enhanced by:
  - Rearticulating them to facilitate decision-making related to planning, resource allocation, and program and curriculum development.
  - Ensuring that they are in consonance with program learning goals.

Besides evaluating criteria, the external evaluators were asked to make specific recommendations that would enhance the UPR-Ponce’s Mission and Goals Statement. They are outlined below:

- The Mission Statement should be expressed in no more than three paragraphs.
- Analyze if curriculum internationalization, technology development, and use of new teaching methods involving distance education should be part of the Mission Statement.
- Reduce the number of institutional goals and state them in more general terms.
- Establish institutional priorities and areas of emphasis in curriculum development.
- Align all goals with the mission.

## CONCLUSIONS

Findings obtained from the analysis of UPR-Ponce’s Mission and Goals Statement lead to the following conclusions:

1. Evidence supports the fact that institutional mission and goals are used to guide departmental and program missions and goals and that institutional policies and procedures are consistent with them.
2. Evaluation of the mission statement reflected the following positive points: it promotes positive attitudes and patterns of behavior in the community; facilitates or stimulates the decision-making process in relation to planning, design and development of programs and curricula, and definition of program results; clearly establishes the institution’s functions and purposes; specifies the population that UPR-Ponce serves; identifies the student as one of the beneficiaries of institutional functions, sharing this role with faculty; and specifies the institution’s social commitments.
3. The institution’s mission is too broad to facilitate establishing priorities among the different institutional functions.
4. No distinctive features can be found in UPR-Ponce’s mission.
5. Multiple interpretations given to the mission’s compliance with different aspects support the fact that the mission statement needs to be improved in terms of structure, content, and language.
6. While goals seem to help in giving direction to assessment activities, they should be revised, reorganized, and made more reflective of student learning outcomes.
7. Mission and goals could benefit from clearer articulation.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are derived from findings and conclusions:

1. Establish a revision process to update the Mission and Goals statement in which all university sectors are involved.
2. Develop strategies to enhance student and faculty knowledge of the institution's mission and goals.
3. Review and revise both departmental and program mission and goals, so that they articulate to the institution's revised statement.

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# CHAPTER 3 PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the nature of the planning process at the UPR-Ponce, and its effectiveness in establishing priorities and directions in order to improve and sustain institutional quality. The results of the assessment process of the adequacy of human, financial, technical, physical facilities, and other resources for achieving the mission and goals were considered to determine the efficiency of each area. Recommendations for improving the planning and resource allocation processes are included.

## PLANNING

At the time of the last self-study, UPR-Ponce had much work to do in the area of strategic planning. It had recently revised its mission statement in 1994 and its 1984 Ten-year Long-Range Plan had just expired. Under the leadership of UPR President Norman Maldonado, the Central Administration instituted a planning process to produce a UPR Systemic Strategic Plan, which was finally approved in 1996, as established in Certification 25-1996-97 of the Board of Trustees. This plan served as a framework for guiding the strategic planning processes of the eleven units that comprise the UPR System, each of which was charged with developing its own Strategic Plan in consonance with the systemic one. This initiative coincided with a recommendation made by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education evaluation team as a result of their 1995 reaccreditation visit: “The College should immediately begin to develop a comprehensive long-range strategic planning process” (Exhibit 2, MSACHE 1995 Evaluation Team Report).

A previous Director of UPR-Ponce’s Office of Planning and Institutional Research (OPIR) guided this institutional strategic planning initiative after UPR- Central Administration provided training on the new planning model adopted. An Institutional Planning Committee, in which all university constituents were represented, was appointed by Professor Antonia López, who was the UPR-Ponce Dean and Director at that time. The Committee and the institution’s leadership participated in a series of workshops at the institutional and central level to instruct them in the planning process. Each institutional unit collaborated in the process of analyzing their corresponding strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. Internal and external environmental scanning was carried out by the OPIR; faculty and nonfaculty staff focus groups were also valuable resources during this process.

As a result of this effort, UPR-Ponce’s 1995-2000 Strategic Plan (Exhibit 3) was finally produced in 1996. Based on the institution’s mission and goals, this plan defined a series of critical factors to improve institutional effectiveness, as well as strategic directions to address them. Critical factors were categorized into seven strategic areas:

- Financial issues
- External funds
- Academic phase
- Academic activities

- Student issues
- Research
- Physical facilities

As part of the Strategic Plan, an action plan was developed for the implementation of strategies in each area, as well as corresponding evaluation criteria. After its completion, UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan 1995-2000 was submitted to the MSACHE, who confirmed that the University had fully complied with the development of a comprehensive long-range strategic plan, and that the university's planning process had improved with the development of strategic and outcomes assessment plans. The Plan was disclosed within the university community through paper copies and brochures prepared by the OPIR containing a summarized version of the Strategic Plan.

In 1999, in anticipation of the completion of the 1995-2000 Strategic Plan, Chancellor Irma Rodríguez appointed a Strategic Planning Steering Committee, which was coordinated by the OPIR Director at that time. This committee was charged with revising the plan and producing the new 2001-2005 Strategic Plan, using the revised University Systemic Strategic Plan as a framework. The group was constituted by the Deans, members of the faculty, nonfaculty staff, and a student representative. Two additional subcommittees, Internal Assessment and External Assessment, were appointed by the Chancellor with ample participation of university constituents in the process. The Committee's first task was to assess the success of the 1995-2000 plan. Findings were reported in October 1999 in *Indicators of the Strategic Direction of the UPR-Ponce According to the Institutional Strategic Plan, Follow-up Report* (Exhibit 4), which concluded that the critical factors were being addressed by the institution. In addition, an analysis was made of the administrative and academic actions taken by the institution to improve of those weaknesses identified in the strategic plan. The group concluded that "these actions evidenced institutional commitment with strategic planning and budget allocation" (*2001-2005 UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan, First Draft*, 66, Exhibit 5). The reviewers of the 2000 *Periodic Review Report* indicated that it was clear to them that "the institution has made good progress in the area of outcomes assessment and planning, and that they understand the rationale and the critical nature of these endeavors" (*Report to Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students of the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce, Analysis of the Institution's 2000 Periodic Review Report*, 6, Exhibit 6).

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee Coordinator organized several workshops to inform the university community on the ongoing planning processes. UPR-Central Administration provided orientation to the process by identifying eight key areas in which each institutional unit should focus in their strategic plans:

- Institutional Climate
- Human Resources
- Planning
- Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
- Research and Creative Action
- Educational and Information Technology
- Student Life
- Community Service and Social Outreach

A first draft of the 2001-2005 UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan was produced in the 2000-2001 academic year. After Dr. Irma Rodríguez resigned in January 2002, an Acting Chancellor was appointed who held office until the current Chancellor Jaime C. Marrero was appointed in July 2002. The Director of the Office of Planning and Institutional Research, who coordinates the strategic planning process, changed four times during the 2000-2003 period, somewhat affecting the timely refinement and production of the final document, as well as the implementation of the new Strategic Plan. The draft of the Plan was submitted to the Deans and academic departments for their discussion and recommendations. The final version of the Strategic Plan was recognized by the Academic Senate in 2004 through Academic Senate Certification 2003-2004-39 (Exhibit 7).

The Strategic Plan included a series of critical issues under each key area and strategic directions for their achievement. A summary of the 13 critical issues identified by key area in this Plan, as well as the institutional goal addressed in each is presented in Table 3.1.

**TABLE 3.1**  
**2001-2005 Strategic Plan key areas, critical issues, and institutional goals addressed**

KEY AREA	CRITICAL ISSUES	INSTITUTIONAL GOAL
1. <b>Institutional Climate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enforce a culture of excellence in service and university activity.</li> <li>▪ Promote institutional assessment.</li> </ul>	8 5, 7, 13, 14
2. <b>Human Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continuously capacitate university personnel.</li> </ul>	10
3. <b>Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen academic, administrative, fiscal, and physical planning processes to facilitate academic-administrative decision-making process.</li> </ul>	14, 15, 17
4. <b>Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote the updating of academic offerings.</li> <li>▪ Continuously improve teaching-learning processes.</li> </ul>	7 1, 2, 3, 4
5. <b>Research and Creative Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Foster research and creative activities.</li> </ul>	9
6. <b>Educational and Information Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continuously strengthen information technologies.</li> </ul>	13
7. <b>Student Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote improvement of student services and quality of life.</li> <li>▪ Foster the development of opportunities for academic and professional improvement of students.</li> <li>▪ Support the development of socio-cultural motivation, commitment, and sense of responsibility.</li> </ul>	5, 16 12 5, 12
8. <b>Community Service and Social Outreach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emphasize and promote institutional presence, participation, and contribution in social processes of the southern region and of Puerto Rico.</li> <li>▪ Increase continuing education offerings and services to nontraditional student community.</li> </ul>	6 11

Source: 2001-2005 UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan

Table 3.1 clearly evidences that the UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan is linked to its Mission and Goals Statement, which is central to institutional planning.

An evaluation plan was developed in 2003 by the former Director of the OPIR that included performance indicators to determine the effectiveness of the institution in implementing its Strategic Plan. This document, entitled *Institutional Effectiveness Plan* (Exhibit 8), will be implemented upon the expiration of the Strategic Plan in 2005, as part of the revision leading to the next Strategic Plan. In addition, and as agreed by the Academic Senate, “the Chancellor will establish the process to develop the 2006-2010 Strategic Plan following an in-depth analysis of the institutional self-study findings” (Certification 2003-2004-39, Academic Senate).

### **Administrative Academic Plan**

When the current UPR President, Antonio García-Padilla, was appointed in 2001, he outlined an Administrative Academic Plan for the UPR System (Exhibit 9- UPR Administrative Academic Plan). It was submitted to an exhaustive analysis to make sure it was in accordance and consistent with the UPR Systemic Strategic Plan, in order to guarantee institutional continuity. President García-Padilla immediately began to implement this Plan after divulging it to the constituents of the eleven institutional units. Unit Chancellors were required by the President to draw up their respective units’ Administrative Academic Plans accordingly. Chancellor Jaime Marrero, with the participation of the Deans and the Director of the Planning and Institutional Research Office, submitted his Plan for 2002-2005 in the 2002-2003 academic year. This plan includes goals, objectives, activities, timelines, persons responsible, resources necessary, and evaluation criteria for each of the President’s initiatives. It is organized by areas of action such as students, faculty, academic programs, creation of knowledge, administrative organization, technological support, physical facilities, and the university’s urban base. These areas directly correlate to those of the President’s Administrative Academic Plan.

Assessments conducted by the OPIR provided evidence of the progress of the plan during the first year it was implemented. Findings are included in the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 UPR-Ponce Annual Reports (Exhibits 10 and 11). Some examples of the effectiveness of institutional renewal initiatives are the creation of the Alumni Office, creation of the Office of Information Technologies to integrate the academic and administrative information systems offices, relocation and restructuring of some student and administrative support offices, establishment of new offices for faculty use, creation of the International Student Exchange Program, implementation of a program assessment process, acquisition and installation of a modern steel sculpture (*Recta Ratio*) located on campus grounds to enhance student aesthetic consciousness, creation of the Institute of Urban Studies, and the implementation of the initial steps to provide the institution with a comprehensive Physical and Programmatic Master Plan. More examples can be found under Chapter 5 on Institutional Assessment.

### **Information Technologies Strategic Plan**

Information and Educational Technologies is one of the key areas included in the UPR-Ponce 2001-2005 Strategic Plan. More specifically, the eighth critical issue of this plan is to “continuously strengthen information technologies in university endeavors.” To this end, the institution has allocated human and fiscal resources to improve administrative processes and to incorporate the use of technology in the teaching-learning process. Some of the most dramatic institutional changes over the last five years have resulted from the acquisition of new technologies, mostly supported by Title V Project funds. In the 2003-2004 academic year, the Institution spent a total of \$506,904 on materials and equipment to support the development of

information technologies. Of this amount, \$395,976 (78%) was funded through the Title V Project.

In 2002, the institution affiliated with *EDUCAUSE*, a nonprofit association whose mission it is to advance higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology. In an assessment of the institutional information technologies capabilities, an *EDUCAUSE* evaluation team suggested that the institution should develop information and instructional technology strategic plans to “increase awareness about information technology and its potential for improving campus functions, including its use in the teaching and learning process” (*EDUCAUSE* Report 2003). The Chancellor took action to address this recommendation and appointed a committee to develop an integrated plan, whose first draft was produced in November 2004. The draft of the *Strategic Plan for the Integration of Information Technologies at the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce*, based on an analysis of the *EDUCAUSE* Report recommendations, focuses on faculty and support staff training in the use of technologies, equipment acquisition and updating, promotion of the use of computer information resources, and establishment of an adequate technological support infrastructure. The three-year plan will have a budgetary impact of close to half a million dollars. It was submitted to the Administrative Board for budgetary streamlining and approval.

### **Permanent Improvements Program**

UPR-Central Administration’s Physical Planning Office oversees UPR-Ponce’s physical facilities planning process, which is the responsibility of the institution’s Administrative Dean and Physical Resources Director. In response to the UPR President’s initiatives in the Academic-Administrative Plan, this Office designed a five-year Permanent Improvements Program for the UPR System, which aims to harmonize the priorities of the University units with those of the President’s Plan, as well as with the institutional policy of promoting excellence in the design of open and constructed spaces. This program is the result of planning of the infrastructure and technological resources necessary to contribute to the achievement of the mission and goals of the UPR and that of its units.

As established in Certification 30, 2004-2005 of the Board of Trustees, every five years, UPR unit Chancellors are responsible for submitting a proposal to the President on permanent improvement projects that they wish to include in the systemic Permanent Improvements Program. They must also include a systematic maintenance plan for each project. The UPR President and the Chancellors are responsible for implementing the programs, while the Physical Development and Infrastructure Office of the UPR Central Administration is responsible for supervising and assessing the development of each program’s project. To ensure that the physical and technological infrastructure of the projects are in consonance with the UPR development agenda, the Permanent Improvements Program must be endorsed by the UPR Central Administration’s Academic Affairs and Research and Technologies Vice-Presidencies, and by the Finance and Budgeting Offices. These projects will be funded through the UPR bond emissions, and through the external funding efforts of each unit. Table 3.2 shows UPR-Ponce projects included in the 1999-2000 to 2004-2005 permanent improvements program cycle and their corresponding initial budget allocation.

**TABLE 3.2**  
**1999-2000 to 2003-2004 Permanent Improvements Program, UPR-Ponce**

Project	Total amended cost approved	Authorized cost in previous cycle	Authorized cost in 1999-2000 to 2003-2004 cycle
Gymnasium	\$ 2,809,509	\$2,342,500	\$ 467,009
Elimination of architectural barriers	39,950	36,050	3,900
Parking lot paving	9,000	9,000	0
Modular cistern	175,000	0	175,000
Classroom air conditioners	250,779	250,779	0
Student Center air conditioner fund matching	65,645	65,645	0
Library renovation	24,960	24,960	0
Student parking lot	2,500,000	572,645	1,927,356
Classroom construction	600,000	300,00	300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,474,843</b>	<b>\$3,601,579</b>	<b>\$2,873,265</b>

Source: Certification 001, 2000-2001, Board of Trustees

For the 2003-2004 to 2006-2007 cycles, the Permanent Improvement Program included the Framework for the Physical and Programmatic Development Project. A total of \$1,465,645 was the approved amended cost for this project and for three continuing projects from the previous cycle.

At the beginning of this academic year 2004-2005 and in November 2004, Chancellor Marrero issued internal communications to inform the university community about the progress of permanent improvement projects and of new developments (Exhibit 12).

### **Physical and Programmatic Master Plan**

As part of the 2003-2004 to 2006-2007 Permanent Improvements Program, the All Engineering Services Corporation, a private architectural and planning company, was hired by the UPR President's Office to design a framework for the development of *UPR-Ponce's Physical and Programmatic Master Plan* (Exhibit 13). The rationale behind this initiative was that the institution lacked a plan that would set the guidelines for its future long-and short-range programmatic and physical growth in consonance with new infrastructure needs, and to ensure the optimum use of campus space. The project is divided into four phases:

- A. **Data Collection** – Qualitative and quantitative assessment of the institution's current physical and programmatic situation.
- B. **Programming** - Analysis of data collected and strategic recommendations for improvement.
- C. **Master Plan** - Development of a plan with timetables for implementing formal recommendations produced in the Programming Phase.
- D. **Development Guidelines**– Establishment of building guidelines for the institution's future growth and development.

The first phase of this project began in the 2004-2005 academic year and is currently in progress. The Chancellor has held meetings with university constituents such as the academic senators, the MSA Self-Study Steering Committee, faculty, students, and nonfaculty staff, in which representatives of All Engineering Services Corporation explained the scope of the project. A

brochure containing a summary of the project was also distributed to inform the university community about this initiative (Exhibit 14).

### **Institutional Unit Plans**

Since academic year 2002-2003, all academic department heads are required to develop a yearly operational plan, which is submitted to the Dean of Academic Affairs. The purpose of this plan is to guide departmental efforts in achieving program and institutional mission and goals. It establishes objectives, activities, deadlines, resources needed, and persons responsible for putting the plan in action. The plan includes activities to address issues related to student learning assessment results, curriculum, faculty development, program resources, and others. An analysis of these plans revealed that operational plans for the academic years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 align the department's objectives with those of the institution (Exhibit 15 - Academic Operational Plans).

The student and administrative services offices also prepare yearly operational plans which are submitted to the Deans for revision and approval. The Deans compile these plans and prepare a consolidated operational plan for the deanships. These plans are based on the individual unit's goals and on the institutional mission and goals (Exhibit 16 - Student and Administrative Deanship Operational Plans).

At the end of the academic year, institutional units assess the achievement of their plans and submit annual reports to their Deans. The Deanships submit a compiled report to the OPIR Director, who prepares the Institutional Annual Report to evidence the effectiveness of the institution in achieving its mission and goals through its individual units. The report is disclosed to the UPR President, to the Chancellor, to the Deans, and to other institutional constituents.

### **Planning Participation and Disclosure**

UPR-Ponce's chief executive officers have consistently appointed different committees and subcommittees to ensure constituent participation in the planning process. Institutional leadership, faculty, nonfaculty staff, and students are represented in these groups. Since the 1995-1996 academic year, Institutional Strategic Planning Committees have integrated academic departments, student services and administrative offices in the strategic planning process. They have collaborated by submitting individual unit plans, which have been considered by the Strategic Planning Committees for developing the institutional Strategic Plan and for its evaluation. The Self-Study Survey revealed that 80% of the faculty agreed that they have participated in the departmental academic planning process. Thirty-five percent of the faculty members have participated in the institutional strategic planning process. This finding suggests that faculty members are more participative of departmental planning processes than of those at the institutional level.

Communication strategies that inform University constituents about the strategic planning process have included the publication of the 2001-2005 plan on the OPIR Web page (<http://www.uprp.edu/opei.htm>), the distribution of copies to the academic departments and offices, and the distribution of brochures with a summary of the Plan. Faculty awareness of the Strategic Plan has also been encouraged at faculty and departmental meetings, and at Academic Senate sessions. In academic year 1999-2000, the Strategic Planning Committee held public



hearings as part of the process of revising the Strategic Plan. The Chancellor continuously communicates with the University community about the plans and progress of projects in areas of institutional emphasis such as planning, assessment, budgeting, and physical facilities developments that are of vital importance for addressing the critical issues of the institutional Strategic Plan.

Examples of mechanisms used to inform about the implementation and evaluation of institutional plans include workshops, newsletters, periodical publications, internal communications, and reports presented by the Chancellor to the faculty, to the academic senators, and to the Administrative Board members. Follow-up reports have also provided information about the progress of institutional plans. Fifty-five percent of the faculty and 49% of the nonfaculty staff who responded to the Self-Study Survey agreed that they were informed about the institutional Strategic Plan. The findings suggest that more effective disclosure strategies should be explored.

### **Planning and Resource Allocation**

Careful planning and resource allocation play critical roles in meeting institutional goals while maintaining financial equilibrium each year, especially in an institution with limited fiscal resources, and where judicious decision-making and planning processes should guide institutional renewal efforts. Since institutional financial resources available for funding initiatives and for improvements are limited, each proposed initiative is carefully reviewed by the Chancellor and his staff to ensure its relation to institutional goals, and that the limited resources are allocated effectively and consistently. The institution acknowledges its need to better define and to directly articulate institutional goals to decision-making and resource allocation processes, in order to better respond to and facilitate planning and institutional renewal. This is confirmed by the fact that 47% of the faculty members perceived that institutional goals guide the decision-making processes related to planning and resource allocation.

UPR-Ponce's individual units are also guided by a clear set of goals, which are in consonance with those of the institution, as evidenced in the analysis carried out as part of the self-study process. These are evident in different documents regularly produced and disclosed by these units such as brochures, annual reports, bulletins, and plans. According to the Self-Study Survey, 80% of the faculty members believe that their departmental goals are used in planning, and 43% agreed that they are considered in resource allocation. This perception could be attributed to institutional budgetary limitations, in which the establishment of priorities sometimes impedes the full allocation of fiscal resources requested by individual units.

### **INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL**

Renewal is defined as the improvement of educational quality, the enhancement of effective teaching and learning, and the improvement of the quality and efficiency of educational and administrative support services. As outcomes results become available, they must be analyzed to verify how the institution can best direct its attention to achieving its strategic goals. The responsibilities for institutional improvement are clearly assigned and stated in the duties and responsibilities of institutional leadership and governance, as established in UPR General By-Laws, which will be discussed later in Chapter 4. Although UPR-Ponce's leadership shares this responsibility with UPR governing bodies, it lies mainly in the Chancellor, who holds the major

academic and administrative authority. The institution's administrative staff and other appropriate staff responsible for different strategies also play a major role in this process by reviewing, analyzing and discussing assessment results. Analyses by these groups may result in revisions to strategies, increased or decreased resource allocations, and further new assessments. There are multiple examples of continuous institutional improvement efforts in the academic, administrative, and student service areas. Many of them are reported in Chapter 5, as well as other parts of this report; some examples are included in this section. In the academic area, the University has improved technological facilities to support the teaching-learning process, as established in its Strategic Plan. The acquisition and use of computer facilities and multimedia technology to enhance the teaching-learning process, funded with Title V Project and with institutional funds, are evidence of the institution's commitment to improving its educational effectiveness. Enhancement of faculty teaching-learning strategies has also been notable during the last five years. Three Multimedia Activity and Teaching Centers have been constructed and equipped with state-of-the-art projection systems that enable professors to use multimedia instructional equipment. Also, Title V has funded the establishment of a Faculty Technological Resource Center, as well as an Interdisciplinary Computerized Center with Internet access for student use. These initiatives have proved to be successful in increasing institutional retention rates, and in improving student and faculty technological skills, as evidenced in project evaluation reports submitted upon its conclusion and institutionalization in 2004. A new Title V Cooperative project was initiated in 2003-2004 to help students improve their achievement in Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics. The institution received funds from the Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program (MSEIP) to implement its project *Technology Infrastructure, Faculty Training and Implementation of a Highly Effective Instructional Delivery System*, for improving student math skills.

The adoption and implementation of a new institutional assessment model in 1999-2000, together with an explicit declaration of the institution's commitment to this process, has been fundamental for creating institution wide awareness for improving institutional effectiveness. Academic program assessment completed in 2003-2004 has also been an important tool for improvement. Baccalaureate programs completed their evaluation and are presently working on their revision. Some programs such as Elementary Education and Business Administration are looking forward to their professional accreditations.

The Office Systems Department has updated most of its computer laboratory equipment and software, based on assessment results obtained through various means. The English and Spanish Departments have established computerized learning centers to develop and improve student communication skills. The Departments of Social Sciences, Business Administration, and Education have also updated their computer laboratories according to new professional demands. The Biology Department established two computer labs to help students develop professional field-related information skills.

The institution is committed to updating its academic offerings, as stated in the fifth critical issue of the Strategic Plan, and there is clear evidence of institutional changes to support this statement. In 1999, a baccalaureate program in Arts in Social Sciences, with majors in Forensic Psychology and in Psychology and Mental Health, was approved. The creation of this program was based on a needs assessment in the areas of mental health problems and high crime rates. A new baccalaureate degree in Science in Biology was also created and approved in 2001, justified

by the high Biology transfer program enrollment and by unsatisfactory transfer rates to other major campuses.

Articulation transfer agreements with the UPR-Río Piedras and the UPR-Mayagüez campuses have been implemented. This action facilitates the transfer of students in their third year to complete a baccalaureate program in Engineering and Mathematics (Mayagüez Campus) and in Social Sciences or Humanities (Río Piedras Campus).

The administrative and student areas periodically assess the quality of services provided by means of satisfaction surveys. Using assessment results, student service support offices have developed strategies to improve their effectiveness and service satisfaction rates. The Guidance and Counseling Department revised the syllabus for the course EDFU 3005 (Seminar on Counseling for Personal Development and College Success) in order to better respond to student needs and expectations in the process of adjusting to college. They also appointed counselors to work exclusively with students that have low academic achievement, and with physically challenged students. Another counselor was assigned to work with academic high-risk students such as athletes, students living in private off-campus housing, and pregnant students. Medical services provided at the university have expanded to include psychological services in an effort to improve student retention, personal, and academic success. Also, gynecological services are now available, and information on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and family planning is provided.

Another significant institutional improvement has been the computerization of most student processes such as admissions, academic counseling, enrollment, and financial aid. The rationale for this change has been to improve institutional effectiveness in providing students with speedy processes and procedures. Also, direct bank deposit is available for students receiving Pell Grants and scholarships.

Surveys conducted in academic year 1999-2000 and 2002-2003 to measure the university community's satisfaction with administrative areas, revealed that physical facilities, some administrative services offices, and campus security scored the lowest satisfaction rates. Improvements in physical facilities have included the construction of a new student parking lot and a multi-use sports complex. Also, more faculty office space and classrooms have been provided by remodeling unused buildings. Campus security has been improved by hiring additional security personnel, increasing campus lighting, and by acquiring new vehicles and equipment for security officers. Actions have also been taken to improve services and processes in the administrative area. The Budget Office has made adjustments in some projected lines of expenses based on the previous year's activity in order to reduce the transfer of internal funds. Following recommendations from an external audit, the Human Resources Office established the Training and Professional Development Division, and appointed a training coordinator charged with developing and implementing a professional and personal improvement plan for university personnel.

## **Environmental Scanning**

UPR-Ponce's commitment to respond to the economic, political, and social climates in which it operates is expressed in its mission and goals. Information obtained through environmental scans is used to make the institution more responsive to its internal and external environment. Findings of environmental scans provide a valuable source to reveal the university's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in order to identify critical issues that need to be addressed to effectively achieve institutional mission and goals.

Internal and external environment assessments are periodically conducted as part of the institutional planning and program review processes. These scans include an analysis of variables such as socio-demographic trends, area labor statistics, employment projections by field of study, economic and infrastructure developments, and others. The most recent environmental scan was conducted in 2003 by the OPIR (Exhibit 17). A comprehensive environmental scan is currently being conducted by an external consulting group as part of the development of the Physical and Programmatic Master Plan.

## **INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES**

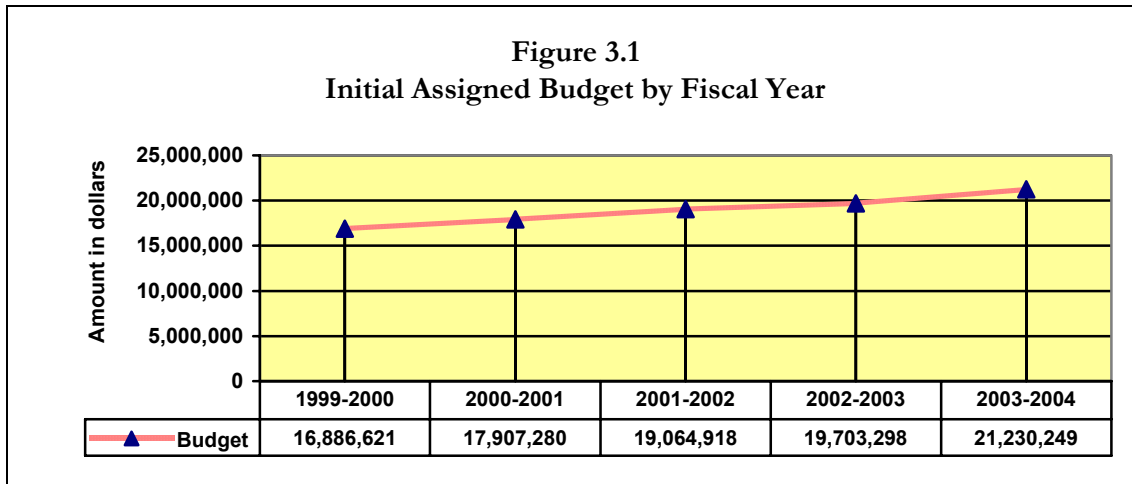
### **Financial Resources**

Despite continuous fiscal challenges faced by the UPR-Ponce, the university has made great strides toward maintaining its financial position during the past decade. Enrollment planning and budget distribution, disciplined financial planning strategies, and identification of new ways to achieve operating efficiencies have all played a critical role in helping the university fulfill its mission and goals. A strong financial discipline has been established during the last years, which has become part of the institution's financial management policy.

The UPR receives the bulk of its funds from legislative appropriations as stipulated by law. Each year, approximately 9.66% of the average total amount of the two previous years of government revenues is assigned to the UPR System. Tuition fees, which are among the lowest in the nation (\$30 per credit/hour for undergraduate programs), account for a very small part of the university's fiscal resources. These have remained unchanged for approximately the last twenty years, in most cases due to university community pressure and to the political consequences implied in raising tuition costs.

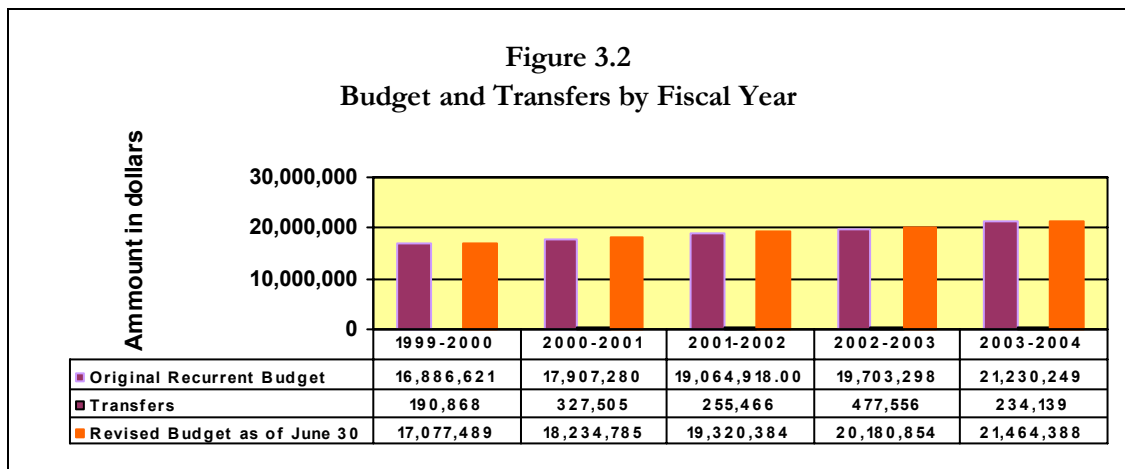
As one of its responsibilities established in Law 16 of June 16, 1993, the Board of Trustees annually approves and certifies each of the UPR unit's budget allocations, based on each unit's recommendation. The fiscal resources provide for academic programs, student and administrative services, special leaves programs, and research activities. Essentially, the budget is established based on the prior year's operating budget, and covers each expense component based on the previous year's allocation.

As depicted in Figure 3.1, from 1999-2000 to 2003-2004, UPR-Ponce's assigned budget was increased by \$4,343,628, which represents an increment of approximately 26%, or an annual average increase of 5.9%.



Source: UPR-Ponce's Budget Office Reports

This increase has been primarily used to respond to personnel payroll regulations. In addition, the institution's initial budget is annually increased by authorized transfers from UPR-Central Administration to support special projects and to cover other new recurrent and nonrecurrent expenditures, as can be observed in Figure 3.2.



Source: UPR-Ponce's Budget Office Reports

At present, 97% of the institution's budget goes to regulatory actions, such as salaries, fringe benefits, utilities, maintenance, and educational materials. The budget petitions submitted by the department and office directors determine the distribution of the remaining 3%. Resources are assigned according to needs identified to strengthen academic, student services, and administrative areas. After receiving the annual budget certification by the Board of Trustees, decisions on resource allocation are made. The Chancellor and the Budget Director distribute the resources and submit the distribution to the Administrative Board for approval, following constraints established by the Board of Trustees. A more detailed discussion of the institution's budgeting process is included later in this chapter.

Several procedures are periodically carried out to ensure sound institutional budget management. In addition to balanced annual budgets, the University undergoes annual internal and external audits to determine efficiency in resource utilization. A firm of Certified Public Accountants

completes annual audits of the financial statements of all units of the University of Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rico Comptroller's Office also conducts operational audits in selected accounting periods to evaluate the efficiency of the fiscal operations and administrative processes. The Puerto Rico Comptroller's Office performed an audit in 1999 covering from January 1, 1986 through December 31, 1999. The CP-00-16 report on this audit was issued in 2000. The report concluded that the UPR-Ponce complied with the law and current regulations.

Since 2002, the Comptroller's Office has established evaluation criteria to measure the appropriate use of funds. Eleven criteria have been established to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency with which the institution is administered. The areas evaluated are accounting, bank reconciliations, debts to government agencies, strategic plan, personnel development and training plan, compliance with Law 41 on irregularities and loss of public funds and property, compliance with Law 18 and Regulation 33 on award of contracts, corrective action plans, Ethics Committee, document filing and control system, and information technology. Points are allocated to each area and an overall score is given to each institution. To recognize and encourage administrative excellence, the Comptroller's Office gives special recognition to the governmental agencies with the highest scores. During the past three years, the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce has received the highest score of all units of the UPR system (93, 98, and 100, respectively) (see Exhibit 18, *Evaluation Sheet for Comptroller Audits*).

Internal auditors from the UPR Board of Trustees have periodically:

- Evaluated if budget allocation is consistent with existing policies and procedures. These include, among others, the Purchase and Pre-Intervention Procedures Manuals and the Register of Contracts in the Puerto Rico Comptroller's Office.
- Performed operational audits of the UPR-Ponce to make recommendations to improve management operations and for the optimum use of funds.
- Evaluated the Financial Aid Office processes.
- Performed operational audits of the financial area, including the Purchasing, Pre-Intervention, Property, and Accounting Offices.

For the 2001-2002 fiscal year, Ernst and Young, an external auditing firm, audited the disbursements and payroll areas. The Report submitted by the independent auditors indicated that the university's financial statements "are free of material misstatement" (see Exhibit 19, *Report of Independent Auditors, June 1999 and 2000*). In 2002, Sherrell Hernández & Co. performed an audit of the Eisenhower Program (Title II).

In 1998 the Chancellor appointed an audit coordinator who is in charge of developing action plans based on findings in the auditors' reports. This coordinator contacts with the different offices to ensure that they comply with findings and to improve the identified weaknesses. Follow-up reports are submitted to the auditors' offices to inform corrective actions taken.

## **Budgeting**

The annual budget allocation process is consistent with systemic and existing internal policies and procedures. The University uses a centralized incremental approach to budgeting and resource allocation, as established by the UPR Board of Trustees and the Central

Administration's regulations and internal procedures. Essentially, the budget is assigned based on the previous year's operating budget, plus changes in expense priorities, which mainly consist of salary commitments. Collective bargaining agreements are instrumental in facilitating the consistent allocation of resources throughout the institution. Through contractual salary rates reached through these agreements, there is consistency in the level of resource allocation directed toward staffing throughout the system.

At UPR-Ponce, the budgeting process involves various constituencies of the university community, such as the Chancellor, office and department directors, Deans, and the Administrative Board. Although the Central Administration's guidelines for requesting funds and allocating resources may vary from one year to the next, the institution has established a systematic annual budget request cycle during the past years. This process requires departments and offices to plan for the upcoming year's activities and request the necessary funds to develop them by completing a budget petition document, providing the following information:

- Number of students enrolled in courses (current and projected).
- Substantial changes in number of employees, students, assigned budget, and volume of services provided for the current fiscal year.
- Substantial changes in number of employees, students, and volume of services provided for the next fiscal year.
- Justified budget petition, by item, for office and laboratory materials and equipment.
- Budget for additional personnel (based on expected increase in volume of services to be provided for the next fiscal year).
- Work plans for new projects (goals, objectives, activities, estimated budget, and justification).

These petitions are carefully reviewed by the Chancellor and his staff to ensure that the limited resources are allocated effectively and consistently with institutional plans. In case of budget limitations, the Chancellor analyzes the budget along with the Budget Director and his executive staff in order to identify specific areas in which to economize. They develop a plan with recommendations for budget redistribution and submit it to the Administrative Board for approval.

UPR-Ponce's mission and goals are supported by a budget which is allocated considering the following categories:

- Administrative Programs category, which supports Administrative, Operational and Maintenance Expenses, Institutional Expenses, and Fringe Benefits;
- Academic Programs category, which covers Transfer, Baccalaureate, and Technical Programs, Summer Session, Continuing Education, and Strengthening Research;
- Student Services category, which includes the Dean's Office, Medical Services, Medical Plan for Students, Registrar's Office, Social and Cultural Activities, and the Athletic Program;
- Academic Support Programs category, which includes the Library, Audiovisual, and the Academic Affairs Office;
- Special Leaves program; and

- Institutional Research category, which includes Institutional Studies.

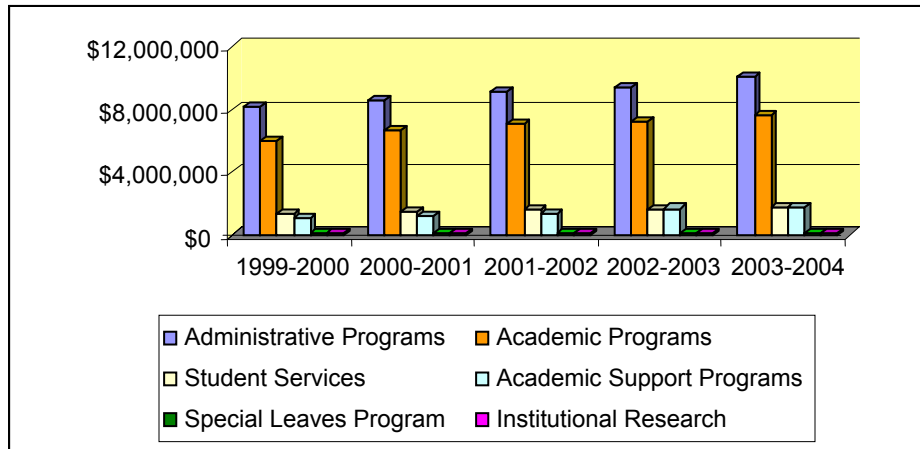
Table 3.3 and Figure 3.3 show the institution’s budget distribution for the past five fiscal years, using these categories.

**TABLE 3.3**  
**Distribution of budget by category from 1999-2000 to 2003-2004**

Year	Administrative Programs	Academic Programs	Student Services	Academic Support Programs	Special Leaves Program	Institutional Research	TOTAL BUDGET
	Amount (%)	Amount (%)	Amount (%)	Amount (%)	Amount (%)	Amount(%)	
1999-2000	\$8,174,401 (48.4)	\$6,007,962 (35.6)	\$1,345,966 (8.0)	\$1,129,167 (6.7)	\$138,585 (0.8)	\$90,540 (0.5)	<b>\$16,886,621</b>
2000-2001	\$8,632,046 (47.3)	\$6,634,265 (36.4)	\$1,521,376 (8.3)	\$1,255,714 (6.9)	\$78,104 (0.4)	\$113,280 (0.6)	<b>\$18,234,785</b>
2001-2002	\$9,160,958 (47.4)	\$7,050,678 (36.5)	\$1,596,142 (8.3)	\$1,315,882 (6.8)	\$78,104 (0.4)	\$118,620 (0.6)	<b>\$19,320,384</b>
2002-2003	\$9,426,948 (46.7)	\$7,263,089 (36.0)	\$1,631,130 (8.1)	\$1,690,443 (8.4)	\$78,104 (0.4)	\$91,140 (0.5)	<b>\$20,180,854</b>
2003-2004	\$10,039,572 (46.8)	\$7,661,435 (35.7)	\$1,777,848 (8.3)	\$1,781,465 (8.3)	\$94,088 (0.4)	\$109,980 (0.5)	<b>\$21,464,388</b>
<b>5-year Average</b>	<b>47.3%</b>	<b>36.0%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Annual Institutional Data Profiles

**FIGURE 3.3**  
**Distribution of Budget by Category**  
**from 1999-2000 to 2003-2004**



As can be seen from the above table and figure, administrative programs take up the biggest portion of the institutional budget, followed by academic programs and student services. Budgetwise, administrative, academic, academic support programs, and student services have received small increments through the years. An exception is posed by both Special Leaves and Institutional Research. Both have undergone budget reductions in the middle of the period, but they later increased in 2003-2004. Still, the percentage of the budget dedicated to Institutional



Research could be increased to levels which could sustain a higher involvement in institutional assessment activities.

For the past two years, the Budget Office has allocated the institutional budget taking into account the areas of the Chancellor’s Administrative Academic Plan. This approach allows for a more effective and efficient analysis of institutional resource allocation, based on services and priorities, rather than on programs. Table 3.4 shows evidence that the annual budget allocations provide for student services, faculty, support staff, technology, and physical facilities.

**TABLE 3.4**  
**UPR-Ponce Budget Distribution by Areas of the Administrative Academic Plan**  
**2002-2003 to 2003-2004**

AREA OF ALLOCATION	2002-2003	2003-2004
Students	\$ 2,564,868 (12.7%)	\$ 2,767,414 (12.9%)
Faculty	3,007,524 (14.9%)	3,189,543 (14.9%)
Academic Programs	6,997,968 (34.7%)	7,293,184 (34.0%)
Creation of Knowledge	131,140 (0.7%)	203,560 (1.0%)
Administrative Organization	4,689,483 (23.2%)	5,101,016 (23.8%)
Technology Support	289,820 (1.4%)	302,560 (1.4%)
Physical Facilities	2,470,051 (12.2%)	2,577,111 (12.0%)
University’s Urban Base	30,000 (0.2%)	30,000 (0.1%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$20,180,854</b>	<b>\$21,464,388</b>

Source: UPR- Ponce Budget Office

Assessment results of the adequacy and effectiveness of student services, faculty, support staff, technology, and physical facilities are included throughout this Self-Study Report.

### **Additional Funding Sources**

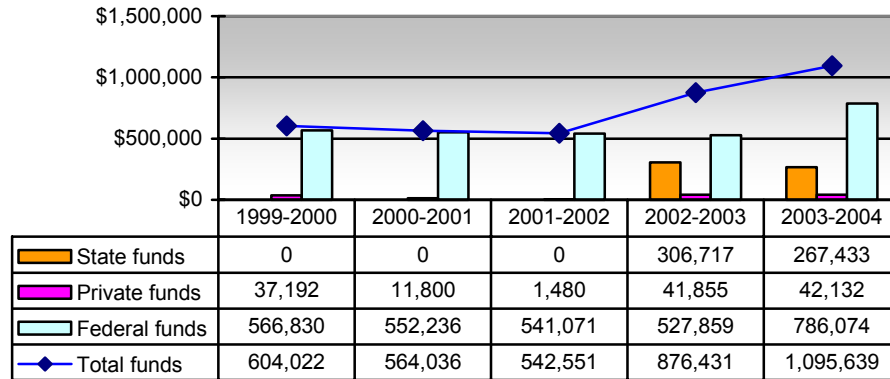
The University uses different strategies to increase its institutional resources to better support its mission and goals, and to help finance some of its institutional renewal initiatives. These resources include funding from state and federal agencies, as well as from private donors. External funds are mainly directed towards funding faculty research projects and initiatives to improve the teaching-learning processes.

The OPIR was charged with external fund raising responsibilities until academic year 2002-2003, when Chancellor Marrero created the Office of External Resources under his direct supervision. He appointed a full-time nonfaculty staff member as its director. The purpose of this action was to improve the effectiveness of institutional external fund raising efforts. The primary objectives of the External Resources Office are to identify external revenue sources, keep the community informed of resources available, and assist in proposal writing.

During the past five years, UPR-Ponce has obtained a total of \$3,682,679 from external funds, which includes funds from state, federal, and private sources. Fifty-six percent of these funds correspond to a Title V Project, which has provided the largest portion of funds received by the Institution during these years. There has been a notable increase in state and private funds obtained during the past two years. This evidences the effectiveness of the Chancellor’s

initiative in revamping the institution’s fund raising structure. Figure 3.5 provides evidence of the effectiveness of institutional strategies for increasing its resources through external funds.

**FIGURE 3.4**  
**External Funds Received**



Source: Annual Institutional Data Profiles

In 2002, UPR-Ponce established the Alumni Office with the objectives of maintaining communication with alumni and encouraging their commitment with the university as economic contributors. The office has directed its efforts towards creating and maintaining an alumni database. Fundraising efforts began in 2003-2004 and continue to this date.

### Human Resources

Conscious that a highly skilled staff is critical for the university’s success, UPR-Ponce has established as one of its institutional goals “to provide personnel with the necessary means to continuously develop administrative and faculty functions”. In pursuit of its mission and goals, UPR-Ponce allocates 90% of its total operating budget to human resources salaries and benefits. At the time this report was being written, the institution’s workforce consisted of a total of 202 faculty members and 254 nonfaculty support staff.

Table 3.5 shows the distribution of personnel by type of appointment for the past two academic years. A benchmark analysis of student-nonfaculty ratio showed that UPR-Ponce’s ratio (16:1) compares to that of UPR-Arecibo (16:1) and that of UPR-Aguadilla (17:1).

**TABLE 3.5**  
**Distribution of academic and nonfaculty staff by type of appointment**

Academic year	Staff	Regular	Confidential position	Service contract	Temporary	Special	Part-time	Substitute	Total
2002-2003	Academic	142	4	59	1	0	0	1	207 (45%)
	Non-faculty	205	8	10	13	12	6	0	254 (55%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>461</b>
2003-2004	Academic	143	3	57	0	0	0	0	203 (44%)
	Non-	202	10	8	9	13	9	3	254

	faculty								(56%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>457</b>

Source: Human Resources Office

Both academic and nonfaculty personnel are recruited according to UPR General By-Laws (2002). Unit supervisors determine what support staff are appropriate and adequate in order to effectively accomplish office or departmental goals, according to established job descriptions and qualification requirements approved by the Human Resources Office at Central level. Staffing needs are discussed with the corresponding Deans, and requests are submitted to the Chancellor justifying the petitions. The Chancellor evaluates and approves them based on needs, institutional budget, and priorities.

Staff turnover is almost nonexistent at UPR-Ponce. The Self-Study Survey revealed that 53% of nonfaculty staff is satisfied with the salaries, and that 78% is satisfied with fringe benefits provided by the institution. The Self-Study Survey also showed that 61% of faculty and 51% of nonfaculty staff are satisfied with professional development opportunities provided by the institution.

### **The Library**

The Adelina Coppin-Alvarado Library strives to provide high quality and efficient information services to the academic community. However, at the time this report was written, the institution faced challenges with its physical facilities. After an assessment of the building conducted by the UPR Central Administration’s Office of Planning, it was determined that the air quality within the building might pose health concerns to the staff and patrons. After meeting with the library personnel, in December 2003, the Chancellor authorized the relocation of library services to temporary facilities within the campus. This arrangement would allow staff to offer essential services and to provide limited study facilities for student use while the main building undergoes renovation. A detailed explanation of library information resources and services is included later under Chapter 8 on Educational Offerings, General Education, and Related Educational Activities.

President García-Padilla and Chancellor Marrero initiated actions to solve the problem in the library. Their first step was to hire an architectural firm (*Atelier 66*) to assess the building structure and to work on its renovation design. This firm produced a preliminary written report (Exhibit 20), which was submitted and discussed with the institution’s academic leadership, as well as with library staff. Major findings of this study indicated the need to improve the air conditioning and fire prevention systems, building illumination, facilities for the disabled, exits, stairs, control rooms, and others. Compliance with Puerto Rico’s current construction codes was taken into consideration in the renovation design.

*Atelier 66* submitted plans for the renovation of the library at an estimated cost of \$2.4 million. This proposal was evaluated by the UPR-Ponce’s Academic Senate and by the Central Administration, who requested that the architects adjust the proposed plans in order to lower costs. The UPR Board of Trustees originally allocated \$1.2 million under the UPR Permanent Improvement Program for the renovation of the library, but since estimated costs have exceeded the university’s expectations, additional funding sources are being explored in order to finance the project. The bidding process for awarding this project is expected to be conducted as soon as the new proposal is submitted; the project is expected to begin before May 2005.

## Physical Facilities

UPR-Ponce's 64 acre campus is located at the corner of Santiago de los Caballeros and Ponce By Pass Avenues, in the southern part of the city. Its 328,971 square feet of facilities consist of 15 buildings, including one main academic building where 42 classrooms, 38 laboratories, and 76 faculty offices are located. An additional 13 classrooms, 10 laboratories, and 27 faculty spaces are housed in other buildings throughout the campus. Other main buildings include the Student and the Administration Deanships, the Library, the multi-use sports complex, and the theater. Several small administrative buildings, such as the print shop, the Pre-school Center, and the security office are also located within the campus. Since 1995, the university has added a total of 58,344 square feet of facilities and renovated some existing buildings, which mainly created more spaces for classroom and faculty use. It is expected that the Physical and Programmatic Master Plan, which was discussed earlier in this chapter, will improve UPR-Ponce's physical facilities planning, efficient use of facilities, and future developments.

At present, a new state highway (PR-12) is being constructed in agreement with the institution's administration, which will strongly impact UPR-Ponce in many ways. This road will cross through part of the campus. This will require the relocation of one of the student parking lots, as well as the main entrance and exit. The Chancellor discussed and consulted the changes and the agreements made by the President in relation to this project with the UPR-Ponce community. These changes will be considered in the development of the Physical and Programmatic Master Plan.

The OPIR has conducted a series of studies to assess the efficient use of physical spaces for teaching purposes. The most recent *Study of the Use of Physical Spaces Dedicated to Teaching* (Exhibit 21), was conducted in May 2003. Benchmarks established by the *Society for College and University Planning* and the *Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education* were used to determine the adequacy of spaces assigned to academic departments. This study revealed that some departments were in urgent need of additional spaces for teaching purposes, while others were found to be underutilizing their respective classroom space. In terms of physical spaces for laboratory use, the study suggested their under-utilization, except for the Engineering department. The study also revealed that there was a need for additional office space for faculty use in most departments, except for the Chemistry-Physics and Biology departments. Based on the results of this study, it was recommended that the administration should consider redistributing classrooms and laboratories assigned to departments according to their needs. In addition, he suggested that the institution explore the possibility of constructing a new building to provide more space for classroom and faculty offices.

Examples of actions taken by Chancellor Marrero during the past year as a result of this study are: remodeling of building D to provide more classroom and laboratory spaces for the Social Sciences and Education departments, and remodeling of buildings K and E to provide additional spaces for faculty offices.

According to the Self-Study Survey, 39% of the faculty members agreed that the number of classrooms assigned to their particular department is adequate; 36% believes that the conditions

in classrooms are adequate; and 58% agreed that the number of faculty offices is adequate. The Survey also revealed that 45% of nonfaculty staff agreed that physical facilities in the working area are adequate. The findings of these surveys confirm those of the 2003 study, given that faculty's level of satisfaction with classroom spaces and faculty offices is low. Additionally, student surveys have consistently reflected similar opinions regarding the adequacy of physical facilities. It is expected that space allocation concerns will be addressed in the *Physical and Programmatic Master Plan*.

### **Maintenance of Physical Facilities and Equipment**

The UPR-Ponce Academic-Administrative Plan (2002-2005) includes within its objectives the development of preventative maintenance plan in order to upgrade the computer facilities and implement and evaluate the maintenance plan annually. Since the academic year 2000-2001, the Physical Resources Office is in charge of preparing an institutional maintenance management plan for each semester. An *Institutional Preventive Maintenance Master Plan* was prepared in 2003-2004, which was implemented in July 2004 (see Exhibit 22, *2003-2004 Maintenance Management Plan*). This plan contains strategic actions to maximize the quality and effective utilization of physical resources at UPR-Ponce. The priorities included in this plan were established in meetings held by the Dean of Administrative Affairs, the Director of the Physical Resources Office, and the Chancellor, who makes the final decisions. An example of the implementation is the replacement of the theater's air conditioning unit.

At the present time, the UPR-Ponce has contracts with various independent suppliers for the maintenance of photocopier machines, elevators, and the air conditioning systems. The university assigned funds to purchase equipment and to strengthen the maintenance program. Regarding equipment acquisition or replacement, the institutional plan follows accounting considerations based on book value, as a reaction to advanced technology trends, or because of new educational requirements. The Chancellor and the Budget Director establish the priorities based on available funds. The implementation of the plan for acquisition, replacement, and maintenance in the Computer Center has been effective. The Director of the Computer Center Director indicated that the plan has contributed to the reduction of the UPR-Ponce information system downtime and has recommended the expansion of the existing plan to cover other departments and offices.

### **Information Support Systems**

In academic year 2003-2004, in order to address the challenges presented by the growth in technological complexity and user demand, as well as to provide increased capability for generating and exploiting new opportunities for academic creativity and administrative efficiency, the UPR-Ponce reorganized its technological services under the Office of Information Technologies (OIT). It answers directly to the Chancellor and supports academic and administrative units by providing expertise in areas such as operations, systems analysis and programming, user services, technical services, and academic computing. OIT functions are organized under two main divisions: the office of academic computing, with a coordinator in charge of overseeing its functions, and the computer center, headed by the director of the OIT. The OIT is located on the second floor of the Academic Building.

All campus buildings are connected by fiber optics; ninety-eight percent of classrooms and offices are connected to the campus LAN. There are approximately 800 computers and 70 printers on campus, of which 500 and 30, respectively, are for laboratory use. The following services and applications are available through the institution's network: access accounts to the Financial Resources, Human Resources, and Student Information Systems; access to systems located in UPR Central Administration, such as library information resources and databases; access to software applications for student use; e-mail accounts; INTERNET access; and the Blackboard Platform. The institution is equipped with a POLYCOM system for video-conferencing purposes. In the summer of 2005, a new management information system (ORACLE) will be implemented at the system level to update current information systems. This will provide more efficient and effective information resources for institutional administrative procedures.

Several recommendations for the improvement of the institution's computer information resources and capabilities were made by an EDUCAUSE evaluation team in 2003 (Exhibit 23), which were addressed in the *Strategic Plan for the Integration of Information Technologies at the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce* (Draft), as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Findings on the analysis of this chapter lead to the following conclusions:

1. The institution has made great efforts to implement planning initiatives since its last accreditation visit in 1995. Fiscal, academic, and institutional planning still need to work more effectively in concert with each other to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to areas with most urgent needs.
2. Frequent changes in the institution's administration, at all levels, have presented challenges for the strategic planning process.
3. Communication of planning initiatives and effective participation of constituents in the planning processes at the institutional level appear to provide the institution with challenges.
4. Like most public institutions, UPR-Ponce occasionally struggles to maintain viability in its technological and physical plant facilities, due to budget constraints.
5. A sound fiscal management and the establishment of clear policies and procedures for the budget allocation process have provided the institution with the means to support its academic programs, and student and administrative services.
6. The institutional budget has annually increased by an average of 5.9% during the last five years. This increase has been mostly committed to comply with personnel salary raises and fringe benefits, thus, limiting a more effective development of institutional initiatives.
7. The institution has successfully improved its ability to increase its institutional resources through additional funding sources, which have contributed to financing some institutional renewal initiatives.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are given as recommendations:

1. Planning efforts should be led by an executive committee composed of the Chancellor, the Deans and the directors of the Budget Office, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research, and Physical Resources.
2. Further elaborate the planning process so that assessment, planning, and resource allocation are better articulated. All components of the institution with decision-making authority should be involved in this process in order to effectively integrate it to assessment and budgeting.
3. The Central Administration should periodically review and increase the institution's operating budget based on its development plans and on the assessment of the goals attained.
4. The Board of Trustees should seriously consider the possibility of increasing UPR tuition cost. Its revision is long overdue as the current tuition rates are no longer able to provide for a more effective improvement of services and institutional resources.
5. Conduct more aggressive and structured fundraising campaigns on a regular basis.
6. Institutional governing bodies should promptly consider the approval and implementation of the *Strategic Plan for the Integration of Information Technologies at the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce*.
7. UPR-Central Administration and UPR-Ponce should assign the highest priority to the library renovation project and to the implementation of the Physical and Programmatic Master Plan.

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# CHAPTER 4 LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION AND INTEGRITY

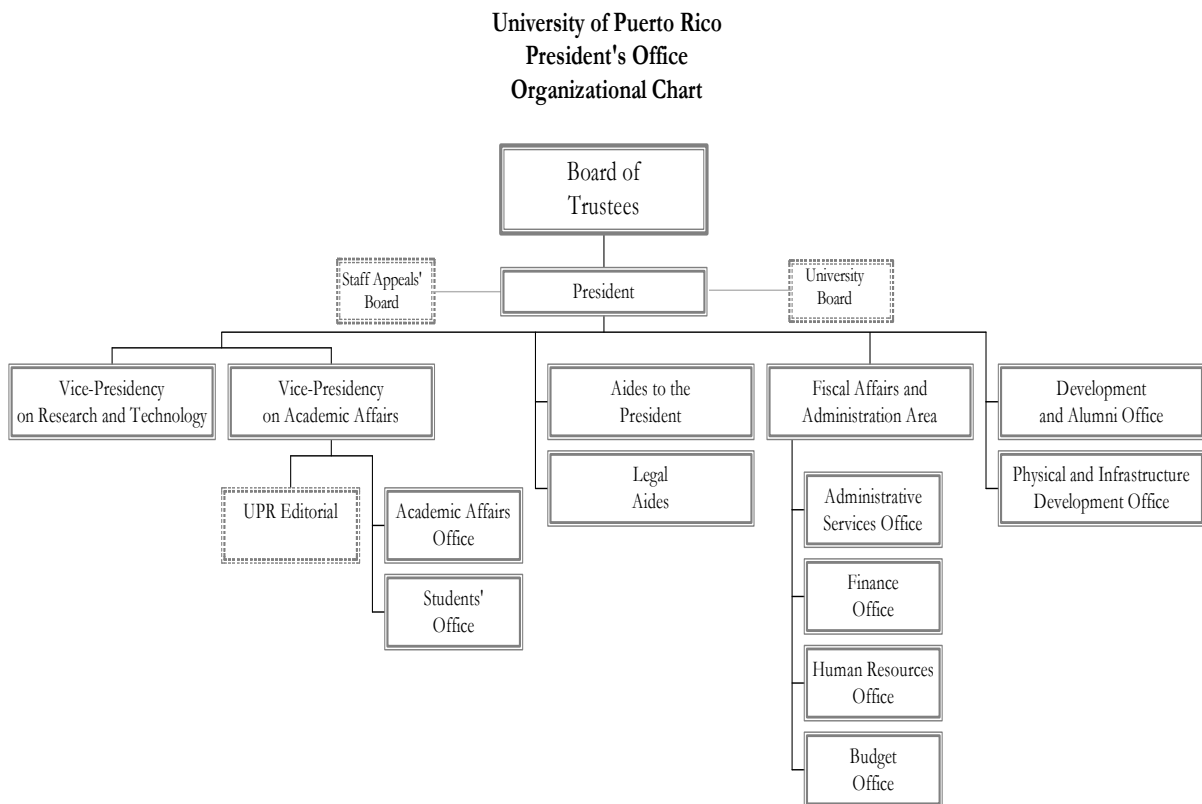
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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes a documented analysis of the institution’s system of governance in policy development and decision-making. It also addresses how well the administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research, foster quality improvement, and support the university’s organization and governance. The degree to which the institution adheres to ethical standards and its own stated policies in conducting its programs and activities is also studied.

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce (UPR-Ponce) is part of the University of Puerto Rico System, a large publicly supported multi-campus, coeducational university system. The Central Administration (UPR-CA), located in Río Piedras, oversees the operations of the eleven academic units, including UPR-Ponce. The Board of Trustees is the highest governing and administrative body of the University of Puerto Rico system, and was created by the Government of Puerto Rico on June 16, 1993, under Law number 16 (PC 384). Previously, the Council on Higher Education had the responsibility of governing the public university system. The organizational chart approved by of the Board of Trustees in 2003 describes the UPR management structure.





UPR University Law (Law #1, January 20, 1966, as amended), clearly delineates the university's governing structure, including the composition, duties, and responsibilities of each university constituent in the development of policies and in the decision-making process (<http://www.upr.edu/sindicos/docs/ley-upr.pdf>). The internal management of each institutional unit is governed by applicable dispositions of law, UPR General By-Laws, and general application complimentary by-laws, as well as by resolutions adopted by the Board of Trustees, by the guidelines established by the University President, and by the rules and regulations adopted by each institutional governing body (<http://www.upr.edu/sindicos/reglamento.htm>).

### **Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees formulates policy for the system, guides its development, allocates its budget, and appoints the President and Chancellors. It also assists in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the Institution, and deals with policy and philosophy related to University activities directed toward obtaining external funds from nonpublic sectors and organizations. Article 3(e) of the UPR University Law (Law #1, January 20, 1966, as amended), states the nontransferable duties and attributions of the Board of Trustees (<http://www.upr.edu/sindicos/docs/deb-atrib.pdf>). In its Certification Number 14 (2001-2002), the Board of Trustees agreed that its primary functions are to formulate regulations for the direction and development of the University, to examine and approve its general operational norms, and to oversee its general course. The Board is composed of thirteen members including one regular student in second year or higher, two professors with tenure in the university system, and ten citizens from the community who shall be designated by the governor with the consent of the Senate of Puerto Rico, at least one of whom shall be a University of Puerto Rico alumnus. All the community members are designated by the governor in periods of four, six, and eight years. The student and faculty representatives are elected from among their representatives in the University Board for a period of one year. Nearly 77% of the thirteen current members of the Board of Trustees are alumni of the University of Puerto Rico.

All members of the Board of Trustees must be American citizens with residence in Puerto Rico and must abide by Law No. 12 of July 24, 1985, as amended, which is known as *Law of Governmental Ethics of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico*. No member of the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico, nor any person who works for the government or other public corporations, except that of the UPR, nor any employee of a private institution of higher education can be designated by the governor to be part of the Board of Trustees. This is to guarantee that members designated to the Board of Trustees are perceived as being free from any conflicts of interest. Participation of university community members in this body evidences the interest of the constituents, while the membership of citizens from various professional fields reflects the public interest (Board of Trustees members - <http://www.upr.edu/sindicos/miembros.htm>).

### **President**

The UPR University Law confers on the President the highest organizational rank, with the responsibility of leading the University System. He acts in representation of the Board of Trustees, which appoints him in consultation with the Academic Senates of the UPR system. The President of the University of Puerto Rico, in collaboration with the University Board, which he presides, coordinates and supervises the academic, administrative, and financial tasks

of the Institution. The President also harmonizes Board of Trustees and University Board initiatives, as well as his own, to promote University development and improvement. In administrating the university system and establishing general institutional policies, the President is advised by the University Board and the Board of Trustees.

President Antonio García-Padilla, appointed by the Board of Trustees in 2001, is a full professor who brings to his position twenty-two years of experience within the University System. He received his undergraduate degree in 1974 and his Juris Doctor in 1978 from the University of Puerto Rico, and an LL.M. from Yale University Law School in 1981. He began as an Assistant Professor in the UPR-Río Piedras Law School in 1982, and he has occupied various teaching and administrative positions since then.

## **University Board**

Chapter III, Article 15, Section 15.1 of the University Law dictates the composition of the University Board. Presided by the President, its members are the Chancellors of the eleven UPR units, the UPR Central Administration finance director, three additional University members appointed by the President with the approval of the Board of Trustees, one representative from each unit's Academic Senate, and a student representative from each campus. The Chancellor, one senator elected by the Academic Senate, and a student elected in Student Council elections represent UPR-Ponce on this Board.

The University Board has the responsibility of maintaining an integrated university system through a planning process that responds to the university's mission and goals. It is also charged with advising the President with regard to the academic, administrative, and financial progress of the units. These functions are carefully balanced to respect the autonomy of individual units.

## **Chancellor**

A Chancellor, who holds the maximum academic and administrative authority of the institution, heads the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce. He is nominated by the UPR President in consultation with the Academic Senate of UPR-Ponce, staff, and students' consultation committees according to the procedures established in Article 19 of the UPR General By-Laws. He is appointed by the Board of Trustees, in accordance with Law 170 of August 12, 1988 (*Administrative Procedures Law*). Article 7 of the University Law, and Section 19.3 of the UPR General By-Laws outline the duties and functions of the Chancellor as follows:

- Provide orientation and supervision to university personnel, as well as to the teaching, research, technical, and administrative functions.
- Formulate the projected budget based on recommendations from the departments and offices.
- Represent UPR-Ponce in official ceremonies, activities, and academic roles.
- Preside over the Academic Senate, the Administrative Board, and faculty meetings.
- Appoint the academic, administrative, and student deans in consultation with university constituents.

- Hire university personnel and visiting lecturers.

With these responsibilities in mind, Chancellor Jaime Marrero has provided leadership and administrative supervision for the UPR-Ponce since his appointment in July 2002. He has taken actions towards the development and implementation of the *UPR-Ponce Academic- Administrative Plan* in areas such as: alumni, student recruitment, student admissions, faculty, technological support, physical facilities, budget, university urban base, and students. A project for the physical and programmatic development of UPR-Ponce has also been initiated under his leadership, with the goal of establishing a long-range plan for the physical development of the institution, aligned with its academic development.

Chancellor Marrero is a full professor with over thirty years teaching and administrative experience in the department of Business Administration and Computer Science. He has an MBA from the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras Campus. Before his appointment, Chancellor Marrero held a number of important leadership positions within the university system, including the direction of the Business Administration and Computer Science Department at UPR-Ponce, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at the UPR Regional Colleges Administration, and Acting Dean-Director at the UPR-Aguadilla. He was also a member of the UPR- Ponce Academic Senate and Administrative Board.

### **Academic Senate**

The Academic Senate serves as the official deliberative forum of the UPR-Ponce academic community and decides on a variety of academic matters, which include courses and curricula, program revision, general admission requirements, and other matters related to academic affairs. It also establishes the general guidelines for faculty appointments, tenure, promotion, evaluation, and leaves in accordance with Chapter III, Article 21 of the Academic Senate By-Laws. It is composed of 25 members: the President of the UPR (*ex officio*); the Chancellor of the UPR-Ponce, who presides; the Deans of Academic, Student, and Administrative Affairs; one elected faculty member representative from each academic department (15); the Director of the Library; and four students elected by their peers in assembly as stated in the Student By-Laws (Certifications 110-98-99 and 135-2000-2001 of the Board of Trustees; Certification 101-2001-2002 of the Academic Senate of UPR-Ponce). Only tenured members of the faculty in active service, preferably with an academic rank of at least Assistant Professor, are elected to the Senate. The eligibility for senators is set out in Article 21, Section 21.6.1 of the University Law, and in the Internal By-Laws of the UPR-Ponce Academic Senate, Chapter V, Article 1.

The members of this body have sufficient expertise and experience to carry out their duties. The composition of the Academic Senate for 2004-2005 is as follows: ten full professors (42%); three associate professors (13%); five assistant professors (21%); one instructor (4%); one nonfaculty member, Dean of Administrative Affairs (4%); and four students (17%). Seventy-five percent of the members have 15 years experience or more with the institution, 60% of the members have held some administrative position within the institution. Thirteen percent of the members have a doctorate, 67% have a master's degree, 4% have a baccalaureate degree, and 17% are students.

### **Administrative Board**

The Administrative Board advises the Chancellor in carrying out his duties. Chapter IV, Article 1 of the UPR-Ponce Administrative Board By-Law states its responsibility for elaborating plans

and projects for institutional development. The Board also evaluates and approves the distribution of the institutional budget submitted by the Chancellor, as well as the UPR-Ponce academic calendar (UPR-Ponce Administrative Board By-Law, Chapter 5-Section 1.1.3) and rules on and approves faculty requests for leaves, tenures, financial aid, and promotions. Its members are the President of the UPR (*ex officio*); the Chancellor of the UPR-Ponce; the Deans of Academic, Student, and Administrative Affairs; four academic department heads designated by the Chancellor; two elected faculty representatives of the Academic Senate; and one student elected by his/her peers in an assembly, in accordance with the Student By-Laws. All members of the 2004-2005 Board (with the exception of the student representative) have had administrative experience and 90% have been with the institution for more than 15 years.

### **Institutional Policies**

Governing bodies give direction and facilitate the effective operation of UPR-Ponce by approving policies, regulations, certifications and any other dispositions which must respond to a priority norm as established by Article 7 of the University of Puerto Rico By-Laws. Any rules, norms, resolutions, instructions and procedures established by the corresponding College authorities must respect the following order of regulations:

1. Applicable Law dispositions
2. UPR General By-Laws
3. Resolutions of the Board of Trustees
4. Integral Development Plan for the University System
5. Norms, instructions, resolutions and any other disposition of the President
6. Resolutions of the University Board
7. Regulations of each institutional unit in accordance with the internally established hierarchy

When any rule, norm, resolution, instruction or procedure is emitted, not only must the established hierarchy be taken into consideration, but it must also guarantee democratic principles, the functional autonomy of each unit, and provide uniform articulation and solidarity as established in the Declaration of Principles of the General By-Laws of the UPR. This should reduce any possible conflicts and foster a sense of belonging to the group, which is a basic requirement for the effective administration of any institution.

UPR-Ponce's governance structure is stated in the following Laws:

- Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966 as amended, known as the University of Puerto Rico Law
- Laws No. 2 and 3 of January 20, 1966
- Law No. 16 of June 16, 1993 as amended
- Law No. 186 of August 7, 1998
- Law No. 5 of October 14, 1995 after amendments (Law for Personnel of the Public System of Puerto Rico)

The Law of the University of Puerto Rico guarantees that in the effective government of each unit, including UPR-Ponce, the University Law prevails over any other rule, norm, procedure, certification, resolution and usual practices. When conflicts arise over which law prevails, the

rules will be established by the Board of Trustees. The President can establish policies, but the Board of Trustees should be informed (Articles 5 and 6 of the UPR General By-Laws). When establishing any public policy, whether administrative or academic, governing bodies must guarantee UPR-Ponce autonomy (Article 10.1 of the UPR General By-Laws).

Effective administration requires that the community have access to and be well informed about governance documents, policies, and procedures. Governing bodies issue official certifications every time a new policy or procedure is adopted or changed in order to ensure both its fulfillment and community awareness. To that end, the UPR Board of Trustees and the University Board disseminate certifications throughout the University system by both printed and electronic means (<http://www.certificaciones.upr.edu/certificaciones>). UPR-Ponce Academic Senate and Administrative Board regularly distribute printed copies of approved certifications to the academic departments, administrative offices, and the library. Elected senators present written and oral reports at faculty meetings regarding academic issues of interest to this body, and newly approved certifications. These are also discussed in departmental faculty meetings.

The Academic Senate keeps students informed about its decisions and activities through the Student Council representatives. Students are also informed by means of bulletin boards, at the northern and southern entrances of the Academic Building.

The University Law and UPR General By-Laws clearly state that the institution's governing bodies are responsible for the development of institutional projects and plans, and for the general direction of its teaching and research programs. No evidence was found of UPR-Ponce's governing bodies initiatives for revising the institutional mission and goals statement adopted in 1994. However, certifications issued by these bodies evidence their involvement in planning processes such as approval of new academic programs, annual program enrollment quotas, admission criteria, and of projects related to the institution's physical development.

Following an assessment carried out in academic year 2002-2003 of the *UPR-Ponce 2001-2005 Strategic Plan*, the Senate recommended that the Chancellor should outline the process to be followed for the preparation of a revised strategic plan for 2006-2010, following an in-depth analysis of the institutional self-study findings (Certification 2003-2004-39). Also, this body approved the *UPR-Ponce Assessment Statement of Purpose* to evidence institutional commitment to improving the effectiveness of its academic programs, the teaching- learning process, and the quality of student support services. The Committee of Academic Affairs of the Academic Senate is currently working on a proposal to establish a *UPR-Ponce Graduating Student Profile*. Also, an *ad hoc* committee of this body is considering the draft of the *Institutional Assessment Plan* for its approval.

The Academic Senate participates in determining the general course of UPR-Ponce's teaching and research programs. In academic year 2003-2004, following the completion of the assessment process of six academic programs, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs presented a summary report to the members of the Academic Senate on the findings of this process, as well as recommendations for program revision.

The UPR Law (Law No. 1 of January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1966, as amended on page 87, Article 11) clearly defines the nature and functions of the Academic Senate. On page 87, Article 8, the afore-

mentioned law defines the functions of the Administrative Board which can also be found in the Internal By-Laws in Chapter IV, Articles 1 and 2. These clear definitions of their functions prevent conflicts between the bodies. However, it is possible that a conflict could occur if the Academic Senate approves an academic proposal, program, or project and the Administrative Board does not approve the financial support required. Article 15 of the General UPR By-Laws provides for the referral of any conflict to the University Board, the President, and as an ultimate step, to the Board of Trustees. Law No. 16 of June 16, 1993, Article 3, “D-9” empowers the Board of Trustees to consider and approve the budget for the whole UPR system.

### **Assessment of Leadership and Governance**

Section 3 (e) (7) of the UPR Law provides that the Board of Trustees shall evaluate the work of the President of the UPR and the Chancellors of the institutional units in terms not shorter than three and not longer than five years of their incumbency. This evaluation shall be in writing and becomes part of the corresponding Board of Trustees’ file. The Board of Trustees recently approved Certification 50-2004-2005, which defines the procedures to assess the performance of the Chancellors, of the UPR units, and of the President. The provisions of the UPR Law are handled through the process described in this document.

The evaluation model and guidelines included in the working document are sustained by the UPR Law and General Regulations. They establish that the evaluation of the President and the Chancellors has four purposes, which are as follows: to improve the performance of the institutional leaders, to account for the exercise of the duties of these officials, to make decisions regarding their retention, and to promote a relationship of support and trust between the Board of Trustees and institutional leadership.

Chancellor Jaime Marrero has not yet been evaluated because he has only been in office for two years. He is accountable to the Board of Trustees and to the President. To that end, he submits annual, periodic, and special reports. The university community assesses the Chancellor’s performance based on written and oral reports, as well as newsletters and bulletins published by his office.

The UPR promotes the professional enhancement of its top management by coordinating workshops and other activities for new leaders. Also, Chancellors have funds for attending national and international seminars, conferences and workshops. Some recent examples of professional development activities in which the Chancellor has participated include: Round Table on Academic Leadership and Management, Summer Institute for UPR Chancellors, Leadership: Facilitating Change (Training Program for Excellence and Improvement), MSA Annual Conference, Institutional Research Workshop, and others.

The Self-Study Survey conducted among UPR-Ponce constituents reflected that 57% of both faculty and nonfaculty staff perceived that the institution’s leadership is effective in moving the institution toward achieving its mission and goals. It also revealed that 73% of the students perceived that the administration helps them in pursuing their academic goals. The survey revealed the following findings on faculty’s perception of UPR-Ponce’s institutional leadership and governance:

- 58% agreed that the Academic Senate facilitates the effective governance and functioning of the Institution;

- 64% agreed that the Administrative Board facilitates the effective governance and functioning of the Institution;
- 37% agreed that the Board of Trustees facilitates the effective governance and functioning of the Institution; and
- 47% agreed that the University Board facilitates the effective governance and functioning of the Institution.

### **Involvement of Constituents in Decision Making**

Law No. 16 of June 16, 1993 and the UPR Law guarantee faculty and student representation in UPR-Ponce governing bodies to ensure their participation in the decision-making process.

The UPR-Ponce Academic Senate is a deliberative body in which a tenured faculty member represents each academic department. Student representation is evident in this body through the participation of the Student Council President and three members elected by their peers in the student election process every year. The Senate is involved in academic decision-making and matters related to the academic community.

The UPR-Ponce Administrative Board is another deliberative body whose decisions affect the entire institution. Its composition, which was explained earlier in this chapter, provides faculty and students with the opportunity of participating in the process of making decisions on matters that affect them.

Faculty members also have the opportunity to express their opinions and to take part in the decision-making process in issues that affect them at faculty meetings. These meetings occur at least once every semester, as established in UPR General By-Laws, but extraordinary meetings can be convoked as necessary. Institutional and departmental committees also provide faculty, administrative personnel, and students with opportunities to participate in the decision-making process at different levels. The Chancellor appoints institutional committees, while department heads and supervisors appoint departmental committees. Appendix D illustrates examples of opportunities for the participation of university constituents in institutional committees. An analysis of this information shows that the faculty participate in 96% of the committees, nonfaculty staff participate in 78%, and students participate in 57%.

The Disciplinary Board is another body in which students, administrators, and faculty make decisions on matters concerning student discipline. The Dean of Student Affairs, two members of the Senate elected by their peers, and two student representatives, as stipulated in Article 17, of the UPR General Student By-Law, make up this board.

The Student Council was established to channel student concerns with issues affecting them, as well as ideas and initiatives for institutional improvement. This student body is the official forum for the student community. It is elected every year and is represented in UPR-Ponce's main governing bodies, as mentioned previously in this chapter. Student senators may submit proposals on issues affecting them to UPR-Ponce's governing bodies. For example, the Academic Senate considered and approved a Student Council petition for tuition exemption for its President and students participating in different decision-making bodies; the approved proposal was submitted to the University Board for its consideration.

Members of student organizations also have the opportunity to present their concerns and ideas to the Dean of Student Affairs, who channels them to the appropriate governing body. For example, student athletes submitted a proposal for early enrollment, which was approved and extended to other student groups, such as Choir, Marching Band, and members of the Theater group. Student representation is also evident in institutional and departmental faculty meetings, where they can express their opinions on matters discussed that affect them. Students also participate in departmental committees such as program assessment committees, and others. More than half of the students responding to the Self-Study Survey (52%) perceived that they are involved in the decision-making process in issues that affect them.

The Self-Study Survey also revealed that 50% of nonfaculty staff agreed that they participate in the decision-making process at the departmental or office level, while 20% feel that the institution provides them with the opportunity. Forty-seven per cent agreed that the suggestions they make are taken into consideration at the departmental or office level. As for faculty, 82% perceived that the institution provides for their involvement in the decision-making processes at the departmental level, while 54% believes that they have the opportunity to participate in making decisions at the institutional level.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

UPR-Ponce has a well-defined organizational structure with clear lines of organization and authority to facilitate its efficiency and effectiveness. Appendix E illustrates this structure. Constituents' familiarity with these lines is high, as reflected in the Self-Study Survey; 96% of faculty members, and 76% of nonfaculty staff agreed that they are familiar with them. Evidence to support that these lines are actually followed can be found in numerous documents which clearly respect hierarchical lines of communication and approval.

Duties and responsibilities of institutional administrators and academic leaders are clearly established in UPR General By-Laws, Chapter IV (2002). These include, among others, academic program planning, development, and assessment; personnel management; budget approval and distribution; proposal writing; innovative project development; external funding activities and administration; and supervision and assessment of student support services. These responsibilities involve their interaction with other administrators of the University system, local and federal government agencies, and the community as a whole.

Following the Chancellor in the organizational structure are the Deans of Academic, Student, and Administrative Affairs. They are appointed by the Chancellor, endorsed by the President and approved by the Board of Trustees after a rigorous consultation process among faculty members, nonfaculty staff, and students. The Deans continue in office at the pleasure of the Chancellor. The process for selecting the UPR-Ponce institutional leadership is clearly defined in Articles 20 and 37 of the UPR General By-Laws. The Deans are supported by academic department chairs and by the directors of corresponding administrative offices. A careful examination of the job descriptions for persons in positions of trust and administrative positions shows that authority and accountability for policy development and decision-making is clearly assigned. The Deans, the academic department heads, and the office directors assist the Chancellor in the decision-making process at UPR-Ponce.



The Dean of Academic Affairs is responsible for the supervision of all academic departments, the library, the Continuing Education and Professional Studies Division, the Honors Program and the International Studies Office. The Dean of Administrative Affairs supervises the administrative support services which include: Human Resources, Security, Post Office, Printing Services, Operations and Maintenance, Switchboard, Documents Administration, and Finance (Accounting, Disbursement, Property, Purchasing, Payroll, Pre-Intervention and Bursar). The Dean of Student Affairs coordinates student-support services and supervises the following offices: Registrar, Quality of Life, Financial Aid, Counseling and Guidance, Admissions, Social and Cultural Activities, Medical Services, Athletic Program, Student Activities and Recreation Center, Placement Office, Extracurricular Activities, Veterans' Affairs, and Psychological Services.

Other administrators who share responsibilities for ensuring that institutional plans and activities are carried out are the Directors of the Planning and Institutional Research, External Resources, Budget, and the Information Technologies Offices, among others. Their duties and responsibilities are clearly defined in the UPR By-Laws and described in more detail in the job description questionnaires available in the Human Resources Office. They answer directly to the Chancellor.

In order to ensure institutional effectiveness and efficiency from an administrative point of view, it is essential that administrative personnel have the academic credentials and professional qualifications that are pertinent to the duties and responsibilities of their positions. The Institution recruits its administrative leadership using the consultation process stipulated in the UPR General By-Laws (Articles 19 and 20, 2002). Clearly established criteria guide the selection processes for the positions of Chancellor and Deans in order to ensure that they have the appropriate skills, degrees, and training to carry out their duties. The selection processes include candidate nominations and evaluations by university constituents. Search committees constituted for consultation purposes draw up a profile with the essential personal and professional characteristics necessary in a candidate. The UPR-Ponce's Academic Senate ensures that the consultation process is carried out as mandated.

Traditionally, administrative leaders come from the ranks of the institution, where approximately 81% of the faculty has a master's degree, and 35% has a rank of at least associate professor. Policies for the selection and assessment processes for nonfaculty administrators are established in Articles 75-79 of the UPR General By-Laws. The Human Resources Office follows the stipulated processes and oversees its compliance. Appendix F presents the qualifications and experience of the current deans, academic department heads, and other institutional administrators. In an institution whose mission it is to offer associate and baccalaureate degrees, and transfer programs, this profile is considered adequate.

The Deans of Academic and Student Affairs are experienced full-time faculty members with a hundred percent release time from teaching duties, in order to guarantee that they have the necessary time to discharge their duties effectively. This policy is also followed when the Dean of Administrative Affairs is a faculty member, but at the present time a nonfaculty staff member heads the Deanship of Administrative Affairs. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the Director of the Office of Planning and Institutional Research have a 75% release from their teaching duties. The Academic Department heads are released from 50% of their teaching

assignment. Qualified nonfaculty staff members with the appropriate skills and experience to perform their responsibilities occupy other administrative positions.

According to the UPR General By-Laws (Article 25, Section 25.3), the Chancellor names academic department heads after receiving the Dean's recommendation, who in turn takes into account the opinions of the department members. No specific criteria have been formally established for this selection process, except that the chair should be a full-time faculty member.

Faculty members with administrative work assignments receive financial compensation according to their appointments. The Board of Trustees sets these compensations according to the level of complexity of the charge and to the nature and size of the campus. Compensations are revised in order to retain and recruit the best talent available to fulfill the institution's mission. Revisions of the compensations given to Chancellors and Deans were conducted in 2003. Compensation scales for academic department heads were revised in 2004.

### **Administrative Changes**

Changes in UPR leadership at all levels are a fact that the university community has faced throughout the years. This leadership has traditionally varied with the political affiliation of Puerto Rico's elected government. All reform movements within the University have included efforts to depoliticize University governance, but to no avail.

UPR-Ponce has been affected in many significant ways by these changes. From 2000 to the present, it has had three different chancellors: Dr. Irma Rodriguez from January 1999 to January 2002, Prof. Ana M. Ortiz, as Acting Chancellor, from January to June of 2002, and Prof. Jaime C. Marrero from July 2002 to the present. During this same period, there have been five Deans of Academic Affairs, three Deans of Student Affairs, and four Deans of Administrative Affairs. These changes have had an impact on the effectiveness and continuity of UPR-Ponce's strategic planning efforts, as discussed earlier in Chapter 3.

However, most academic department heads and the directors of student support and administrative services offices have held their positions for several years. Nonfaculty support staff has remained relatively stable as well, which has ensured the continuity of essential processes and services. Clearly established University By-Laws, regulations, policies, and procedures mentioned earlier in this Chapter have also contributed to the effective functioning and governance of the institution, despite continuous administrative changes. In addition, UPR-Ponce has a highly competent faculty and staff who are committed to the institution's mission and goals, and strive to achieve them.

In his Administrative-Academic Plan (2001), President Antonio García-Padilla, states: "The administrative staff provides the institution with stability and professionalism. In a university such as ours, where most of the chief executives tend to come from the ranks of the faculty for limited periods of time and then return to teaching, the stability and continuity offered by career staff is particularly significant. In my opinion, the university does not act with full awareness of these realities."

Responses to the recent Self-Study Survey revealed that 82% of the faculty and 72% of the nonfaculty staff agreed that changes in the administration affect the stability of UPR-Ponce.

Eighty-one percent of the faculty and 71% of nonfaculty staff believe that these changes affect the institution's efficiency and effectiveness. These findings suggest that changes in administration are strongly perceived to have an impact in the stability of the UPR-Ponce.

### **Assessment of UPR-Ponce's Administration and Services**

The Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce is the executive in charge of the evaluation of personnel in positions of trust at the College as stipulated in the University By-Laws of the UPR, Article 39, Section 39.1 and 39.3. The Chancellor uses the document *Evaluation of Faculty Personnel in Administrative Functions*, Certification No. 16 of 1986-87 of UPR-Regional Colleges Administration (RCA). For assessing nonfaculty staff in administrative functions he uses the form OCRH-001, *Nonfaculty Staff Evaluation Form*.

The Dean of Academic Affairs is the executive in charge of conducting the evaluation of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the academic department heads by using the document *Evaluations of Faculty Personnel in Administrative Functions*, Certification No. 16, 1986-87 of the Regional Colleges Administration. The Deans of Student and Administrative Affairs evaluate the directors of the respective administrative offices using the form OCRH-001, *Nonfaculty Staff Evaluation Form*.

Interviews conducted with the Deans revealed that they follow-up on findings from evaluations by meeting periodically with the administrative personnel. Areas for the improvement of administrative structures and services are identified and addressed in the institution's staff development program.

As part of the periodic assessment process of the effectiveness of administrative structures and services at UPR-Ponce, multiple audits are conducted by internal and external regulatory agencies as follows:

- **Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico** - Annual audits are performed to evaluate the effectiveness of the administrative processes, institutional management, and fiscal operations. These audits were carried out in February 2003, in October 2003, and in October 2004. UPR-Ponce was found in 93%, 98%, and 100% compliance, respectively, with the assessment criteria. The UPR-Ponce obtained the best scores for the entire UPR University System in these years.
- **Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico** - Assessment of the Institution's Operational Phase (fiscal operations). This audit is aimed at determining if institutional operations are carried out according to applicable regulations and in an effective and efficient manner.
- **UPR Board of Trustees Assessment of Operational and Administrative Phases** - The Office of Internal Audits of the UPR-Central Administration has performed two complete audits covering years 1994 to 1997, and the Evaluation of the UPR-Ponce Computer Center (Administrative Phase) in February 2004.
- **Contracted External Audits** - External auditing companies are contracted by the UPR to make annual assessments of the effectiveness of different administrative, operational,

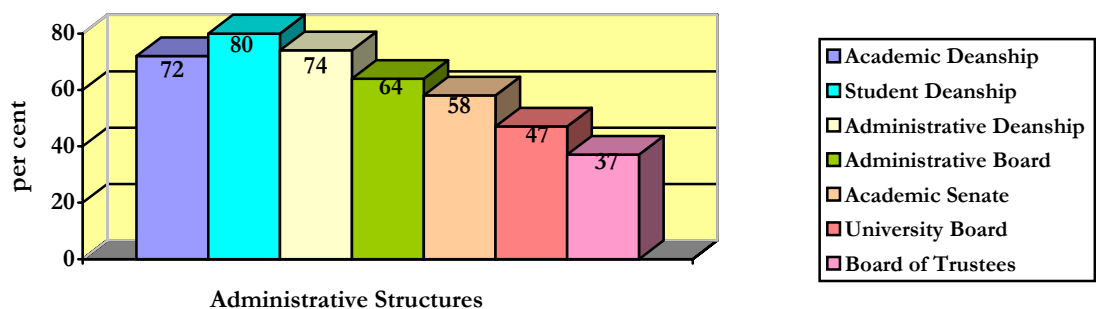
academic, and fiscal processes related to financial aid programs. (Example: *Ernest & Young, Sherrell & Co.*).

- **Federal Audits** –Federal agencies, such as the US Department of Education, regularly assess UPR–Ponce in its administrative processes, including student services such as Veterans’ and Financial Aid Services.
- **UPR Board of Trustees Financial Aid Monitoring** –This board conducts assessments of all aspects related to the financial aid granted to students.
- **Regulatory Agencies** – Other state and federal agencies such as *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Women’s Advocate Office, Disabled Citizens’ Ombudsman Office, Office of Government Ethics, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)*, and others make periodic assessments of the institution’s fulfillment of agency mandatory regulations.

After these assessments are carried out, the Institution develops and implements plans for improvement, to address concerns raised by audits, and submits them to corresponding agencies. The regularity of the audits ensures the institution’s compliance with the plan submitted. Examples of how the findings of the assessments are used to improve the effectiveness of administrative structures and services are pointed out in Chapters 3 and 5 of this report.

The Self-Study Survey requested the faculty’s opinion about the effectiveness of UPR-Ponce’s administrative structures in carrying out their duties. The results are shown in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1**  
Faculty Assessment of the Effectiveness  
of UPR-Ponce’s Administrative Structures



## INTEGRITY

UPR-Ponce promotes sound ethical practices and respect for individuals through its teaching, research, services, administrative practices, use of technology, and labor relations. It expects faculty, nonfaculty staff, and students to respect the responsibilities of scholarly life and to conduct their activities accordingly.

Policies and regulations regarding ethical practices are stated in the University Law of January 20, 1966, as amended; UPR General By-Laws; and in certifications of the Council on Higher Education, the Board of Trustees and the University Board. They are also evidenced through the creation of policies and bodies charged with addressing ethical concerns and disputes among the members of the university community. An example of one of these policies is Circular Letter No. 03-01- *Procedure to offer information to the Internal Auditing Office about the misuse of funds and property, and violation of the laws and rules of the University of Puerto Rico* issued by the Board of Trustees. Other examples of institutional integrity are included in this Self-Study Report.

As a public corporation, the UPR abides by the Puerto Rico Commonwealth's Law of Government Ethics. This law was established to promote and preserve the integrity of public officials and institutions of the Government of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; to establish a Code of Ethics for officials and employees of the Executive Judiciary and Legislative Branches, and for former public employees of these branches; to create the Office of Government Ethics and determine its functions; to require government officials who hold elected, high-level and sensitive offices, to submit reports on their personal finances in order to monitor possible conflicts of interest; to impose certain duties and grant certain powers to the Secretary of Justice; to establish penalties and appropriate funds for the enforcement of this Act; and to repeal Acts No. 110 of May 12, 1943 as amended, and No. 28 of June 8, 1948, as amended (Exhibit 24 - Law Number 12 of July 24, 1985). The Law also requires that every public employee complete a minimum of ten hours of continuing education on ethics topics every two years, which can be achieved through various means provided by the Puerto Rico's Ethics Office. By June 30, 2004, 180 of the 392 employees (46%) had completed the ten hours.

In order to guarantee compliance with this law, the UPR-Ponce Chancellor appointed the Government Ethics Committee. This committee organizes several activities each year to promote sound institutional ethical practices. Among the activities carried out during this academic year are the following:

- Distribution of the *Conética* Bulletin—This bulletin is distributed by the Puerto Rico Ethics Office and covers different matters related to ethics and their implications. It promotes the integrity of public employees and government institutions.
- *Golden Bow Ceremony (Ceremonia del Laço Dorado)* – During Ethics Week, the Institutional Ethics Committee promotes a slogan and distributes a golden bow as a symbol of the week.
- Distribution of the Governmental *Ethos* Magazine – This is the first magazine on the subject of ethics that invites discussion, analysis, and study of the challenges that the modern Puerto Rican society faces. The Puerto Rico Office of Ethics publishes it, as well as other educational material.

Seminars are also organized for personnel and students. Some recent examples of topics discussed are as follows:

- Governmental Ethics Law in Government Relations
- Ethics in the Decision-making Process

- General Rules of Ethics Law
- Ethics Law Dispositions in Contracts
- Ethics Rules on Hiring Relatives
- Public Employees: Behavior, Effects, and Consequences

Norms, instructions, resolutions, and other dispositions have been issued and disclosed by the Chancellor in order to promote sound ethical and legal practices. Some examples of these are:

- Circular Letter No. 03-01 - Use of University funds and property; By-laws and rules of the University of Puerto Rico
- Circular Letter No. 03-02 – Internal auditing program
- Circular Letter No. 03-03 – Payment of overtime
- Circular Letter No. 03-04 – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996
- Circular Letter No. 03-05 – Legal consequences of sales inside the campus
- Circular Letter No. 03-06 – Deadlines for academic personnel contracts and administrative personnel designations
- Circular Letter No. 03-07 – Vacation program

Advances in technology facilitate the access and development of information skills, but, they pose a series of legal and ethical concerns. In order to guarantee that every member of the University community makes legal and ethical use of information technologies, the UPR Board of Trustees issued Certification No. 72 (1999-2000)- *Policies and Procedures for the Legal and Ethical Use of Information Technology*. This policy has been widely disclosed within the university community.

Article 11 of the UPR General By-Laws defines academic freedom as the right of every faculty member to teach their subject with objectivity and integrity, without restrictions other than those imposed by the moral and intellectual responsibilities of covering all the elements of a course, as approved by corresponding authorities. It also includes the respect for different points of view, the responsibility of teaching using pedagogical methods identified with the search of truth and ethical teaching. Article 11 also defines research freedom as the right of every faculty member engaged in research activities to carry out their duties without restrictions that limit objectivity, intellectual integrity or dedication to the search of truth in their work. These rights will not diminish students' fundamental right to learn all essential elements of each course, to have their beliefs respected and to enjoy freedom of expression.

Seventy-nine percent of UPR Ponce faculty, 69% of nonfaculty, and 86% of students believe that the UPR-Ponce promotes sound ethical practices and respect for individuals, as revealed in the Self-Study Survey. Seventy-nine percent of the faculty incorporates universal values and ethics in the general education courses they teach.

Article 2 of the UPR Student General By-Laws (1997), clearly establishes the rights and responsibilities in faculty- student relationships, including aspects such as the student's right to freedom of expression in a climate of harmony and respect. Article 14 describes student behavior subject to disciplinary norms and procedures. Some of these behaviors are related to academic integrity violations, plagiarism, use of drugs and weapons, theft, personal and/or

property damage, obscene conduct, and others. The UPR Student General By-Laws are currently under revision by the University Board. The Office of Student Affairs of the UPR Central Administration has published a pamphlet that includes a summary of institutional policies about Sexual Harassment, Drugs and Alcohol, Security, Copyright Law, Non-Smoking Policy, Patents and Inventions, and others.

UPR-Ponce is committed in its policies and procedures to promoting respect among its constituents. Article 32 of the UPR By-Laws states that constituents are guaranteed the right to freely express, associate, meet openly, formulate petitions, and sponsor and organize activities that comply with the institution's laws and by-laws. These activities should not interfere with other legitimate activities and must abide by institutional respect codes. Article 35 states that administrators should take measures directed towards maintaining an institutional climate of harmony, respect, and unity.

Two recognized institutional labor unions (the *Hermandad de Empleados Exentos no-Docentes* and the *Sindicato de Trabajadores*) represent nonfaculty staff in the collective bargaining process and in reaching labor agreements, while supervisors' concerns are channeled through the *Asociación de Supervisores y Gerenciales*. Some faculty members are grouped under a UPR-recognized professional association (*APPU*, for its Spanish acronym), which monitors their rights and contributes to fulfilling the University's mission and goals.

The Self-Study Survey revealed that 69% of the faculty, 58% of nonfaculty staff, and 80% of students perceived that the institutional climate at the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce is one of respect among constituents.

The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce is honest and truthful in its public relations announcements, advertisements, and recruiting and admissions materials. It has never been accused of misleading ads or information published in its catalog or in announcements of its academic offerings. Public documents about institutional services that are accessible to the community have never been questioned. The Self-Study survey revealed that 76% of the faculty, 51% of nonfaculty staff and 85% of the students perceived that the institution is honest and truthful in the information it discloses to the external and internal community.

## CONCLUSIONS

After a thorough analysis of findings, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The University Law and policies provide appropriate direction and facilitate the effective governance and functioning of the institution by establishing a well-defined governance structure whose lines of authority are clearly defined and followed.
2. While members of governing bodies have sufficient expertise to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities, little evidence was found of governing bodies' participation in the establishment and ongoing assessment of the institution's effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals.
3. Governing bodies' by-laws and policies provide appropriate directions and facilitate the effective governance and functioning of the institution. They are shared with the community through print and electronic media.

4. There is no evidence that governing body members of UPR-Ponce receive formal orientation concerning the institution's mission, organization, goals, and academic programs.
5. An analysis of constituent's participation in the decision making process at the institutional level shows an adequate balance.
6. Changes in administration are strongly perceived as affecting the stability, efficiency, and effectiveness of UPR-Ponce.
7. Administrative structures and services are periodically assessed to improve their effectiveness.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations derive from findings and conclusions:

1. Governing bodies of UPR-Ponce should regularly receive formal orientation concerning the institution's mission, organization, goals, and academic programs. Their participation in the establishment and ongoing assessment of the institution's mission goals, objectives, and strategic planning process should be further evident.
2. The institution should explore strategies to minimize administrative changes and turnovers in order to guarantee stability and effectiveness in all administrative procedures. When undergoing administrative changes, stronger measures should be taken to ensure institutional continuity.
3. Institutional leadership and governance should seek new strategies to enhance the community's perception of their roles.



## INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides evidence of the existence of a pertinent assessment plan and process at UPR-Ponce for periodic assessment of institutional effectiveness. In addition, it investigates the extent to which the information obtained from this process is used for institutional planning, resource allocation and institutional renewal.

### UPR-Ponce Assessment History

Since its creation in 1984, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research (OPIR) has diligently compiled and disseminated statistics and carried out studies of the effectiveness of academic, student and administrative undertakings to guide the decision-making process. However, no formal, systematic plan existed to direct these efforts.

In 1995, the Middle States Association visiting team suggested that the OPIR be more aggressive in collecting, analyzing and disseminating institutional data. Furthermore, the institution should develop a written institutional effectiveness plan parallel to a Strategic Plan (MSA Report to the Faculty, 1995). In response to these concerns, a series of professional development activities were offered to the university community to increase commitment to assessment to improve the teaching-learning process and institutional effectiveness as well as to develop the necessary skills.

In 1996, the UPR-Ponce began the process of preparing a written institutional assessment plan according to the recommendations of the Middle States evaluation team. The OPIR coordinated this endeavor which provided for the participation of faculty, students and administrative personnel. Their efforts resulted in the “Institutional Outcomes Assessment Plan 1995-2000.” In March 1997, a small Middle States team made a follow-up visit and confirmed that the institution had “fully satisfied the requirement of formulating a comprehensive outcomes assessment plan” (MSACHE Follow-up Visit Report, 1997).

One of the committees appointed by the Chancellor in preparation for the 2000 *Periodic Review Report* was charged with evaluating the “1995-2000 Institutional Outcomes Assessment Plan” and its implementation. The submission of the *Periodic Review Report* coincided with the completion of the plan. The committee’s evaluation revealed that the institution had faced many challenges in the development and implementation of its assessment plan, especially since it was a pioneering effort carried out amid continuous administrative changes. In fact, this was one of the key factors limiting the effectiveness of the implementation process. Other elements were the lack of a well-focused understanding of the concept of outcomes assessment, added to a certain degree of skepticism and reluctance on the part of some members of the university community (*Periodic Review Report 2000*).

Recognizing that the institution needed to intensify and strengthen its efforts to develop a more formal and effective assessment process, in April 1999 the administration invited Dr. James Nichols and Mrs. Karen Nichols of Institutional Effectiveness Associates to offer workshops to the faculty and staff and to make recommendations on the institutional assessment process. The workshops generated a great deal of enthusiasm among the participants and increased their understanding of the assessment process.

The Nichols met with former Chancellor Irma Rodríguez and her staff and recommended that outcomes assessment be carried out in a more formal, systematic, and timely manner, following a five-column model. Dr Nichols' recommendations and model were adopted in an effort to develop a more structured approach to institutional assessment activities. All three major components of the institution became the focus of assessment activities: teaching and learning, student services, and administrative support. In September 2000, the UPR-Ponce opened the Institutional Assessment Office which was coordinated by a faculty member with nine-credits release time. A part-time secretary was also hired. The office had the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate the design and development of assessment plans at all levels in each of the deanships.
- Offer training and consultation to all units to facilitate the design and implementation of assessment plans.
- Formalize and standardize the assessment process at the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce.
- Prepare and publish an annual report to summarize, document, and evidence the assessment activities of all academic departments and administrative offices, as well as actions taken as a result of assessment.
- Coordinate the Institutional Assessment Committee.

As a result of this institutional commitment, the academic departments, and administrative and student support offices have carried out the assessment processes continuously since academic year 2000-2001.

In academic year 2002-2003, the Institutional Assessment Office was closed due to administrative restructuring. The assessment process continued as originally planned, but it continued in a more decentralized way. Each deanship oversees the assessment activities of its dependencies. In the Academic Affairs Deanship, the Associate Dean coordinates the assessment efforts, and in the Student Affairs Deanship the responsibility has been assigned to a professional counselor. In the Administrative Affairs Deanship, the Director of Finance is charged with coordinating assessment.

The implementation of assessment plans is evidenced by final reports for the 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and by the 2003-2004 assessment plans. Moreover, annual reports submitted by academic departments and administrative offices include summaries of assessment activities and results, as well as information on uses made of the findings.

Table 5.1 shows the assessment plan completion rates of the UPR-Ponce academic departments, student services, and administrative offices from 2000-2001 up to 2003-2004 academic years.

**TABLE 5.1**  
**UPR-Ponce Assessment Plan Completion Rates**  
**2000-2001 to 2003-2004**

Year	Institutional Average Rate	Deanship Rates		
		Academic Departments	Student Deanship	Administrative Deanship
2000-2001	58%	41%	57%	75%
2001-2002	90%	82%	100%	100%
2002-2003	88%	82%	91%	100%*
2003-2004	99%	88%	100%	100%*
<b>Average</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>94%</b>

\* Deanship of Administrative Affairs developed assessment plans for selected offices. The percent corresponds to the assessment process carried out by those offices only.

An analysis of table 5.1 revealed an increased institutional participation in the assessment process during the last four years following adoption of the five-column model.

Both faculty and nonfaculty staff participates in the development and implementation of their individual unit's assessment plans. According to the results of the faculty Self-Study Survey conducted in 2003, 85% of the faculty agreed that they had participated in the development of their departmental assessment plan; 82% agreed that they had participated in the implementation of the plan (development of assessment tools, data collection, and analysis), and 80% agreed that they had taken part in the discussion of assessment results. However, only 43% of the nonfaculty staff surveyed agreed that they had participated in the development of the assessment plans and other processes performed in their departments or offices. Faculty participation in assessment activities has been greater than that of nonfaculty personnel.

Different institutional and departmental assessment committees have also submitted annual reports that reflect faculty and/or nonfaculty participation (Exhibit 25). However, no evidence of student representation on these committees could be found.

### **Assessment Process**

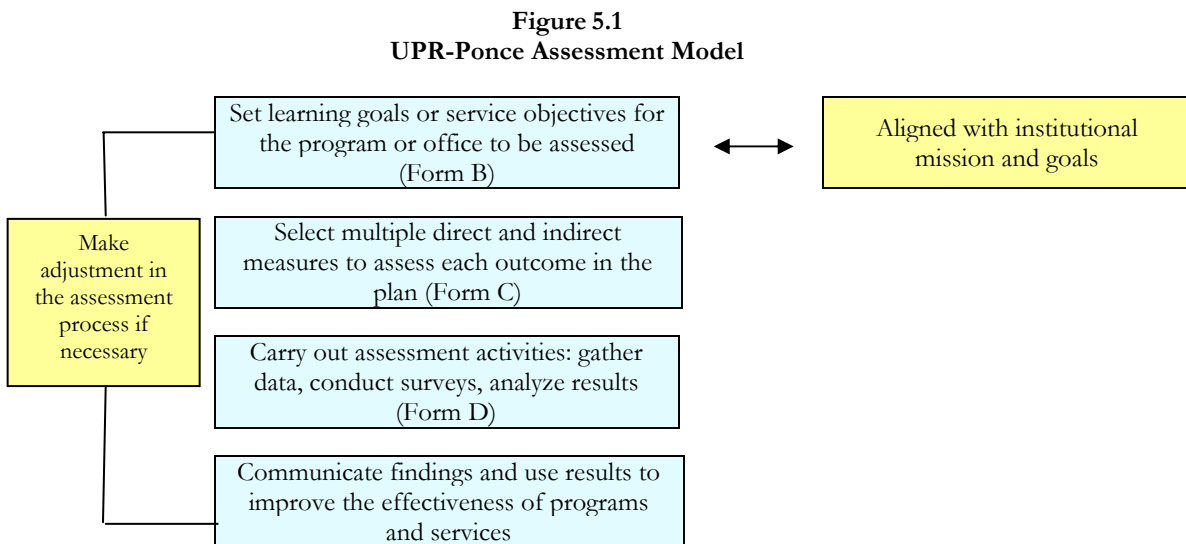
As established in the *UPR-Ponce's Institutional Assessment Plan* draft, the main purposes of institutional assessment at UPR-Ponce are the following:

- Establish a system of quality control for the teaching-learning process.
- Identify differences between intended educational outcomes and the actual results of the educational process.
- Use results to plan, make changes, and develop strategies for improving courses, activities, and programs.
- Contribute to students' personal growth according to established goals.
- Ensure the effectiveness and pertinence of institutional programs.
- Provide information for program evaluation related to student learning.
- Provide accountability to internal and external stakeholders.

UPR-Ponce’s assessment model requires that assessment activities be carried out in the following phases:

1. *Identify the learning goals/ objectives of each program or office (Form B)* - In this phase, the academic departments identify student learning goals according to the Student Profile for Program Graduates while ensuring congruence with institutional mission and goals. Student and administrative support offices also establish objectives related to the mission and goals and to the processes and services which they carry out or provide. In both cases, priorities are set for intended outcomes to be included in the assessment plan for the year.
2. *Select the means for assessment and the criteria for success or performance indicators for each of the goals (Form C)* – Departments and offices identify information sources, as well as direct and indirect measures that will enable them to gather the data needed to assess the outcomes. They must also set the criteria for success. They then create the instruments to be used and ensure their validity and reliability.
3. *Carry out the assessment activities (Form D)* - Data is collected, organized and analyzed in light of established criteria. Findings are reported together with recommendations for improving the quality of student learning and services in relation to the intended outcomes.
4. *Provide feedback on the process (closing the loop)* - Departments document the use they make of assessment results to implement changes where necessary, to improve effectiveness. Information on assessment results and actions taken is disseminated by different means such as reports, newsletters, web pages, letters and others.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the stages mentioned above:



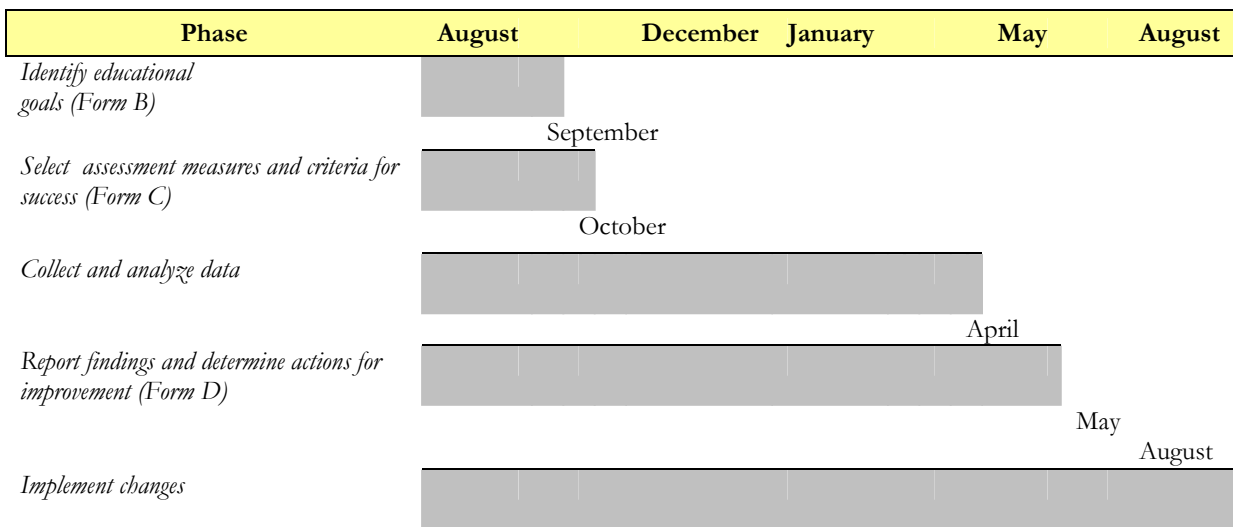
All assessment plans are developed according to the following five-column model suggested by Dr. James Nichols; it is described in greater detail later in this section.

**Figure 5.2**  
**UPR-Ponce Five-Column Outcomes Assessment Model**

Institutional Mission/Goal Reference	Intended Outcomes Statement	Means of Assessment and Criteria for Success	Summary of Data Collected	Uses of Results

Figure 5.3 shows the institutional timetable which was established for the completion of the assessment activities of this model.

**FIGURE 5.3**  
**Timetable for Assessment Activities**



Each year, academic department heads appoint departmental assessment committees to develop and implement a plan to assess student learning. The Student and Administrative Affairs Deanships also appoint assessment committees to assess student and administrative support services, and processes following the model.

**UPR-Ponce Assessment Statement of Purpose**

Committed to the institutional assessment process, the Academic Senate approved a “UPR-Ponce Assessment Statement of Purpose” (Certification 2002-2003-62). It was widely distributed on campus and reads as follows:

*The assessment process at UPR-Ponce constitutes a continuous and collaborative effort among faculty, nonfaculty personnel, and the administration. Guided by **Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education**, published in 2002 by the Middle States Association Commission on Higher Education, and by the assessment model suggested by Dr. James O. Nichols, academic departments and administrative offices develop their respective departmental plans in order to assess the achievement of their established educational goals and objectives. UPR-Ponce is committed to assessment by using a decentralized focus to carry out the process, in which academic departments are responsible for the*

*assessment of educational results; administrative and student services offices and departments are responsible for the assessment of the achievement of their objectives. The role of the UPR-Ponce administration is to coordinate and document assessment activities carried out at different levels. Administrative support is also offered by the Office of Planning and Institutional Research in carrying out surveys and submitting institutional statistical data. Furthermore, the Deanship of Academic Affairs coordinates the process for assessing educational outcomes.*

*The ultimate goal of institutional assessment at UPR-Ponce must be the continuous improvement of its academic programs and teaching support services to ensure the achievement of its mission and goals. In order for assessment to be effective, units must give continuous follow-up to their assessment plans, documenting weaknesses as well as strengths and using findings to improve. In order to ensure that assessment proceeds as stated, it is expected that Deans, department heads, and office supervisors encourage and involve faculty and personnel in formulating assessment plans as well as the assessment activities.*

### **Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP)**

Academic year 2000-2001 marked the beginning of a new assessment era in UPR-Ponce. The Institution has taken great steps towards the development of a sustained assessment culture and has learned important lessons from past experiences which have helped to improve assessment endeavors. Since the UPR-Ponce adopted Nichols' assessment model in 2000-01 for the assessment of student learning and services, most areas of major institutional responsibility have developed and implemented individual assessment plans each year.

However, after reviewing UPR-Ponce's assessment practices and policies, it was determined that a more comprehensive institutional assessment planning document was necessary, in order to clearly establish and guide the assessment process.

During the 2003-2004 academic years, under the leadership of the OPIR, several members of the Self-Study Steering Committee drew up a first draft of an *Institutional Assessment Plan* (Exhibit 26). The purpose of this plan is to serve as a frame of reference to guide and systematize efforts to assess the overall effectiveness of UPR-Ponce in achieving its mission and goals. One of the principles stressed in the plan is that all assessment plans must be linked to the institution's Mission and Goals Statement, which is the framework for planning and assessment activities. Its goals lead to objectives; these objectives lead to strategic actions producing outcomes that are assessable. The results of assessment should lead to ongoing improvement." (IAP, 2004). This plan is based on Nichols' assessment model adopted in 2000-2001. It establishes areas where assessment will be conducted, assigns responsibility for assessment, and establishes means for assessment. This draft was submitted to the Chancellor in June 2004 for consideration and referral to corresponding institutional governing bodies and constituents. In August 2004, the Academic Senate appointed a special committee charged with analyzing and submitting recommendations for this plan. It will also be subject to revision based on Self-Study findings.

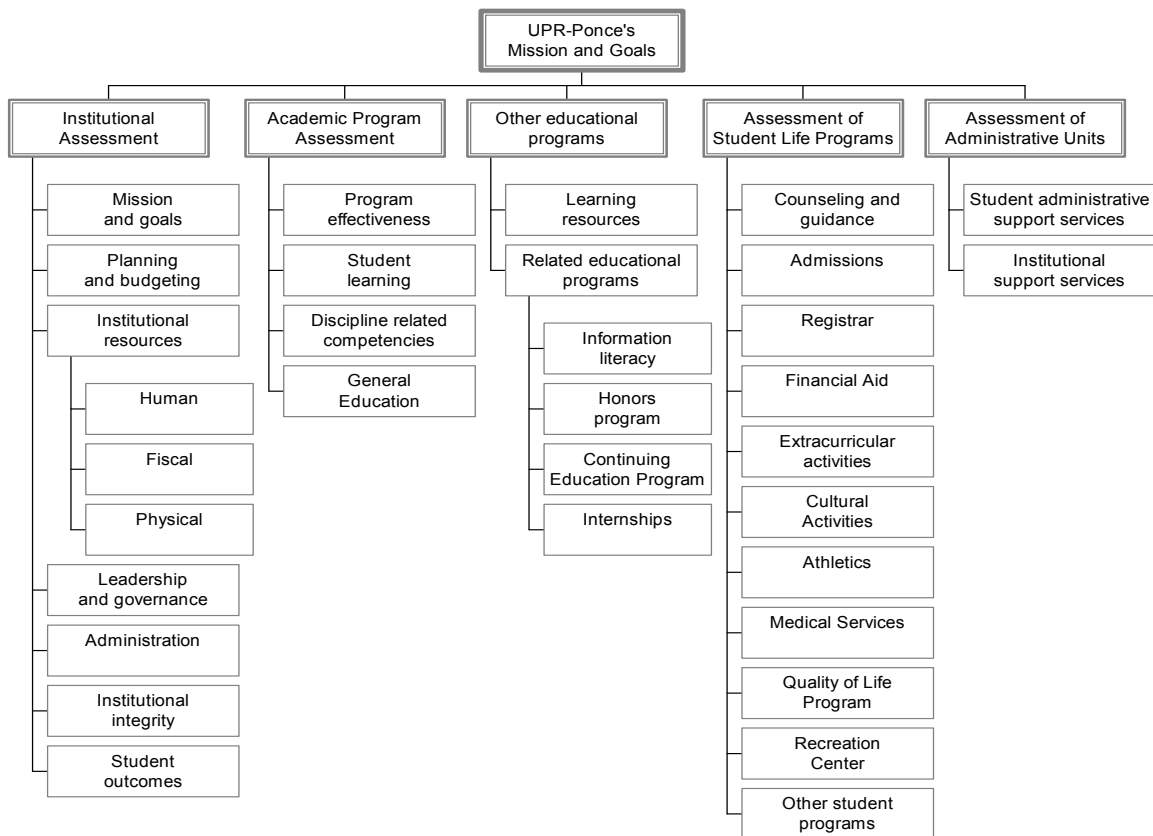
### **Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment**

UPR-Ponce views itself as a collective enterprise. That is, each functioning unit serves a distinctive purpose in the institution and has its own mission, goals, and assessment process which are aligned with the institutional mission and goals. Therefore, the institution's mission and goals should be achieved if each one of its functioning units achieves its particular mission

and goals. In conclusion, the sum-of- its-parts approach is the one that best describes the assessment paradigm in UPR-Ponce.

As stated in the *UPR-Ponce Institutional Assessment Plan* draft, “assessment is carried out in each major area of institutional responsibility.” Figure 5.4 illustrates the institutional areas where assessment is conducted in order to determine institutional effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals.

**FIGURE 5.4**  
**Areas for the Assessment of the UPR-Ponce Overall Effectiveness**



Source IAP (Draft), 2004

Appendix G shows the findings of an analysis of the UPR-Ponce sum-of-its-parts approach to the assessment of institutional goals. The table presents a matrix that matches each institutional goal with the assessment tools that are currently being used throughout the institutions. This analysis revealed that the institution assesses its effectiveness through the assessment of each one of its functioning units by using multiple direct and indirect assessment methods.

### **Office of Planning and Institutional Research Assessment Activities**

This Office conducts institutional assessment activities and offers support to the academic, student, and administrative areas in implementing their assessment plans. At present, the office is staffed by a faculty member with a .75 release time who acts as director, a statistics officer, and

two secretaries. On occasion, other faculty members are given release time to conduct specific institutional studies for the office.

Institutional research reports conducted by the OPIR constitute an important source of information for the assessment of institutional effectiveness, in most areas of institutional responsibility. The following list describes some of the institutional studies performed and published by this office during recent years:

- *Partial and Total Withdrawals Study, 1998-1999*- This study is an analysis of course withdrawals and complete withdrawals. Statistics are given by department, program, and reasons for withdrawals. Strategies or resources that students consider could be used to reduce the number of withdrawals are also studied.
- *Alumni Surveys 1996, 2000* – These surveys report on data collected from alumni surveys including the following information: gender; highest degree obtained; academic program; time taken to complete degree at UPR-Ponce; grade point average; graduate studies if applicable; reasons for continuing graduate studies in a different area; employment information; evaluation of preparation received at UPR-Ponce in relation to job; degree to which the institution contributed to development in areas such as responsibility, teamwork, general education skills, etc.; evaluation of different areas or aspects of UPR-Ponce; degree to which the institution improved quality of life; and overall satisfaction with the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce.
- *Graduating Student Survey, 2000*- This survey measures the degree of satisfaction of graduating students with the academic programs and other services offered at the institution. It also analyzes time taken to complete degrees and reasons for delays, reasons for changing programs, degree to which the institution helped students improve in certain areas, plans for the future, subjects of greatest difficulty, and other characteristics.
- *Physical Facilities Needs Assessment, 2003* – This assessment facilitates one of the objectives of the institutional plan for evaluating academic programs; this study focuses on the adequacy of physical facilities dedicated to the teaching process. It presents findings regarding faculty office space, classrooms, and laboratories.
- *Perception Study: Are UPR-Ponce students satisfied?, 2000*- This study describes the results of a satisfaction survey administered to a sample of the student population. Students were questioned about their participation in student activities, satisfaction with UPR-Ponce's contribution to their development in communication skills in English and Spanish, other skills and personal attributes, general satisfaction with the institution, and satisfaction with their academic program.
- *2001 Cohort Follow-up on their Second Year of Study, 2003*- In this important study of the perceptions of second-year students from the 2001-2002 cohorts, students were questioned about the institution's contribution to their development in certain areas and skills. They were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the services available to them.



- *UPR-Ponce Annual Reports* – These reports are annual compilations of information about achievements and activities in academic, student and administrative affairs. They include many useful tables and graphs.
- *IPEDS Reports*- The United States Department of Education requires all institutions of higher education to complete a series of annual reports that make up the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. The IPEDS reports cover seven main areas. The first area is institutional characteristics, which provides general information about the institution. The fall enrollment section includes full-and-part time enrollment by race/ethnic group, age, and gender. A section to complete gives statistics of degrees completed by type of degree, time taken, race/ethnic group, and gender. The graduation rate survey shows how many students in each cohort complete their degrees within the equivalent of 150% of the time stipulated for the degree, how many transfer to other institutions, the number of athletes in the cohort, and the number that complete their degrees in time and a half. Statistics are also given by race and age. Another section of the IPEDS provides information on full-time faculty by rank, gender, status, and length of contract. Financial statistics and financial aid data are also provided in the IPEDS reports. The last section is a biennial report on the number of nonfaculty staff members by occupation, full-or part-time, gender, and race/ethnic group.
- *Freshmen Students' Profile*- This is a yearly profile of freshman students: gender, place of birth, age, civil status, high school attended, other institutions to which they applied for admission, place of residence while studying, degree which they hope to obtain, factors influencing their decision to study at UPR-Ponce, areas which they need to develop, and other characteristics.
- *2003 Institutional Needs Assessment*- This study provides and analyzes data useful to the institution for planning, program evaluation and other purposes: demographics and natural resources of the region; data on industry and commerce; levels of income of area residents; socioeconomic factors; population distribution by age, sex, race, education, and projections; school enrollment by grades; trends in births; immigration and migration patterns; educational levels of adults over 25; statistics on school dropouts; and information on educational courses and programs offered throughout the southern region.
- *Assessment of 2002-2003 graduating student experience at UPR-Ponce* - This survey of graduation candidates expressed their opinions on several important issues: degree of satisfaction with UPR-Ponce's contribution to the development of general education skills and skills in their chosen areas of study, their evaluations of different areas of the institution, degree of enthusiasm with which they would recommend their program to other people, and evaluation of their overall educational experience at UPR-Ponce.
- *UPR-Ponce Alumni Profile Perception Study* - This is a study prepared by Dr. Jaime García in collaboration with Professor Ivonne Vilariño on faculty perception of skills and traits that UPR-Ponce graduates should possess. Given a list of characteristics, the faculty was asked to indicate how important they believed each characteristic to

b, and to indicate how much they believed the institution contributes to the development of each one in its students. The results were submitted to the Senate for analysis and consideration.

- *Self-Study Surveys, 2004* – These are detailed reports on the findings of the master surveys conducted as part of the self-study process. Faculty, student, and nonfaculty personnel were questioned about their perceptions of the following:
  - Institutional mission and goals
  - Educational offerings
  - Student and administrative support services
  - Student and administrative processes and policies
  - Planning
  - Institutional resources
  - Leadership and governance
  - Administration
  - Institutional integrity
  - Assessment
  
- *UPR-Ponce Faculty, nonfaculty, and students' perceptions related to different aspects of the institution, 1995*- This study reports the perceptions held by faculty, students and nonfaculty personnel on different academic and administrative aspects of the institution.

In addition to these specific reports and documents, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research keeps a database of statistics on enrollment, faculty, academic suspensions, course and complete withdrawals, applications and admissions, degrees conferred, and others. This data is disclosed periodically to the Chancellor, the Deans, and the department heads to aid them in planning and decision-making. Over the last twenty years the Office has also published and distributed an annual statistical compendium of relevant institutional data which is known as *Annual Institutional Data Profile* (Exhibit 27). It includes information on enrollment by program, gender, year of study, full-time and part-time; freshmen characteristics such as College Board scores, general admissions index, high school average, family income and education; students transferring from other institutions; final grade distribution; degrees conferred by academic program and gender; time taken to complete degrees; faculty profile; promotions and tenure; average teaching load; research projects; use of audiovisual equipment; audiovisual materials prepared; library resources; financial aid; social and cultural activities; physical plant; profile of nonfaculty personnel; budget; and costs of equipment, materials, and utilities.

The Planning and Institutional Research Office now publishes most of the above-mentioned studies and other information on its Web page ([www.uprp.edu/opei.htm](http://www.uprp.edu/opei.htm)). Earlier documents are available in print format.

### **Use of Assessment Measures**

As shown previously, there is ample evidence of the systematic and thorough use of multiple qualitative and quantitative measures for the assessment of institutional goals to collect the

necessary information to evaluate its overall effectiveness at multiple levels of analysis. Input measures such as incoming student qualifications, experience measures such as student satisfaction, and outcomes measures such as employment, graduation rates, internal and external audits, and others, are used to assess expected institutional outcomes.

Quantitative and qualitative data and information are regularly requested and used by administrators, faculty, nonfaculty members, and students for multiple purposes. Some examples of the uses made of this data are the following:

- Institutional assessment
- Program assessment
- Proposal writing
- Faculty and student research projects
- Special projects
- Academic planning
- Internal and external accountability
- State and federal agency reports (Puerto Rico Council on Higher Education, IPEDS reports, others)
- Budgeting and decision-making

### **Academic Program Assessment**

The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce recognizes the importance of program assessment in the pursuit of academic excellence, as evidenced in Certification 74-29 of the Academic Senate of the Regional Colleges Administration. This certification describes the program assessment process as a continuous one that should facilitate adaptation to changing circumstances.

The Deans of Academic Affairs are responsible for overseeing the assessment of all academic programs to determine their nature and effectiveness. This evaluation provides information that helps to maximize the outcomes, efficiency and quality of educational activities, and resources. This information is used in making decisions related to the programs. In September 2002, the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs at the UPR-Ponce revised its 1997 guidelines for program evaluation by taking into account all related laws and certifications. As a result, the Office published the *Guidelines for the Assessment and Evaluation of Academic Programs*, which was distributed to all departments. Academic department heads and program evaluation committee coordinators received training on how to implement the guidelines in assessing and evaluating their programs.

Recognizing that program evaluation and revision requires the commitment of all concerned, the guidelines set out the following roles and responsibilities:

- **Academic Affairs** – This division advises departments on the process; it is responsible for ensuring that the plan for the systematic evaluation of academic programs is followed and completed.
- **Associate Dean of Academic Affairs** – This administrator coordinates the process at the institutional level.

- **Department Head** – This administrator supervises the program evaluation and revision process in the department.
- **Program Evaluation and Revision Committee** – This committee carries out the process at the program level.

The guidelines established the following principles for program evaluation:

1. Program evaluation is the shared responsibility of all faculty members.
2. Evaluation is a natural, continuous process of all programs.
3. Although all programs undergo informal evaluation, a formal periodic, and systematic process must also be carried out.
4. Evaluation should not pose a threat to any program component.
5. Evaluation should be based on a plan with clear objectives.
6. Evaluation should be a cooperative process among all stakeholders: faculty, students, administrators, support staff, and members of the community.
7. Stakeholders should participate in each stage of the evaluation process.
8. During the evaluation process, students, faculty, support staff, and the community should clarify and understand program and institutional missions, goals, and objectives.
9. Evaluation should demonstrate to what degree program goals and objectives are achieved; processes should also be assessed.
10. Effective evaluations require time, technical assistance, training, and budgeting.
11. External evaluations such as those of accrediting agencies should be helpful to internal evaluations. They should be viewed as complimentary.
12. Changes can be implemented during the evaluation process.

The Institution pursues the following goals in regard to program evaluation:

- All academic programs offered at UPR-Ponce will be evaluated in a period of time not to exceed three years. Each program evaluated in the first cycle will be evaluated every three years thereafter unless the certification that created the program dictates a shorter frequency (Certification 131, Council on Higher Education).
- New programs will be evaluated three years after the graduation of the first class and every three years thereafter unless the certification that created the program dictates a shorter frequency.

A more detailed account of the academic program assessment process and findings can be found under Chapter 8 of this report.

### **Assessment of Student Learning**

Assessment of student learning in the UPR-Ponce occurs at three levels: institutional, program, and course. A detailed explanation of the assessment activities conducted to determine the institution's educational effectiveness is included later in this report under student learning assessment.

## Changes and Improvements Resulting from the Institutional Assessment Process

Assessment is an evaluation process that helps evidence outcomes and determines whether or not changes or improvements are needed. UPR-Ponce recognizes that its ability to close the loop is the key to successful assessment.

During the last five years, UPR-Ponce has managed to encourage a formal assessment culture and to cultivate an awareness of its importance in improving institutional effectiveness. Great effort has gone into ensuring that the results of assessment are used to plan for changes where needed. The Self-Study Survey revealed that 76% of faculty members and 52% of nonfaculty staff believe assessment results are used to improve academic programs or student services.

As evidenced earlier in this report, assessment is carried out in each major area of institutional responsibility through multiple, direct and indirect, qualitative, and quantitative methods. Institutional effectiveness assessment processes have been used to improve the quality of the planning processes, resource allocation, institutional integrity, and student learning. Some examples of changes and improvements that may be attributed to assessment include the following:

### Planning

- Revision of the UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan.
- Development of plans for improving physical installations and green spaces on campus.
- Development of annual operational plans based on assessment results.
- Use of assessment results in yearly enrollment planning and admissions criteria.
- Establishment of an *Instructional Technology Strategic Plan* to guide the use of technology in improving the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process.
- Development of training and professional development plans for faculty and staff aimed at improving the quality of the teaching and services offered.
- Corrective action plans based on the findings of both internal and external audits and supervision.
- Development of an *Institutional Effectiveness Plan* including criteria for success to measure outcomes of the *UPR-Ponce 2000-2005 Strategic Plan* (Exhibit 28).
- Development of a Physical and Programmatic Development Plan to integrate institutional programmatic growth with the development of adequate physical spaces.

### Resource Allocation

- The Chancellor and the Budget Office designed a mechanism (*Budget Request Documents-Exhibit 29*) used to establish priorities in the distribution of the portion of the annual institutional budget that is not committed to obligatory actions (3-5%), based on budget requests from all offices and departments. In an interview, the Budget Director indicated that budget priorities are based on needs to strengthen academic programs, student services, and administrative areas which in turn are identified from assessment results and the corresponding planning.

## **Institutional Renewal**

- New bachelor degree programs in Biology, Social Sciences, and Athletic Training were created as a result of needs assessments.
- Funding the Title V Project was obtained by using the results obtained from the assessment of the student learning and the freshman profiles.
- A preschool center for the care of employees' children was established as a result of a needs assessment.
- A new parking lot was built for students, in part as a response to the results of various satisfaction surveys.
- Campus security was increased in response to the assessment of student and staff satisfaction with this area.
- Additional staff positions have been created to improve the quality of support services rendered.
- Different offices were remodeled and relocated.
- Faculty evaluation policies and procedures were revised.
- A multipurpose sports building was constructed to satisfy the athletic needs of the student population.
- A Psychological Services Office was created to serve the needs of students and personnel.
- A Quality of Life Office was created to promote compliance with institutional policies regarding safety, drug abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual aggression on campus.
- An Alumni Office was organized to strengthen ties with our alumni.
- The Annual Faculty Workshop was organized to offer professional development activities for the faculty in response to faculty needs assessments.
- A formal assessment process was implemented to improve institutional, program, and service effectiveness.
- Enrollment processes have been improved by enabling students to select courses via the Internet.

## **Leadership and Governance**

- A new institutional leadership was appointed based on the results of a consultation and assessment process among university constituents.
- Training on Administration and Supervision topics were offered to the institutional leadership based on findings of a needs assessment.

## **Administration**

- A Legal Services office was set up to expedite actions that require legal processes in response to internal and external audits and monitoring.
- An audit coordinator was appointed to follow up on recommendations made in internal and external audits.
- The position of Documents Administrator was created to oversee the compliance with policies requiring the preparation of an inventory of public documents to be kept or discarded.

- The Computer Center and the Academic Computing Office were merged to create the Office of Information Technologies based on the recommendations made by external evaluators.

### **Institutional Integrity**

- A plan to train institutional personnel on the Government Ethics Law was developed.
- Workshops and seminars were offered to students on different topics of professional ethics.
- Institutional policies on ethical and legal uses of technology were developed, implemented, and disseminated.
- Revision of the Procedures used to grant access to the Student Information System (SIS) were revised in response to an audit report that included recommendations related to the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of student information.
- The Computing Center was relocated, and the Director was made responsible for its security and control.
- The property inventory process was decentralized to ensure its transparency.
- Formal written contracts became a requirement for construction and services that include clauses regarding guarantees and policies.
- Internal control measures on receipt and delivery of merchandise and materials were set up as a result of an assessment report submitted by the Internal Audits Office.
- Formal bids became a requirement for purchases exceeding \$25,000.

### **Student Learning**

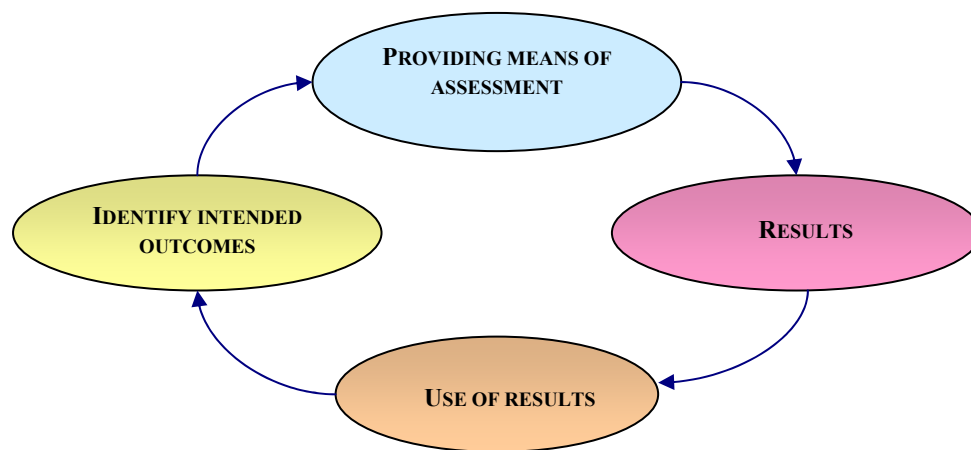
- A new assessment model was adopted and implemented as a result of the analysis of the information obtained from the *1996-2000 Outcomes Assessment Plan for the Periodic Review Report* in 1995.
- Freshman orientation was reorganized in the fall of 2003 in order to provide more time to cover the topics of study habits, time management, planning, and library and information skills.
- Marketing and accounting internships were created to provide students with practical experiences that contribute to the educational expectations of their programs.
- Title V computer labs were used by the English, Spanish, and Mathematics faculty to strengthen basic skills and increase student retention.
- Syllabi of different departments were revised in order to include objectives and activities designed to improve personal and information skills.
- Educational technology was purchased and faculty was trained to incorporate it in the classroom to improve the teaching and learning process.
- Tutorial programs were organized in the Chemistry and Mathematics Departments to offer assistance to all students needing help.
- The Tutoring Project at the Counseling Office was strengthened by increasing the resources available and providing training sessions to improve the quality and effectiveness of the Project.

## Assessment and Strategic Planning

During the past ten years, UPR- Ponce has conducted a series of internal and external environmental assessments in order to establish appropriate strategic directions for the institution and its functioning units. Comprehensive internal and environmental assessments were conducted in 1995-1996, 2000-2001, and 2003-2004 as part of the strategic planning, academic program review, and self-study processes.

James Nichols' institutional effectiveness paradigm, adopted in 2000 as the basis for UPR-Ponce assessment plans, integrates the planning and assessment processes. This model provides a means for closing the planning and evaluation loop following each assessment cycle:

FIGURE 5.5  
UPR-PONCE ASSESSMENT LOOP



In 2001, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research assessed institutional effectiveness based on its *1995-2000 Strategic Plan (Administrative and Academic Actions Taken with Regard to Weaknesses in the Strategic Plan, 1995-2000)* (Exhibit 30). This evaluation was conducted prior to the process of reviewing the strategic plan for the next five years (*2000-2005 Strategic Plan*). In academic year 2003-2004, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research developed a plan to assess the effectiveness of its *2001-2005 Strategic Plan (Institutional Effectiveness Plan)* (Exhibit 31). This document includes indicators for each area of the plan and will be implemented upon completion of the Strategic Plan.

Corrective action plans are also periodically prepared and implemented based on findings from internal and external audits and assessments. As recommended by the MSA evaluation team in 1995, the Institution developed a *Strategic Plan* and its first *Institutional Outcomes Assessment Plan*.

In 2003-2004, a strategic instructional technology plan was developed as a result of a recommendation from a campus assessment team from *The Advanced Networking with Minority Serving Institutions* funded through EDUCAUSE. The purpose of this plan is to guide the use of technology in improving the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process.



Since 2002-2003, in an effort to strengthen the integration of planning and assessment processes, the Deans of Academic, Administrative, and Student Affairs have requested that the academic units prepare annual operational plans that include specific strategic actions to respond to assessment results. At the end of the year, they must submit an annual report to the Dean in which they assess and report the effectiveness of their operational plans. The Student Affairs Assessment Committee also requests that all offices submit annual assessment reports including actions to be taken for improvement of their services according to assessment results. Academic and administrative offices also require that actions for improving assessment results be included in their assessment reports (Form D).

In academic year 2003-2004, the Physical Resources Office developed an *Institutional Preventive Maintenance Plan*, which became operational in July 2004. This plan contains strategic actions to maximize the quality and effective use of physical resources at UPR-Ponce. The effectiveness of the plan is to be assessed and reviewed periodically by the Dean of Administrative Affairs and the Director of Physical Resources.

Using the information obtained for its comprehensive self-study, UPR-Ponce will assess its effectiveness and set the guidelines for the revision of its strategic plan. Findings and recommendations included in this report are expected to set the agenda for institutional improvement in the next five years and to improve and strengthen the link between the assessment and strategic planning processes.

### **Institutional Commitment and Support for Assessment**

Faculty and administrative support have been significant factors in the development of an assessment culture at our institution. Administrative commitment to assessment was formally evidenced when, in April 2000, former Chancellor Irma Rodríguez invited Dr. James Nichols from Institutional Effectiveness Associates to offer consultation and training to the university community (teaching and nonteaching personnel). Dr. Nichols' workshop, *Understanding Assessment Concepts and Implementing Institutional Effectiveness in Administrative and Educational Support Units*, generated great enthusiasm among participants and a commitment from the Chancellor and top ranking administrators to adopt Dr. Nichols' five column model for assessment plans.

As previously mentioned, actions following this initial commitment such as the creation of an Institutional Assessment Office with the appointment of an Assessment Coordinator, evidence the efforts of the administration to encourage assessment initiatives across the institution. Numerous orientation sessions and training opportunities have been provided to faculty and nonfaculty staff in order to enhance their understanding of assessment concepts and develop expertise in its procedures.

In October 2001, the Chancellor appointed the assessment coordinator and a member of the faculty, actively involved in assessment efforts of student services, to participate in The National Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment at Penn State Assessment Institute. In 2003 and 2004, institutional representatives benefited from Dr. John Green's *Outcomes Assessment Workshops* in Puerto Rico.

The following committees have been appointed by the Chancellor to provide support and guidance for assessment initiatives at the institutional level since academic year 2000-2001.

- Institutional Assessment Committee
- Academic Assessment Committee
- Student Assessment Committee
- Administrative Assessment Committee

Academic department heads have also appointed departmental assessment committees to develop and implement assessment plans and activities at the department level. These plans are annually submitted to the Academic Assessment Committee for evaluation and approval. Unit administrators are responsible for providing the initiative and leadership necessary to involve all constituents in assessment and planning processes.

Institutional funds have been provided to support assessment activities of academic departments and individual faculty through *assessment mini-proposals*. The Office Systems Department received funding to use of the College Board ELASH standardized tests to assess English communication skills of their graduation candidates.

The Office of Planning and Institutional Research provides support to academic departments and offices to implement their assessment plans. This support consists of, but is not limited to, developing and implementing assessment tools, providing technical and statistical support, and assisting in the collection, dissemination, and analysis of assessment data. The degree of support offered is subject to the availability of human resources which at this moment are somewhat limited.

Additional evidence of institutional commitment to assessment lies in the Academic Senate's approval of the *UPR-Ponce Assessment Statement of Purpose* (Certification 2002-2003-62), which was cited earlier in this report.

In November 2003, a questionnaire was administered to the Chancellor, Deans and academic department heads to measure their level of commitment to assessment activities and to determine how these administrators enhance the campus climate for assessment. The instrument used (Enhancing the Campus Climate for Assessment Questionnaire) was taken from the MSA publication *Student Assessment Learning: Options and Resources*. The following conclusions were drawn from the responses given by UPR-Ponce's Chancellor and Deans to this survey regarding their commitment to assessment and how they can enhance the campus climate for assessment:

- Personal commitment to assessment is acceptable. Nevertheless, commitment to sharing leadership of assessment with the faculty should be strengthened.
- Interest in assessment is stimulated, although communication channels among campus assessment committees are not so common, nor are they widely used to promote assessment on campus.
- Little use is made of hiring procedures to recruit people who will help the campus focus on assessment.
- Incentives provided to faculty to focus on assessment are limited.
- Training opportunities provided to enable faculty to strengthen assessment could be improved.
- Resources provided to enable faculty to strengthen assessment are meager.
- Time provided to faculty for focusing on assessment is insufficient.

- Encouragement of measurable outcomes of assessment endeavors is extremely poor.
- Very little has been done by academic leaders to celebrate and reward assessment achievements.

Responses given by academic department heads were somewhat similar to those of the Chancellor and Deans; however, the department heads indicated that they had more effective communication with their departmental assessment committees. Also, they expressed greater commitment to assessment by giving incentives to their faculty to focus on assessment, especially by promoting a learning-centered environment and strengthening assessment of major goals for the institution.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

After an analysis of UPR-Ponce's institutional assessment process, the following conclusions can be made:

1. UPR-Ponce has made noteworthy progress in implementing a more structured approach to assessment in most major areas of institutional endeavor, especially during the last five years. A growing consensus of the importance of using assessment results for institutional improvement has been noted.
2. Increasing awareness of assessment on campus has resulted in greater participation by university faculty and staff in assessment activities. Most of the UPR-Ponce units have developed and implemented assessment plans based on mission and goals to determine their effectiveness, and therefore, that of the Institution. Academic units and student services offices have been actively involved in assessment practices, and assessment of student learning has become the center of program assessment processes.
3. The Institution uses multiple qualitative and quantitative measures to assess its goals.
4. Dissemination and use made of the data collected to improve educational programs, services, and operations could be maximized.
5. Administrative support for and commitment to assessment could be more proactive.
6. Integration of assessment results to planning and budgeting could be further elaborated.
7. Assignment of responsibility for carrying out assessment activities in some areas, as well as ensuring the disclosure and use of its results at different institutional levels, could be better defined.
8. Current staffing of the Office of Planning and Institutional Research is limited. This factor might limit the number and complexity of institutional assessment activities that can be carried out, as well as the support provided to departments and offices in implementing their assessment plans.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the effectiveness of its institutional assessment process, UPR-Ponce should consider the following recommendations:

1. Continue efforts to enhance the integration of assessment results to UPR-Ponce's strategic planning and budgeting processes.
2. Develop a more robust assessment structure to coordinate assessment activities and ensure that information regarding institutional effectiveness is used in ongoing and strategic planning efforts.
3. Develop a more formal and regular process for communicating assessment results and for providing discussion forums at different levels to promote improvement.
4. Restructure and strengthen the OPIR, thus, making it more responsive to, and focused on assessment processes at all levels.
5. Further enhance institutional leadership support and commitment to creating a culture that values assessment as a vehicle to improve educational programs, services, and operations.
6. Continue efforts to acknowledge existing assessment activities and to promote fuller participation by facilitating communication, encouraging discussion of results, and providing incentives.

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# CHAPTER 6 STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the extent to which the institution's admissions policies, procedures, and practices are clearly stated, fully understood, widely communicated, consistently implemented, and periodically reviewed. It also establishes how consistent they are with, and contribute to, the fulfillment of the institution's mission, goals, and objectives. An analysis is made of the quality of student support services available to help students achieve the institutional goals set for them.

## STUDENT ADMISSIONS

### Freshmen Admissions

The admissions process for freshmen students to the UPR system is a highly centralized one. The UPR Central Administration's Admissions Office (UPRCA-AO) prepares a brochure with information on all academic programs offered at each of the University's eleven campuses. In order to determine that the information provided in these brochures is accurate, the UPRCA-AO requires that both Deans of Academic and Student Affairs certify that the information to be disseminated in the brochure clearly reflects actual academic offerings. Brochures are distributed to all units of the system and these are redistributed to high schools based on their geographical proximity to each. Students are required to submit an application form (included with the brochure) in which they select up to three program alternatives, in order of priority, based on their preferences. Submission of the application form must be accompanied with an admission application fee of \$15. Since 2002-03 students applying for any academic program at the University of Puerto Rico have the options of filling out the application form by phone or via the Internet. This was instituted as a result of an assessment which identified conditions that would enhance and facilitate the application process.

When the Admissions Office of each unit distributes brochures and application forms to high school counselors, who are in charge of advising students about their university options, the Financial Aid Office at each unit provides them with financial aid application forms. Admissions criteria, financial aid options, deadlines for application, and any other concerns are explained at that time. In addition, the Central Administration's Admissions Office also holds a yearly Conference for High School Counselors which is held by region and at different UPR campuses. This ensures that counselors are well-informed about all policies and procedures related to the admission process and financial aid options, thus, ensuring the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information. When students are accepted, the UPRCA-AO sends them a package that includes detailed information about financial aid.

UPR-Ponce provides all high school students with timely and accurate information about the programs and services it offers. A professional counselor has been assigned to visit all high schools in the UPR-Ponce geographic area to provide students with brochures of the institution's academic offerings. Evidence that UPR-Ponce offers trustworthy and honest recruitment and admissions materials lies in the fact that 85% of the students participating in the Self-Study Survey agreed that this was so.

Through Certification No. 25 – 2003-04, the Board of Trustees of the University of Puerto Rico established the freshmen admissions norms and policies: 1) graduation from an accredited high school with a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher, or approval of the high school equivalency test offered by the Puerto Rico Department of Education; 2) scores on the College Evaluation and Admission Test (*CEAT*) offered by the College Board, which assesses students in five different areas: verbal and mathematical reasoning, and achievement in English, Mathematics, and Spanish; and 3) the General Application Index (GAI) established for the course of study selected by the student.

Based on this Certification, the GAI is computed using the following apportionment: 50% to the high school GPA, 25% to the *CEAT* verbal reasoning score, and 25% to its mathematical reasoning score. Prior to 1995, the weight was equally distributed among the GPA and the *CEAT* verbal and reasoning scores (one third to each component). Changes came after a study commissioned by the Central Administration's Admissions Office determined that the GPA had a higher predictive value in determining academic success.

The freshmen admissions policies and procedures were submitted to public scrutiny. On July 24, 2003, the UPR Board of Trustees published an announcement in a local newspaper informing the local community of its intention to approve new policies and norms and requested written comments on these matters. After considering comments and using its judgment and experience acquired from using the reconceptualized GAI computation, the Board emitted its Certification on *University of Puerto Rico's admissions norms and policies for freshmen students* (Certification 25 – 2003-04).

Although admissions criteria at UPR-Ponce conform to rules and regulations set by the Board of Trustees, the Institution is authorized to admit a limited number of students (not to exceed 2.2% of its total freshmen admissions), by using other criteria which take into consideration their abilities, talents, or exceptional conditions. Students applying under these conditions must comply with the high school graduation and College Board examination requirements, and they must indicate the abilities, talents, or exceptional conditions which make them worthy of consideration. Under these regulations, UPR-Ponce now only considers athletes who are admitted to the Elementary Education program. These students can have GAI scores up to twenty points under the scores required by their programs of choice. The UPR Central Administration's Admissions Office certifies those candidates that comply with all requirements, and these are submitted to the corresponding unit for its analysis. Students are also required to demonstrate their skills in order to be accepted. Talented students are allowed to delay their UPR admission for a whole year on the condition that they present evidence that they will be pursuing nondegree postsecondary educational experiences outside of Puerto Rico.

GAI's for institutional programs are determined through a specific process. The Dean and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, the Director of Planning and Institutional Research, and department heads in charge of an academic program participate in a workshop in which they analyze the performance of each program using the following criteria: 1) five-year trend of applicants, admitted, and enrolled students; 2) five-year trend in GAI and enrollment quota for first-year students; 3) performance (GPA and credits approved) for the previous year's cohort in their first year of study, based on their GAI's; 4) retention and graduation rates; and 5) degrees

granted. Based on the analysis of this data, department heads make recommendations to the Dean of Academic Affairs regarding the minimum GAI to be required for the program and the enrollment quota for freshmen. The information is analyzed at the Deanship level and submitted to UPR-Ponce's Administrative Board, which officially approves the information and submits it to the Central Administration's Admissions Office. This process ensures that students accepted to the academic programs of their choice (following their interests and goals) have the required competencies.

Table 6.1 shows the institution's five-year trend in admissions quota, number of applicants, number of students admitted, and enrolled freshmen students.

**TABLE 6.1**  
**Admissions quota, applicants, admitted, and enrolled freshmen students**  
**(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

Year	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Admissions quota	1290	1355	1320	964	1053
Applicants	1713	1610	1668	1366	1337
Admitted	1164	1148	1021	736	871
Enrolled	1054	1016	937	683	826
% Admitted that enrolled	91	89	92	93	95
% Occupancy *	82	75	71	71	78

\*Percentage of admittance quota covered by students that enrolled  
Source: UPR-Ponce Office of Planning and Institutional Research

While there has been a 22% decline in freshman enrollment from 1999-2000 to 2003-04, the percentage of students admitted that finally enrolled has steadily increased in the last three years. Percent occupancy declined for the first three years; it increased in 2003-04.

Table 6.2 presents the number of freshmen students admitted at UPR-Ponce based on abilities, talents, or exceptional conditions for academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04. It reflects that UPR-Ponce has complied with the established admissions quota for students admitted by abilities, talents, or exceptional conditions.

**TABLE 6.2**  
**Freshmen students admitted**  
**by abilities, talents, or exceptional conditions**  
**(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Students admitted by abilities, talents, or exceptional conditions	6	8	15	16	19
% of freshmen enrollment	0.5	0.7	1.5	2.2	2.2

Source: UPR-Ponce Admissions Office

Table 6.3 presents the distribution of incoming freshmen by GAI for academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04.

**TABLE 6.3**  
**Distribution of incoming freshmen by GAI**  
**(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

GAI	Percentage by academic year				
	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
150 – 199	< 1	< 1	< 1	< 1	0
200 – 249	22	25	11	5	7
250 – 299	50	48	60	55	58
300 – 349	25	24	26	39	32
350 – 400	1	1	2	1	2
Incomplete records	3	2	0	0	< 1
<b>Over 250</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>92</b>

Source: UPR-Ponce Annual Institutional Data Profiles

From the content of table 6.3 it is clear that over 80% of students admitted had GAIs higher than 250 since academic year 2001-02.

### Transfer students

UPR-Ponce enrolls a limited number of internal transfer students coming from other UPR campuses and external transfer students coming from other institutions.

Table 6.4 presents these numbers.

**TABLE 6.4**  
**Number of enrolled external and internal transfer students**

	1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02		2002-03		2003-04	
	1 <sup>st</sup> . sem.	2 <sup>nd</sup> . sem.	1 <sup>st</sup> . sem.	2 <sup>nd</sup> . sem.	1 <sup>st</sup> . sem.	2 <sup>nd</sup> . sem.	1 <sup>st</sup> . sem.	2 <sup>nd</sup> . sem.	1 <sup>st</sup> . sem.	2 <sup>nd</sup> . sem.
External transfers	56	19	25	22	27	14	27	14	40	8
Internal transfers	28	10	41	28	48	18	43	27	47	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>% External transfers</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>24</b>

Source: UPR-Ponce Annual Institutional Data Profiles

In academic year 1999-2000, UPR-Ponce enrolled a higher proportion of external transfers (close to 7 out of 10). The numbers shifted in later years, with internal exceeding external transfers.

The admission of external transfer students is guided by rules and regulations stated in Certification 2002-2003-69 of the UPR-Ponce's Academic Senate (Appendix H). As a general norm, external transfer students are required to approve 50% or more of the required specialization credit hours at UPR-Ponce. The above mention certification also establishes the procedure to be followed in order to apply as an external transfer student: filling out an



application form with the required fee, submitting two official transcripts of all college-level work, and a letter of recommendation from the Dean of Students of the institution which the student previously attended.

Regulations regarding the evaluation process require that committees at the program level consider the applicant and that reasons for denying acceptance be given if a student is rejected (either because of noncompliance with specific program requirements or because of completion of departmental transfer quota). If the student is accepted, it is required that a transfer credit form be included with program acceptance. Acceptances are usually received at the Registrar's Office without the transfer credit form. For academic year 2002-03, completion rates (defined as percentage of transfer students whose transcripts reflected approved courses at UPR-Ponce) were 67% for the first semester and 76% for the second semester. This is a cause for concern, as these students may be enrolled in courses that are eventually transferred, thus, requiring reimbursement of financial aid.

Through Certification No. 2002-2003-34, the UPR-Ponce's Academic Senate formally approved norms and policies guiding the approval of transfer courses from other institutions. Criteria used to establish equivalence among courses are as follows: courses must have been taken at an accredited institution; each course description and content, as described in their syllabi, should have a 75% equivalency with that of UPR-Ponce's courses; and courses should have been approved with a grade of "C" or higher.

In August 2003, a study was conducted to determine level of satisfaction with UPR-Ponce's transfer process among external transfer students. Eighty-two percent of students surveyed indicated that the orientation received regarding the transfer process was excellent or good; 86% rated the material published by the Institution regarding its offerings as excellent or good. Sixty-eight percent considered the time taken for the whole process as satisfactory, while 59% stated that the organization of the process was excellent or good. Offices participating in the process were also evaluated, with percentages representing the excellent or good choices: Admissions (82%); Registrar's Office (73%), Bursar's Office (86%), Academic Departments (100%), and Academic Affairs (85%).

In September 2003, the Deanship of Academic Affairs appointed a committee to establish course equivalencies with other private institutions in Puerto Rico. When completed, the document should expedite the process of giving credit to courses taken at other institutions by external transfer students.

Internal transfer students are considered based on the following criteria: approval of twenty-four (24) credit hours in any within the other units of the UPR system and compliance with the minimum GAI required by the program to which the student is applying. Transfer of courses for these students is easy because the UPR keeps a course coding system which is uniform among units. An evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with the process among the internal transfer students is yet to be conducted.

### **Evaluation of the Admissions Process**

Table 6.5 compiles results from different sources regarding student evaluation of the quality of the admissions process.

**TABLE 6.5**  
**Students' evaluation of the admissions process**

	1999-2000 Alumni survey	2000-01 Freshmen survey	2001-02 cohort in their second year of study survey	2002-03 Graduating students' survey
Percent evaluating as excellent or good	60	74	58	65

Source: OPIR

Data is inconsistent (ranging from 58% to 74%) because in the 1999-2000 alumni survey, the 2001-02 cohort in their second year survey, and in the graduating students' survey the information about the quality of the admissions process was not determined separately for those students who started as freshmen at UPR-Ponce, and those students who either transferred externally or internally.

The most reliable source for evaluating the quality of the freshmen admissions process is the freshmen survey. It was observed that the question regarding the evaluation of this item was eliminated from the instrument used to question freshmen from academic years 2001-2002 onward. This limits the analysis of the quality of the admissions process, as the process has undergone major changes that would benefit from student feedback. The Office of Planning and Institutional Research revised the freshmen student survey instrument and included the evaluation question concerning the admissions process in the survey again. The revised version will be used with 2004-2005 freshmen to measure the effectiveness of this process.

### **Profile of Freshmen Students**

Appendix I presents characteristics of freshmen students for academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-2004. The profile shows that UPR-Ponce's freshmen are predominantly female (approximately 60%), single, have graduated from a public high school, live with their parents while studying, and come predominantly from the UPR-Ponce's assigned geographical area. In addition, they are of Hispanic origin and come from the traditional 18-year old cohort (Appendix I-1). The distribution of incoming freshmen by high school grade point average (GPA) shows an increasing trend in the percentage of high school GPAs of 3.00 or over, with the value stabilizing in academic year 2002-2003 (Appendix I-2).

The distribution of incoming freshmen by CEAT achievement test results shows that for the last five years over 50% and 69% of UPR-Ponce freshmen students scored over 500 in Spanish and Mathematics, respectively (Appendix I-3). Scores on the English achievement test are consistently lower. Close to 50% of freshmen come from families whose yearly income is under \$15,000 (Appendix I-4).

The annual Freshmen Survey compiles information regarding students' goals and aspirations. Table 6.6 presents relevant findings on freshmen educational goals.

**TABLE 6.6**  
**Percentage of UPR-Ponce freshmen rating different goals as high**

Goals	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Prepare for a profession	97	91	96	93	94
Clarify their vocational interests	53	39	45	54	47
Improve technical knowledge and skills	83	78	83	85	83
Improve employment opportunities	68	67	66	71	69
Receive a college degree	87	80	83	83	84
Participate in student and university activities	27	25	29	27	24
Develop knowledge and skills that enrich their cultural heritage	48	43	48	52	53
Develop ability to coexist with others	47	43	38	41	42
Participate in cultural, social, and sports activities	32	28	29	30	30
Improve self-image	49	45	41	48	46
Meet people	57	59	55	59	56
Develop leadership skills	54	51	55	53	54
Prepare to serve society better	80	73	76	79	80
Develop intellectual skills	86	72	78	80	2*

\* Sixty-eight percent of participants didn't respond

Source: UPR-Ponce Freshmen Students' Profiles

Consistently, students rate the following as important goals to be accomplished through their college years: prepare for a profession, improve technical knowledge and skills, receive a college degree, prepare to serve society better, and develop intellectual skills.

Table 6.7 presents the percents of UPR-Ponce freshmen who rated their need for help in certain areas as high.

**TABLE 6.7**  
**Percent of UPR-Ponce freshmen who rated their need in certain areas as high**

Areas	1999-2000 %	2000-01 %	2001-02 %	2002-03 %	2003-04 %
Oral expression in English	53	58	58	59	50
Oral expression in Spanish	7	11	11	9	7
Written expression in English	50	54	52	57	46
Written expression in Spanish	11	11	10	11	9
Reading comprehension	13	18	12	17	10
Mathematics skills	31	38	35	40	36
Study habits	33	32	27	34	28
Academic counseling	40	36	32	38	31
Vocational counseling	35	31	27	34	25
Library use	17	13	16	8	8
Personal and family relations	7	10	11	9	8
Personal growth and development	24	17	20	17	14
Computer skills	*	50	41	32	23
Research skills	*	32	40	36	25

\* Information not available

Source: UPR-Ponce Freshmen Student Profiles

Students repeatedly show an interest in improving their oral and written expressions in the English language. Goals and areas in which students indicated they need help show that students' priorities are in academia.

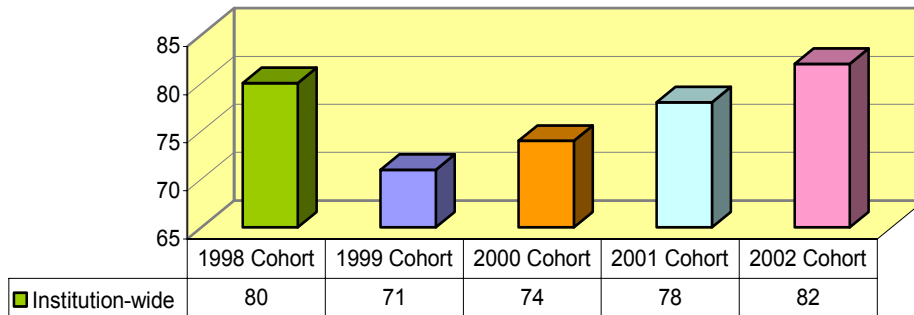
**Admissions Criteria and Academic Success**

While the Self-Study Survey revealed that 88% of participating students agreed that, at the time of admission, they had the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities to be successful at UPR-Ponce, it was considered appropriate to validate this opinion with two indicators of student academic success: first to second year retention and graduation rates for students in degree seeking programs at UPR-Ponce.

***First to Second Year Retention Rates***

The UPR-Ponce determines retention rates both at the institutional and program levels. This allows the institution to follow-up students who come back for a second year, regardless of the program of studies in which they register, and those who remain in the original program for which they were admitted. The cohorts taken into consideration are only first-time degree seeking students. Figure 6.1 presents five-year retention data.

**FIGURE 6.1**  
**First to second year retention rates**  
**(1998 to 2002 cohorts)**



Source: OPIR

The institutional retention rate has been steadily increasing since 1999. Levels for all cohorts topped the first to second year retention rates of public baccalaureate-general institutions which the *Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE)* placed at 67.1% for the 2002 cohort (2003-04 CSRDE Report).

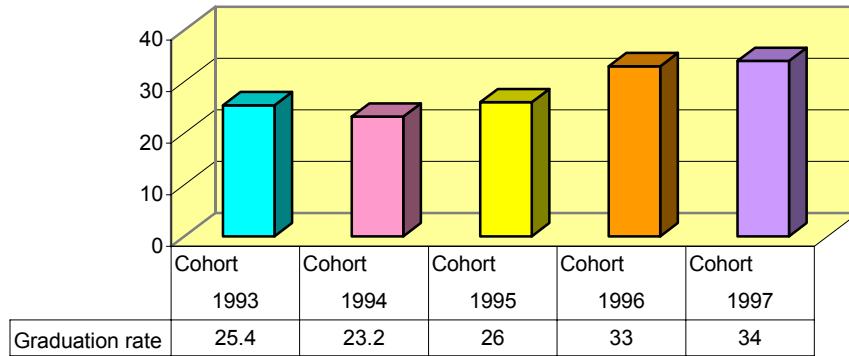
***Graduation Rates***

The Institution follows its student graduation rates to determine the appropriateness of the criteria used to accept its students and the success students achieve in fulfilling their goals and aspirations. To determine institutional graduation rates, cohorts are followed up to 150% of the time required for graduation for his/her program of study. Success is defined based on the parameters established by the U.S. Department of Education since these statistics are required in the IPEDS reports. The Institution has also started calculating program graduation rates;

students are tracked internally to determine if they fulfilled their graduation requirements within 150% of the time.

Figure 6.2 presents data on graduation rates at the institutional level.

**FIGURE 6.2**  
**Graduation rates**  
**1993 to 1997 cohorts**



Source: OPIR

Graduation rates at the institutional level are comparable to those of public baccalaureate institutions. CSRDE has reported the graduation rate as 34.6% (2003-04 CSRDE Report).

Table 6.8 presents benchmark data related to other UPR campuses (all offering only academic programs at the undergraduate level) and their overall and baccalaureate graduation rates (1997 cohort).

**TABLE 6.8**  
**Graduation rates for comparable UPR campuses\***

Institution	Overall graduation rate	Overall transfer out	Baccalaureate graduation rate	Baccalaureate transfer out
UPR – Arecibo	32.3%	19.1%	29.5%	22.2%
UPR - Aguadilla	33.9%	11.4%	20.4%	14.0%
UPR - Carolina	27.8%	5.1%	22.8%	5.4%
UPR - Bayamón	27.7%	0.4%	41.1%	0.5%
UPR – Utuado	26.5%	17.6%	6.7%	21.0%
UPR – Cayey	35.0%	N/A	34.8%	N/A
UPR - Humacao	48.0%	5.9%	44.2%	5.7%
<b>UPR – Ponce</b>	<b>33.9%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>34.9%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>

\*1997 cohort

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, U.S. Department of Education

The table shows that UPR-Ponce’s overall graduation rate for the 1997 cohort exceeds all other UPR campuses, with the exception of Cayey and Humacao. For graduation rates at the baccalaureate level, only UPR-Bayamón and UPR-Humacao exceeded UPR-Ponce’s performance. Information regarding institutional retention and graduation rates is disseminated in the institution’s catalog.

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

One of the major goals in UPR-Ponce's mission statement is "to provide students with appropriate and timely services complementary to academic life." The Dean of Student Affairs coordinates most services offered directly to students.

The Deanship of Student Affairs is engaged in the integral development of the UPR-Ponce students with special emphasis on intellectual, psychological, physical, and personal aspects. Services that complement students' academic life include Financial Aid, Counseling and Guidance, Admissions, Registrar, Social and Cultural Activities, Quality of Life, Psychological Services, Veteran's Services, Placement, Medical Services, and the Athletic Program, among others. Offices providing most of these services are housed in the Student Services Building.

The goals of the Student Affairs Deanship are:

- To provide students with appropriate and timely services complementary to academic life.
- To provide the means for students to overcome their academic deficiencies.
- To provide quality personal, professional, and physical development activities for students.

The main objectives addressed through student support services are:

- To provide students with basic health services.
- To identify the academic, occupational, and personal needs of students.
- To help students in the decision-making process in the selection of an occupation or profession.
- To encourage participation in student associations and extracurricular activities.
- To promote sports as an important aspect of the integral development of the student.

Staff with the appropriate academic credentials and experience provides student support services at UPR-Ponce. The UPR's Plan for Classification and Retribution of Staff requires that all personnel occupying a non-trust staff position within the University of Puerto Rico comply with minimum requirements in terms of academic preparation and experience. A probationary period allows supervisors to determine whether an employee is suitable for a given position. Based on successful evaluations, tenure is granted. At the present time, no further evaluations are performed on nonfaculty staff in regular positions after tenure is granted. The union is currently negotiating criteria and instruments to be used in performing such evaluations. The Dean of Students evaluates nonfaculty staff in positions of trust at the Deanship of Student Affairs, discusses findings and follows up on negotiated improvements.

To comply with UPR-Ponce's Administrative Board Certification No. 2003-2004-21, all staff are required to complete 10 hours of professional improvement every year. The Human Resources Office at UPR-Ponce coordinates activities and verifies that each staff member meets the quota.

The OPIR has carried out assessments of student support services by surveying alumni and graduating students' perceptions. Data on these assessments (with presented scores based on a

weighted average, in which *Excellent* = 4; *Good* = 3; *Fair* = 2; and *Poor* = 1) form part of this Chapter as well as assessment results obtained from each office's assessment plans.

### **Office of the Dean of Student Affairs**

This Office assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of all its services and provides support for changes that will enhance them. Besides coordinating all assessment efforts at the Deanship, the Dean is actively involved in developing strategies that will enhance student participation in institutional decision-making. For academic year 2002-03, and as part of its assessment plan, the Dean proposed to increase student participation in the Student Council elections, a task directly supervised by this Office. As participation did not increase to the proposed level, a plan was designed to increase student participation in the electoral process for academic year 2003-04. It included increasing promotion efforts in departments and among professors who were asked to encourage their students to actively participate in student government; having candidates share their information more efficiently, using electronic means as an alternative; and convoking students to an assembly where they heard candidates' plans and assessed whether candidates were suitable for vacant Student Council positions. The plan was successful in achieving its goals, as voter participation increased by 9% in relation to the previous year.

Puerto Rico's Law 51 regulates the rights of people with special needs. It stipulates the state's obligation to provide them with an education that allows them to develop as productive citizens in our society. The Deanship has been actively involved in disseminating information on Law 51 by appointing a committee composed of faculty, staff, and students, for this purpose. In addition, conferences and workshops are held annually to inform faculty and staff of strategies that will help students with special needs to adapt to university life and pursue academic success.

In order to assess student services in a more centralized way, the Dean requested that the OPIR prepare an instrument to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of student services supported by the Deanship. Dr. Lourdes Torres, Acting Institutional Researcher, worked on the development and validation of the instrument. It will be used to focus the student services assessment plans.

### **Admissions Office**

The Admissions Office provides interested high school students, mostly from the southern part of the island, with application forms and assists them in completing the forms. Office personnel receive and evaluate requests for admission from private and public schools, as well as other universities. They also offer orientation on admission policies and procedures to high schools in the region.

For academic years 2001-02 and 2002-03, and as part of its continuous assessment, the Office included among its objectives a study to determine if their high school orientation was a key factor in students' decisions to apply for admission at UPR-Ponce. Findings showed that 69% of freshmen students answering the 2002-03 survey thought that this was so, a 38% increase when compared with the previous year. In academic year 2003-04, ninety-eight percent (98%) of students receiving formal admission orientation regarded it as adequate in helping them clarify doubts about applying to UPR.

When students visit the Admissions Office, they fill out a satisfaction survey that assesses the quality of services they received. For the past two years, 98% of students answering the survey have indicated that they are highly satisfied or satisfied with the quality of the service.

### Financial Aid Office

The Financial Aid Office coordinates and administers student financial aid programs and provides financial assistance and counseling. The Office awards aid to students according to financial need- the difference between current educational cost and what individual students can pay toward these costs. The institution evaluates financial aid for students from data provided by the federal need-analysis processor (ED Express), after the processor has analyzed the information students and their families have supplied on the student's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Office staff offer orientation to high school and college students, process Pell Grant applications and student loans, supervise the work-study program, keep meticulous records of all student aid, and process records for students who transfer to other institutions.

Table 6.9 presents data on financial aid for academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04.

**TABLE 6.9**  
**Distribution of financial aid by academic year**

Source	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Pell Grant	\$8,558,084	\$8,459,157	\$9,257,284	\$8,753,584	\$9,070,388
Legislative Grant	0	0	0	986,004	754,431
Freshmen Aid Program	386,500	390,442	336,250	0	0
Supplemental Educational Aid Program	661,855	715,099	704,685	0	0
Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG)	232,834	239,328	199,887	154,780	184,665
SLEAPP	0	7,887	11,675	8,544	0
LEAPP	15,030	17,469	15,829	15,860	0
Federal College Work Study Program	293,968	256,472	219,119	282,792	271,898
America Reads Program	66,648	78,992	72,424	0	0
Stafford Loans	115,075	580,697	766,725	560,900	799,138
External Scholarships	25,700	6,750	15,433	32,377	26,965
Other programs	328,907	0	300,790	0	0
<b>Total amount of financial aid</b>	<b>\$10,684,601</b>	<b>\$10,752,293</b>	<b>\$11,900,101</b>	<b>\$10,794,841</b>	<b>\$11,107,485</b>
<b>% Total financial aid coming from Pell Grants</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>% Students receiving financial aid</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Proportion of aid per student</b>	<b>\$3,244</b>	<b>\$3,494</b>	<b>\$3,940</b>	<b>\$4,051</b>	<b>\$4,066</b>

Source: UPR-Ponce Annual Institutional Data Profiles

From this table, is obvious that approximately seven out of ten students pursuing their academic degrees at UPR-Ponce receive some form of financial aid. It is also a fact that Pell Grants constitute the highest source of financial aid granted, ranging from 78 to 82% of all funds allocated. For the period considered in this Self-Study, the proportion of aid per student increased by 25%.



Assessment results show that, in academic year 2001-02, 95% of high school students visiting the Financial Aid Office indicated that it offered a good or excellent service. In academic year 2002-03, based on its proposed objectives, the Office reported that 93% of students receiving their services were either highly satisfied or satisfied, a 3% decrease from the previous year. In addition, 87% of the Pell Grant applications were processed electronically, surpassing established expectations.

OPIR surveys used to assess the services of the Financial Aid Office showed the following results: 3.15 on the 1999-2000 Alumni Survey, 3.13 on the 2000-2001 Graduating Students Survey, and 2.72 in the 2002-2003 Graduating Students Survey. All of these assessment sources agree that services are good.

### **Registrar's Office**

This Office provides information in an accurate manner with consistent quality service that is responsive to the needs of the college community. The Registrar has the responsibility of maintaining academic records of all its undergraduate students, whether active or not, while ensuring the privacy and security of these records. It provides registration services to departments and students, records and reports grades, issues transcripts, schedules final exams and certifies attendance, grade point averages, and degrees.

The 2000-01 Alumni and Graduating Students' Surveys assessed the services offered by the Registrar's Office with scores of 2.13 and 2.10, respectively. The 2002-03 Graduating Students' Survey evaluated specific aspects of the enrollment process, which is coordinated with other offices such as academic departments and the Bursar: course and section selection process (2.54), payment activities (2.81), course and section availability (1.98). The services provided by the Registrar's Office have been consistently evaluated as fair.

Assessment of the effectiveness of several processes centered at the Registrar's Office has resulted in significant improvements. Personal transcripts are emitted immediately for all students that request this service, and students asking for program readmission or reclassification receive their answer promptly (less than a month).

As custodian of student records, the Registrar's Office recognizes and guarantees students' rights under the *Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974* which holds that students: 1) have the right to examine their academic records, 2) have the right to ask that their student records be amended so that they reflect factual information, 3) must consent for the release of information in their academic records, and 4) have the right to file a complaint if the University of Puerto Rico has not complied with these conditions.

Information about this Law is widely disseminated to students during registration, in EDFU 3005 (Introduction to College Life, a course offered for freshmen), in the Compendium of Institutional Policies handed to students, and in the institution's catalog.

To ensure that students' academic records are adequately safeguarded, certain norms and procedures have been established:

- Institutional Policies and Procedures for the Legal and Ethical Use of Information Technologies at the University of Puerto Rico (Board of Trustees' Certification No. 072-99-2000).
- Procedures for granting access to the Student Information System at the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce.
- Norms and regulations for using accounts within the Student Information System.

Institutional norms and procedures have also been established to regulate academic records audits, grade changes, and removal of incompletes. Students' knowledge of regulations established to protect their right to confidentiality was assessed in the Self-Study Survey. Seventy-three percent of students surveyed indicated that they know the regulations.

### **Quality of Life Program**

The Quality of Life Program was created in 1998 as an initiative to promote healthy lifestyles within the campus community. Crime, drugs, and alcohol are serious issues in society and have a direct impact on the quality of life within the system. The goal of this program is to create awareness and inform the campus community on drug and alcohol prevention, wellness, and campus security. The Program sponsors activities, training, workshops, and social events for students and employees. Orientation is given to students who request information on sexually transmitted diseases, drugs, HIV, and AIDS, among others. This program helps the College to comply with the federal regulations of the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act, and the Sexual Assault Program of the U.S. Department of Education.

In academic year 2002-03, thirty-five activities were held; there was a 10% increase in student participation compared to the previous year. Satisfaction with activities was high, as determined by evaluation results. In academic year 2003-04, a total of fifty-two activities were held. These also had a 10% increase in student participation.

### **Counseling and Guidance Department**

The Counseling and Guidance Department plays an important role in helping students to adapt to college and to be successful academically. Professional counselors offer personal, academic, and vocational counseling to individuals and groups. A counselor is charged with visiting area high schools to promote the institution's programs and to recruit students. The Department maintains a Career Center, offering updated information on a wide variety of occupational fields, occupational interest inventories, and information and application forms for graduate schools.

Counselors give a weekly one-hour, non-credit course "Seminar on Adjustment to University Life" (EDFU 3005), to freshmen during their first semester. EDFU 3005 is a course that introduces students to different aspects of university life. Besides providing information on basic student support services, including those directed to students with special needs, the course is designed to help students develop life, career and study skills, and make occupational and personal decisions. During the last four years, the course has been successful in helping students to make a decision on their career. Of those students completing the course during these years, 86%, 91%, 90%, and 90%, of the students taking the course had made a decision by the end of the semester. In 2001-2002, counselors assessed students' satisfaction with several aspects of the course. A sample of students taking EDFU 3005 were highly satisfied with the amount of help

received vocational, personal, and academic counseling received in this course (95%, 93%, and 94% satisfaction, respectively).

Counselors also sponsor numerous workshops, conferences, and other activities that promote good study habits, time management skills, and learning success. Each counselor works closely with an at-risk group: student athletes, students on probation or at-risk, physically challenged students, and students with dependent children, among others.

Professional counseling is given to student athletes in order to ensure their academic success. A counselor is assigned the task of following up on athletes' academic records and of supporting their specific needs in order to help them achieve their goals. Workshops are held on topics such as stress management, teamwork, anger management, and study habits. For academic year 2003-04, a total of 101 athletes were impacted by workshops, representing 73% of this population.

The Department also provides tools to help students cope with institutional demands through the "Éxito" (*Success*) Project. The first to second year attrition numbers show that most students leaving the institution do so because of academic reasons, freshmen with an academic grade point average of less than 2.00 in their first semester of study are identified and recruited by the Office to receive academic and vocational counseling in their second semester. This fact shows that the department has effectively supported the project.

A professional counselor is assigned to follow-up on students with special needs. The student organization, "Asociación de Estudiantes Derribando Barreras" (Association of Students Overcoming Barriers), under the auspices of the Department, groups students interested in supporting the development of leadership skills and the integration of students with special needs. Another group with special needs is expecting mothers. They participate in an Office project directed to retain them as students. During academic year 2003-04, all students participating in the project continued their studies. The Office also hosts a program sponsored by the Department of Family Affairs of the Government of Puerto Rico. This program gives economic childcare support for the children of college students.

A selected group of students, the "Organización de Estudiantes Orientadores", is trained to act as peer counselors to other students at risk. The Counseling and Guidance Department also coordinates tutoring services in disciplines in which students need most help.

Counselors advise students referred by professors and intervene in the withdrawal process of those students planning to completely withdraw from the institution. Advice and counsel is given in order to provide alternatives that will retain them.

Table 6.10 shows services rendered by the Counseling and Guidance Department for academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04. It reveals a fairly constant level of services rendered by the Department for the years examined.

**TABLE 6.10**  
**Services rendered by the**  
**Counseling and Guidance Department**  
**(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

Areas	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
<b>Students interviewed</b>					
Academic	2,902	2,684	2,539	2,301	2,570
Vocational	407	308	830	580	539
Personal	380	569	539	749	749
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>3,689</b>	<b>3,561</b>	<b>3,899</b>	<b>3,630</b>	<b>3,858</b>
<b>Community members interviewed</b>					
Parents	187	162	184	120	113
High school students	373	312	467	335	298
Transfer students	128	115	95	101	96
Others	361	389	242	122	243
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>1,049</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>750</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,738</b>	<b>4,539</b>	<b>4,887</b>	<b>4,308</b>	<b>4,608</b>

Source: UPR-Ponce Annual Institutional Data Profiles

In academic year 2001-2002, the Counseling and Guidance Department assessed its services by surveying students after receiving them. Table 6.11 presents survey results:

**Table 6.11**  
**Assessment of Counseling and Guidance Department Services**

Criteria	Percent satisfied
Counseling and guidance help in making a personal, academic, and/or vocational decision.	96
Case was managed confidentially.	99
Counselor inspired trust and willingness to help in future occasions.	98
Counseling process was carried out in an amiable and respectful manner.	99
Would recommend services to peers.	99

### Medical Services Office

UPR-Ponce's commitment to the personal health and wellness of its students is evidenced through services offered by the Medical Services Office. A full-time physician, a registered nurse, two administrative assistants, a part-time gynecologist, one part-time registered nurse, and a social worker provide on-campus medical care. When necessary, patients are referred to specialists, laboratories, and hospitals. The Office complies with all regulations required by the HIPAA privacy law.

Assessment conducted among students and employees immediately following services offered by this Office consistently reflects that close to 92% evaluates them as excellent or good. (The number of students involved in the Family Planning Clinics has been increasing every year). OPIR surveys used to assess student satisfaction with the Medical Services Office showed that alumni and graduating students perceive the Office as providing services that range from fair to good.

### Office of Psychological Services

The Office of Psychological Services began to operate in January 1997, with a part-time clinical psychologist. Its function is to offer psychological services such as evaluations, treatment, and crisis intervention to students and employees. The Office publishes a monthly bulletin, “La Oficina de Servicios Psicológicos Informa...” (The Psychological Services Office Reports...), where, besides promoting services, information is shared on topics related to clinical psychology. During academic year 2002-03, the Office assessed the quality of its services, finding that 78% of the students surveyed considered services very satisfactory. Appointments increased by 14% from the first to the second semester. In addition, the percentage of students showing up for their appointments increased by 19% for the same period.

### Extracurricular Activities Office

Leadership and participation in nonacademic activities is fostered through the Extracurricular Activities Office. Students are encouraged to organize groups and associations. Table 6.12 shows the number of UPR-Ponce authorized groups and associations and the number of students participating in them. Members organize a wide variety of activities.

**TABLE 6.12**  
**Student Participation in Groups and Organizations**  
**(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Number of groups or associations	21	22	20	24	25
Number of students participating	*	929	*	1,184	813

\* Information not available

The table shows a slight increase in the number of student associations on campus. On the other hand, the number of students participating within these organizations has fluctuated (mainly due to enrollment trends).

The Office also coordinates Veterans’ Administration benefits. In academic year 2001-02, the Veterans’ Administration *Educational Liaison Representative* audited the Office. In their report, they praised methods set for administrating the program, and the presentation and conservation of documents. There were no discrepancies found, assuring that the Institution will not be audited in four years. In academic year 2002-03, the Agency in charge of licensing Veterans’ Programs evaluated the Office and rated its services as excellent. The Office tries to certify beneficiaries in as short a time as possible. In 2002-03, 85% of applicants for Veterans’ benefits were certified within the first thirty days of the semester.

The Office is also involved in sharing information on community housing. OPIR surveys used to assess community housing information showed the following results: 1.68 in the 1999-2000 Alumni Survey, 1.57 in the 2000-2001 Graduating Students Survey, and 1.87 in the 2002-2003 Graduating Students Survey. All sources agreed in evaluating this service as fair.

### Recreation Center

For the purpose of harmonizing its students’ physical, athletic, and sports development with an ethical and professional formation, UPR-Ponce has a Recreation and Sports Intramural Program available. Information on the program is posted in flyers on bulletin boards across campus. The

Recreation Director, complying with stipulated responsibilities, organizes, plans, and supervises recreational and sports activities. Based on students' preferences, it offers multiple types of recreation. The facilities have five billiard tables, a music box, three table tennis boards, a domino table, a TV set, a money slot machine, and table games.

In academic year 2002-03, surveys of students who visited the Center revealed that 80% assessed recreational activities as good; this is an 8% reduction compared to data from the previous year. Eighty percent (80%) felt satisfied with the physical facilities. In academic year 2003-04, a survey among users determined that 97% felt that the space provided for the Recreation Center should be expanded.

### **Social and Cultural Activities Office**

This Office contributes to the intellectual and cultural development of the student body through cultural and social events that focus on the enhancement and appreciation of the popular and fine arts. A calendar is published each semester and circulated within the campus community. Table 6.13 displays the number of activities held by the Office in the past years.

**TABLE 6.13**  
**Activities organized by the Social and Cultural Activities Office**  
**(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

Type of activity	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Social	7	2	2	4	2
Cultural	10	12	14	6	8

In 2002-03, 98% of students participating in activities offered by this Office stated that they were highly satisfied or satisfied with them; in addition, attendance increased by 2% from the previous year.

OPIR surveys used to assess the Cultural Activities Program showed the following results: 2.62 in the 1999-2000 Alumni Survey, 2.39 in the 2000-2001 Graduating Students Survey; and 2.64 in the 2002-2003 Graduating Students Survey. All groups surveyed consistently rated the quality of cultural activities as good to fair.

### **Placement Office**

The main objective of this Office is to assist students in obtaining permanent, summer, or temporary employment. Services provided include arrangement of job interviews with prospective employers, coordination of employer presentations, and job referrals. The Office offers seminars and workshops to facilitate job search, resumé preparation, and develops interviewing skills. Since March 2003, two Puerto Rico Labor Department employees have headed the Placement Office. Employment orientations have been assessed; 91% evaluated them as excellent or good.

### **Athletic Program**

A formal Athletic Program offers athletically talented students the opportunity to participate in a series of sports for which the Institution provides professional coaching and training. Both female and male varsity teams participate in track and field, basketball, cross-country, weight

lifting, tennis, beach volleyball, table tennis, baseball, softball, volleyball, and chess. Table 6.14 shows athletic achievements by different institutional teams that have participated in the Inter Collegiate Sports Organization.

**TABLE 6.14**  
**Achievements in Athletics**

Sport		1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Volleyball	<b>M</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .
	<b>F</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> .	5 <sup>th</sup> .	6 <sup>th</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .
Baseball	<b>M</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> .	6 <sup>th</sup> .	6 <sup>th</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .
Softball	<b>F</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> .	5 <sup>th</sup> .	5 <sup>th</sup> .	6 <sup>th</sup> .	5 <sup>th</sup> .
Beach Volleyball	<b>M</b>	*	4 <sup>th</sup> .	5 <sup>th</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .
	<b>F</b>	*	4 <sup>th</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	6 <sup>th</sup> .
Tennis	<b>M</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .
	<b>F</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .
Basketball	<b>M</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> .	5 <sup>th</sup> .	5 <sup>th</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .
	<b>F</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	6 <sup>th</sup> .
Track and field	<b>M</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	6 <sup>th</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .
	<b>F</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	6 <sup>th</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .
Weight lifting	<b>M</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .
	<b>F</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .
Cross-country	<b>M</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .
	<b>F</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> .	4 <sup>th</sup> .	*	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .
Table tennis	<b>M</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .
	<b>F</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .
Chess	<b>M</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	3 <sup>rd</sup> .
	<b>F</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .	1 <sup>st</sup> .
<b>Global Cup Prize</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup>.</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup>.</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup>.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup>.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup>.</b>
	<b>F</b>		<b>3<sup>rd</sup>.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup>.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup>.</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup>.</b>

\* Did not participate in this sport; M = male; F = female

Source: UPR-Ponce Athletic Program Office

The table reflects UPR-Ponce's athletic teams excelling in several sports. Males have place first in the Global Cup Prize for the last two years. The females have held the second place in the past three years.

Each semester, student athletes are informed of their duties and obligations and asked to sign a contract. A bulletin is prepared in which information is shared regarding their responsibilities with athletics and academic progress. OPIR surveys used to assess the quality of sports activities showed the following results: 2.56 in the 1999-2000 Alumni Survey; 2.23 in the 2000-2001 Graduating Students Survey; and 2.67 in the 2002-2003 Graduating Students Survey. Results show that the quality of sports activities is evaluated as good to fair.

### **Cafeteria**

A concessionaire, "Servicios Universitarios Cooperativos (SUCCOOP)" operates the cafeteria, located in the Student Services Building. It provides students, faculty, and nonfaculty personnel with breakfast and lunch on a schedule from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Monday through Thursday and Fridays from 7:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

A Cafeteria Committee, with members from all constituencies, evaluates the cafeteria facilities and services. Those surveyed rated the Cafeteria as good or excellent. Prices received 90% favorable rating. Services received a 60% favorable rating, and food quality was favorably rated by 66% of respondents.

OPIR surveys used to assess the quality of cafeteria services showed the following results: 2.92 on the 1999-2000 Alumni Survey, 2.64 on the 2000-2001 Graduating Students Survey, and 2.26 on the 2002-2003 Graduating Students Survey. Results show that the overall quality of cafeteria services is evaluated as good to fair.

### **Bookstore**

The Bookstore supplies textbooks, office and school supplies, souvenirs, gifts, and personal effects. It is located on the first floor of the Student Services Building. Since 2000, “Servicios Universitarios Cooperativos (SUCOOP)” operates it.

OPIR surveys used to assess the quality of Bookstore services showed the following results: 2.50 on the 1999-2000 Alumni Survey, 2.47 on the 2000-2001 Graduating Students Survey, and 3.00 on the 2002-2003 Graduating Students Survey. Results show that the overall quality of the Bookstore is evaluated as fair to good.

### **Student Ombudsperson’s Office**

Since 1995, the UPR-Ponce has a Student Ombudsperson’s Office whose mission is to promote an effective though informal process to generate solutions to students’ problems and conflicts. According to UPR University Regulations, in redressing a grievance or complaint, a student must initiate the appropriate procedure in the corresponding unit. In the event that such pursuit is unsuccessful, a student is able to seek direct intervention from the Student Ombudsperson as long as complaints are presented personally or in writing. A brochure describing services rendered by the Office, with an explanation of procedures for filing claims and grievances is distributed during the freshman orientation session.

The Self Study Survey revealed that 34% of the students knew the procedures available for filing claims and grievances. Twenty-nine percent agreed or totally agreed that these procedures were taken care of promptly and efficiently. Fifty four percent believe that concerns and allegations related to their course grades are adequately addressed.

### **Campus Safety and Security**

UPR-Ponce is committed to the safety and well-being of its students, faculty, and staff. Table 6.15 shows statistics related to campus security.

**TABLE 6.15**  
**Statistics on Campus Security**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
Criminal offenses – On campus	1	1	3
Criminal offenses – Non campus	1	0	0



Criminal Offenses – Public property	1	0	0
Criminal offenses – Reported by local & state police	n/av	114	127
Hate offenses – On campus	2	0	0
Hate offenses – Public property	1	0	0

Source: IPEDS, Campus Security Act

The table reveals that, while the campus is safe and has a relatively low crime rate, its external environment might be a source of concern. This information is divulged in the institution's Web page and through the catalog. OPIR surveys used to assess campus security showed the following results: 2.29 in the 1999-2000 Alumni Survey and 1.86 in the 2002-2003 Graduating Students Survey. Results show that Campus security is evaluated as fair.

## 2004 NATIONAL SURVEY OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (NSSE)

Table 6.16 shows NSSE results for questions asked to UPR-Ponce freshmen and seniors concerning the extent to which the Institution emphasizes different aspects related to institutional environment, with ratings based on a 4-point scale.

**TABLE 6.16**  
Extent to which the institution emphasizes aspects related to institutional environment

Criteria		Percentage selecting very much or quite a bit (UPR-Ponce)	UPR-Ponce	Bac-Gen.	NSSE 2004
Providing the support students need to help them succeed academically	FR	60	2.71	3.16***	3.10***
	SR	56	2.60	3.05***	2.97**
Helping students cope with nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	FR	47	2.45	2.26	2.15**
	SR	41	2.25	2.08	1.92**
Providing the support students need to thrive socially	FR	57	2.64	2.44	2.36**
	SR	49	2.43	2.24	2.12*
Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)	FR	77	3.00	2.95	2.83
	SR	67	2.94	2.69*	2.59**

FR= freshmen; SR= seniors; Bac- Gen.= Baccalaureate General institutions

\* Statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ); \*\* statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ ); \*\*\* statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) (2-tailed)

Source: NSSE 2004

UPR-Ponce scored higher than Baccalaureate-General and all institutions in three of the four criteria (helping students cope with nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.); providing the support students need to thrive socially; attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)). Differences were significantly higher in some cases. Providing the support students need to help them succeed academically was a criterion in which UPR-Ponce students scored significantly lower than Baccalaureate-General and NSSE institutions' participants.

## CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of institutional data leads to the following conclusions:

1. Admissions standards and criteria for institutional programs are clearly stated, consistently applied, and widely disseminated to potential students.
2. The effectiveness of the process for determining approval of incoming students' transfer credits could be improved.
3. First to second year retention rates at the institutional level are higher than those reported nationally for institutions within the same Carnegie classification as UPR-Ponce.
4. Graduation rates at the institutional level are close to those reported nationally for institutions within the same Carnegie classification as UPR-Ponce and compare favorably to other UPR units.
5. The percentage of students admitted who actually enroll is adequate.
6. The Department of Counseling and Guidance supports a cadre of programs targeting different populations: students with special needs, athletes, expectant mothers, tutoring, the Career Center, and students at risk.
7. The Athletic Program has been highly successful in competition within the Intercollegiate Sports Organization.
8. The institution enforces norms and regulations that ensure students' right to confidentiality and the students are aware of it.
9. Goals and needs of freshmen are assessed frequently; their main concerns are focused on academics.
10. Offices have improved processes and services as a result of their assessment activities. The quality of these services has been consistently evaluated by students as fair or better.
11. NSSE benchmarking results show the Institution placing greater emphasis than comparable institutions on the following: participation in extracurricular activities; helping students cope with nonacademic responsibilities; and providing the support students need to thrive socially. They also show the Institution scoring significantly lower on providing the support students need to help them succeed academically.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are given as recommendations:

1. Ensure that external transfer students have their transferable coursework approved before enrolling at the institution for the first time.
2. Work on developing strategies to improve student support services so that evaluation results coming from all student sources reflect an increase in student satisfaction with them.
3. Work on increasing graduation rates at the institutional level by developing support services that will enhance the student experience and help them in achieving their goals and aspirations, especially those related to academic success.

**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter addresses the extent and effectiveness with which the faculty discharges its primary responsibilities of teaching, research, and service, as well as their related roles in student advising, curriculum development, academic policy making, and governance. It will also scrutinize faculty recruitment and retention, performance assessment, and promotion.

**Faculty Profile**

In the UPR-Ponce’s mission statement, it is stated that “the institution recruits and retains faculty dedicated to the arts of teaching and advising; to the search for and dissemination of truth through scholarship, research, and creative endeavor; and to service to the University and the community in general.”

Table 7.1 presents a five-year profile of the UPR-Ponce faculty.

**TABLE 7.1**  
**Faculty Profile**  
**(First Semester of Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
<b>Total Faculty</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>By academic preparation:</b>					
Baccalaureate	13 (6%)	10 (4%)	10 (5%)	14 (7%)	8 (4%)
Master	167 (81%)	188 (85%)	181 (85%)	162 (81%)	162 (82%)
Doctorate	24 (12%)	23(10%)	21(10%)	24(12%)	28(14%)
<b>By rank:</b>					
Instructor	102(50%)	114 (51%)	105 (49%)	93 (46%)	84 (42%)
Assistant Professor	38 (19%)	41 (18%)	40 (19%)	38 (19%)	41 (21%)
Associate Professor	29 (14%)	29 (13%)	27 (13%)	29 (15%)	31 (16%)
Full Professor	35 (17%)	37 (17%)	40 (19%)	40 (20%)	42 (21%)
<b>By type of contract:</b>					
Tenured	99 (49%)	117 (53%)	126 (59%)	126 (63%)	132 (67%)
Tenure-Track	31 (15%)	24 (11%)	17 (8%)	22 (11%)	15 (8%)
Temporary	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	-	2 (1%)
Substitute	1 (<1%)	-	-	-	-
Service Contract	70 (34%)	78 (35%)	67 (32%)	52 (26%)	49 (25%)
<b>By classification:</b>					
Full-Time	169 (83%)	179 (81%)	175 (83%)	155 (78%)	156 (79%)
Part-Time	35 (17%)	42 (19%)	39 (17%)	45 (22%)	42 (21%)

Source: Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs

The data shows that, in the five year period assessed, there have been no significant changes in the faculty profile. Faculty with baccalaureate was reduced from thirteen in 1999-2000 to eight in 2003-04, and doctorates increased from twenty-four to twenty-eight for the same period; master’s decreased from 167 to 162. Ranks show an increase for full, associate, and assistant professors, while instructors have decreased in numbers. The tenured/tenure-track faculty has increased from 64 to 75%. The full-time to part-time ratio has remained approximately 4 to 1

for the period. Faculty turnover is virtually nonexistent. Table 7.2 presents the FTE student to faculty ratio which has fluctuated slightly between 16:1 and 18:1 during the last five years.

**TABLE 7.2**  
**FTE faculty/student ratio**

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
FTE students	4,037	3,888	3,684	3,487	3,529
FTE Faculty	222	231	224	203	201
Student/faculty ratio	18:1	17:1	16:1	17:1	18:1

Source: Annual Institutional Data Profiles

Table 7.3 presents the demographic profile for full time faculty at UPR-Ponce.

**TABLE 7.3**  
**Demographic characteristics of full-time faculty**  
**(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
<b>Total Full Time Faculty</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>By gender:</b>					
Male	73 (43%)	78 (44%)	70 (40%)	66 (43%)	64 (41%)
Female	96 (57%)	101 (56%)	105 (60%)	89 (57%)	92 (59%)
<b>By age group:</b>					
Less than 25	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
25 – 34 years	26 (15%)	29 (16%)	27 (15%)	16 (10%)	16 (10%)
35 – 44 years	35 (21%)	37 (21%)	31 (18%)	30 (20%)	30 (19%)
45 – 54 years	79 (47%)	82 (46%)	78 (45%)	67 (43%)	62 (40%)
55 or more years	27 (16%)	31 (17%)	39 (22%)	42 (27%)	48 (31%)
<b>By place of birth:</b>					
Born in Puerto Rico	141 (83%)	148 (83%)	147 (84%)	129 (83%)	129 (83%)
Born out of Puerto Rico	28 (17%)	31 (17%)	28 (16%)	26 (17%)	27 (17%)

Source: Office of Human Resources, UPR-Ponce

The table reflects that the UPR-Ponce has mostly recruited females for faculty positions, with the age distribution centering on the 45-54 range. Most faculty are of Hispanic origin, as they have either been born in Puerto Rico, Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, or Cuba. Faculty coming from other countries, like Italy, Canada, or the United States, constitutes a small minority. As seen in the Self-Study Survey, 73% of the faculty perceived that the institution promotes diversity related to age, gender, race, nationality, and others among faculty members.

### **Faculty Recruitment, Retention, Tenure, and Promotion**

Articles 42, 43, and 44 of the UPR's General By-Laws set the framework for the establishment of rules and regulations regarding faculty recruitment. Article 42 establishes minimum degree requirements (a Master's degree from an accredited institution of higher education in the discipline to be taught). Article 43 sets the criteria for faculty recruitment: quality of the applicant's academic record and of the institution that conferred the degree, mastery of the discipline to be taught and capacity to integrate it with related disciplines, teaching experience and experience applying knowledge in a particular field of study, published papers and lectures

given, identification with the philosophy and objectives of the University Law, and capacity for scientific and creative research. Article 44 stipulates the incoming rank for new faculty.

Through Certification 2002-2003-60, the UPR-Ponce Academic Senate approved the *Norms and procedures for faculty recruitment*, that provide guidelines to academic departments on rules, regulations, and procedures for hiring new personnel. The specific academic preparations required to teach in each of the departments are part of this Certification. Potential new faculty is qualified following a procedure in which the Departmental Personnel Committee examines the candidate's credentials and submits its recommendations to the Dean of Academic Affairs, who formally qualifies the candidate. The qualification form was revised by the Deans of Academic Affairs and approved by the Academic Senate (Certification 2003-2004-35). The qualification is included in the candidate's record, which is kept by the Human Resources Office.

Knowledge of the regulations was assessed in the Self-Study Survey which revealed that 89% of the faculty agreed that they know the faculty recruitment, selection, and appointment policies. Asked about their degree of participation in formulating these policies, 62% agreed that they are involved in these processes. Fifty-nine percent are satisfied with these procedures, and 56% perceived that the institution strictly follows the procedures.

Faculty tenure and promotions are guided by an evaluation scheme whose framework is UPR's General By Laws Article 45 which states that the following criteria should be considered when promoting and granting tenure to faculty: quality of teaching, research or disclosure; dedication to university work and service; compliance with teaching duties; professional improvement; involvement in faculty work, including committees and study programs; research and creative work; conferences given related to their field of study; publications, expositions, concerts, and other related activities; recognitions received; documented opinions of colleagues and other people related to their work; and professional attitude.

Through Certification 2002-2003-77, the UPR-Ponce's Academic Senate approved the *Complementary norms, criteria, and procedures for evaluation of teaching faculty at the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce*, which were approved by the UPR's University Board through its Certification 37 (2002-03) in order to comply with Section 45.2 of the General By-Laws. The document describes the general characteristics of the evaluation process, entities and officials responsible, duties of faculty and institutional entities in the evaluation process, faculty rights related to their evaluation, administrative appeals, evaluation procedure, and confidentiality of evaluation documents. Faculty is evaluated by peers, students, and department heads, using locally developed instruments. The criteria considered in each instrument are briefly described below:

- Peer evaluation instrument (Academic Senate Certification 1999-2000-27): knowledge of the discipline (35%); methodology (35%); interaction with students (20%); and communication (10%).
- Department head evaluation instrument (Academic Senate Certification 2000-2001-54): compliance with teaching responsibilities stipulated in the University By-Laws; syllabus revision; evaluation and recommendation of learning resources; and development of initiatives which show commitment to student learning.

- Student evaluation instrument (Academic Senate Certification 2000-2001-61): course objectives and content; methodology; assessment practices; development of critical thinking and information skills; faculty-student interactions.

The faculty evaluation process is carried out in the following way:

- Part-time and tenure-track faculty: Peers evaluate faculty member each semester; students from two sections taught by faculty member evaluate him/her every semester; department head performs an evaluation each semester.
- Tenured faculty: Peers evaluate once a year; students from one section taught and selected by faculty member evaluate him/her every semester; department head does a yearly evaluation. Faculty members are not evaluated once they reach the highest rank (full professor).

Results from the peer evaluation process are discussed with faculty, as required by Academic Senate Certification 2002-2003-77. The evaluation results are assigned the following weights: Peer evaluation (43%); Department head's evaluation (43%); and Students' evaluation (14%).

Article 46 of the UPR General By-Laws stipulates the rules and regulations for granting tenure to faculty. The Administrative Board is empowered by law to grant tenure, requiring that faculty occupy a tenure-track position and provide five years of satisfactory services. Exceptions to this rule are noted in this article. Through Certification 2004-2005-15, the UPR-Ponce Academic Senate establishes the internal procedures for the process, with a clear description of institutional constituents' roles and responsibilities, and faculty rights and modes of appeal.

Promotion procedures are stated in Article 47 of the UPR General By-Laws. The Administrative Board, which is empowered by Law to grant promotions, must abide by the procedures, time between ranks, and special considerations are described in the Article. Through Certification 2001-2002-03, the Board regulated the promotion procedure by revising a system developed by the Regional Colleges Administrative Board in which a set of elements have to be assessed and accounted for. Table 7.4 shows these elements, the acceptable supporting evidence, and the multiplication factors used in faculty evaluation for promotion.

**TABLE 7.4**  
**Elements, evidence, and multiplication factors used for faculty promotion**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Evidence to support element</b>	<b>Mult. factor</b>
I. Quality of teaching	Yearly evaluations of peers, students, and department head	0.500
II. Creation and publication activities	Original faculty work, such as: Books; anthologies; educational modules; research projects; proposals; academic manuals; courses created; bibliographical works; conferences offered; expositions, concerts, poster sessions, direction or participation in dramatic plays; professional designs; active participation in seminars, symposia, forums, workshops, and panels; competitions; camps and clinics; translations; University-related consultation; radio, TV, and video productions; and others.	0.667
III. Professional improvement activities	New degrees received; courses taken, with or without credit; professional titles; seminars, symposia, forums, workshops, panels, congresses, conventions, and conferences; membership in professional associations; cultural trips; and others.	0.333

Element	Evidence to support element	Mult. factor
IV. Participation in committees, dedication to University service, and to the federal, state, and municipal governments	Participation in governing bodies and committees at the System, Regional Colleges Administration, UPR-Ponce, and departmental levels; administrative responsibilities; and others.	0.479
V. Community service	Provision of service to nonprofit institutions which benefit the community directly.	0.500

Source: Certification 2001-2002-03, UPR-Ponce's Administrative Board

Faculty is required to prepare a portfolio with documented evidence supporting each element, according to the Instruction Manual for the Promotion Checklist developed by the Administrative Board. The evidence is qualitatively and quantitatively assessed. The total score is obtained by adding the scores for each element and the number of years of service.

Minimum scores in order to qualify for promotion (Administrative Board Certification 2001-2002-04) are: 100 for Assistant Professor, 115 for Associate Professor, and 135 for Full Professor. Scores are not cumulative and, once a rank is achieved, faculty initiates a new evidence accumulation to support the next promotion. The portfolio is assessed by the Departmental Personnel Committee (composed of not less than three and not more than seven tenured faculty coming from the highest ranks and the department head) and the Faculty Personnel Committee (composed of one representative of each of the Departmental Personnel Committees, up to three department heads appointed by the Chancellor, and the Academic Dean, who presides it) before reaching the Administrative Board, with each level scrutinizing evidence and submitting recommendations supported by evidence. The Administrative Board gives a strong weight to these recommendations before granting promotions.

Table 7.5 shows the number of faculty tenures and promotions granted by the UPR-Ponce Administrative Board during the past five years.

**TABLE 7.5**  
**Tenures and promotions granted**  
**By the UPR-Ponce Administrative Board**  
**(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
<b>Tenures</b>	10	13	11	3	7
<b>Promotions to:</b>					
Assistant Professor	3	7	7	3	8
Associate Professor	3	4	6	2	5
Full Professor	4	4	4	0	2
<b>Total Promotions</b>	10	15	17	5	15

Source: Annual Institutional Data Profile

From 1999-2000 to 2001-2002 there was a rising trend in promotions, with both tenures and promotions falling off in 2002-2003 and rising somewhat in 2003-2004.

Faculty satisfaction with the tenure and promotion process was assessed through the Self-Study Survey. Ninety-four percent indicated that they know the tenure and promotion procedures; on the other hand, 57% are satisfied with them.

The Law of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the UPR General By-Laws guarantee faculty the right to file complaints if unsatisfied with results from institutional processes such as tenures and promotions. The self-study survey revealed that 64% of the faculty acknowledged knowing the procedures for filing complaints, and 40% was satisfied with these procedures. Article 35 of the UPR General By-Laws stipulates the criteria and procedures for undertaking disciplinary action against faculty. Fifty-nine percent of the faculty acknowledged knowing them, and 38% agreed that they are adequate.

Through Certifications which are institutionally distributed, the UPR Board of Trustees establishes a uniform salary scale for faculty that includes salary differentials based on rank, years of service, and academic preparation. Special salary scales are set for UPR-Carolina (functions on a trimester schedule), engineering, architecture, law, and medical sciences faculty. The information is communicated to faculty through the Personnel Office ORH-T-002 form (Notification of appointment, service contract or change). University fringe benefits include a health plan, social security, a retirement plan, worker’s compensation, Christmas bonus, a stipend for educational materials, study benefits for spouses and siblings, and leaves. Table 7.6 shows a comparative table of salaries between UPR and other institutions of higher education in Puerto Rico.

**TABLE 7.6**  
**Average salary of full-time instructional faculty**  
**(11-12 month contract)**

Institution	Instructor	Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Full Professor
University of Puerto Rico – Ponce	\$34,933	\$38,831	\$46,214	\$54,444
Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico – Ponce (private)	28,188	36,072	37,984	38,684
Inter American University of Puerto Rico – Metro (private)	30,264	32,892	37,128	41,520

Source: 2003 Faculty Survey, IPEDS

While the table reflects that salaries at UPR are competitive when compared to those in private institutions, the Self-Study Survey revealed that 60% of the faculty was satisfied with their salary. Seventy-seven percent was satisfied with their fringe benefits.

### **Faculty Roles and Responsibilities**

Articles 63, 64, and 65 of the UPR General By-Laws establish the duties, function, and responsibilities of faculty. Duties include developing faculty and departmental objectives, attending meetings, presenting and discussing university-related issues, respecting the institution’s fundamental values, participating in consultation and election processes, keeping up-to-date in their disciplines, participating in professional development and evaluation processes, planning academic programs, and complying with those obligations related to their teaching duties (12 credit-hours of direct student contact; 6 office hours; 15 hours of preparation for



teaching, research, and test preparation and grading; and 4.5 hours for meetings). Faculty actively involved in research should be informed of the research needs in their disciplines, actively participate in research programs, and teach research skills. Librarians are responsible for the development of library services to support academic programs, including the acquisition of library and audiovisual materials and assisting users.

Article 65.2 specifically states that academic counseling is a faculty-inherent duty. Assessment results of students' perceptions of academic counseling showed that 50% of the 2000 alumni, 51% of the 2000-01 graduating students, and 70% of the 2002-03 graduating students rated this type of counseling as excellent or good. NSSE 2004 results show that the quality of academic advising received by freshmen was perceived as significantly higher than perceptions from either baccalaureate-general or all institutions participating in the survey. Seniors scored lower than either baccalaureate-general or all institutions on this survey (2.85 on a 4 point scale), but differences were not statistically significant. When questioned about whether they are trained for academic counseling, 39% of the faculty agreed that they were.

Faculty teaching loads can exceed the established 12-credit hours' norm. In case of institutional need, faculty can take a teaching overload that cannot exceed an 18-20 credit hour limit established by the Administrative Board (Certification 2001-2002-62). Exceptional cases exceeding the stipulated overload have to be analyzed by the Academic Dean and approved by the Chancellor.

Table 7.7 shows the distribution of faculty average teaching load for each of the academic departments.

**TABLE 7.7**  
**Faculty average teaching load**  
**(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

<b>Academic Department</b>	<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>2001-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>
Allied Health Sciences	20.21	15.90	16.21	15.68	15.97
Biology	15.35	16.88	14.10	13.49	14.86
Business Administration	15.82	15.87	16.50	15.50	15.86
Chemistry & Physics	15.75	15.56	16.00	18.56	17.29
Engineering	14.59	16.15	16.03	14.86	14.89
Computer Science	16.06	15.75	15.68	16.04	17.02
Education	16.50	16.02	15.33	15.95	16.20
English	17.12	17.43	18.07	16.22	16.60
Humanities	14.45	16.32	16.93	16.47	18.06
Mathematics	16.15	13.25	19.53	18.41	18.92
Office Systems	19.05	16.88	14.61	14.29	13.24
Social Sciences	15.94	15.39	16.25	16.85	16.98
Spanish	16.64	15.12	15.83	15.07	15.39

Source: Annual Institutional Data Profile

While no average teaching load exceeds the Board's stipulated top, averages are consistently over the 12-credit hour norm. In 2003-04, Mathematics topped all departments, with an 18.92, followed by Humanities (18.06) and Chemistry and Physics (17.29).

The UPR-Ponce mission statement supports efforts directed towards strengthening institutional research capabilities. The Institution supports faculty research by granting faculty leaves, sabbaticals, load reductions, and seed money to help in research start-up. The last endeavor is budgeted annually and funds are assigned by the Institutional Academic Research and Creativity Committee which receives and evaluates faculty research proposals following guidelines included in the *Institutional Policy for Academic Research and Creativity* (Administrative Board Certification 2000-2001-41). Appendix J presents academic research projects funded by this allocation.

Faculty research projects have been published through different means. During academic year 2003-04, Dr. Migdalia Alvarez, of the Biology Department, got her works on dominance, structure, and composition trends of *Dacryodes excelsa* fragmented forests in Puerto Rico and on the history of the disturbance on the floral and structural composition of a Caribbean mountainous forest published by the *Revista Mesoamericana*. Two books were published by Humanities faculty: Dr. Carlos Zapata (*From independence supporter to autonomist: Transformation of the political thought of Luis Muñoz Marín*), and Prof. Juan Nadal (*Edition, Latin-Spanish translation and notes to the medieval text Consolation of Philosophy*).

*Ceiba* is the UPR-Ponce publication which includes scholarly research and creative works by faculty members. Published annually since 2001, after several years of dormancy, it includes articles from both UPR-Ponce faculty and other intellectuals invited to contribute original works. The last issue included works from Dr. Javier Giordia (Spanish Department) on Manuel Fernández Juncos, the first UPR *Doctor Honoris Causa*, Dr. José R. Villalón (Humanities Department) on ethics and literature, and Dr. Luis R. Sánchez (Social Sciences Department), with an article entitled *Entre la tarde y la noche*.

Another medium for disclosing original faculty research is provided through the Congress on Academic Research and Creativity, which has been continuously held for the past six years. Faculty members are invited to present original research (those receiving funding from UPR-Ponce are required to present in this Congress as part of the funding agreement), and the Academic Research and Creativity Committee evaluates proposals. During the last two years, faculty from other UPR campuses has been invited to participate as a means for exchanging ideas and research projects. While these activities promote research and dissemination of results, faculty perceived that more can be done; on the other hand, 66% of the faculty agreed that the UPR-Ponce does promote research and disseminates its results.

Community service by faculty is an essential part of the promotion process. Faculty is involved in numerous endeavors such as participation as judges in different educational endeavors, active work in philanthropic organizations, involvement in special projects such as *Las Cucharas* jail ministry, active participation in school boards, presentation of workshops to school teachers, and conferences to different community groups.

Program assessment has been a focal point at the institution. Faculty participation is guaranteed in the *Guidelines for the Assessment and Evaluation of Academic Programs*. The Ad Hoc Program Assessment and Revision Committees that carry out the assessment are composed of the department head (ex-officio member), the Departmental Curriculum Committee, a student, and a faculty member with expertise in Curriculum Development and Evaluation, the head of the Office of Planning and Institutional Research, a community representative and a librarian acting as consultants. Evidence confirms that all assessed programs were constituted as stated.

As stated in the UPR General By-Laws, decision-making is another faculty endeavor. Faculty can participate in committees at the departmental, institutional, and systemic levels. Departmental committees include the following: Personnel; Curriculum; Library; Professional Development; Reclassification, Readmission, and Transfer; Assessment; and others, as needed. At the institutional level, committees are appointed by the Chancellor and attend to institutional concerns. When questioned through the Self-Study Survey about their opportunities to participate in departmental decision-making, 82% agreed that they can participate. On the other hand, 54% agreed that they can participate at the institutional level.

## **Professional Development**

The UPR-Ponce provides its faculty with a professional development program that strengthens the teaching-learning process. In order to further this goal, the Institution provides in-house professional development activities, facilitates faculty assistance to off-campus professional development activities, and provides for leaves which support the completion of doctoral work in areas of institutional interest. Evidence shows that each year UPR-Ponce has offered activities of a general nature under the auspices of the Deanship of Academic Affairs and academic departments.

A Faculty Professional Development Needs Assessment Survey was conducted in academic year 2000-2001 in order to identify areas of faculty interests. Appendix K presents this survey's results. A new assessment has been programmed for 2004-2005. The instrument used for the survey identified activities within the following areas: Curriculum and Instruction, Research, Student Learning Assessment and Evaluation, Proposal Preparation, and Use of Technology. Appendix L-1 includes professional development activities sponsored by the Deanship of Academic Affairs during the last five years. Activities offered centered on assessment, program evaluation, and research issues. In general, faculty members expressed great satisfaction with them. Evaluation forms provided a means for faculty to convey their needs for other professional development activities.

Departments have been actively involved in developing activities that will provide for their faculty's professional development. These activities, which are open to all faculty members, range from activities with a cultural focus to specific topics corresponding to the department's discipline. Forty-six percent of the academic departments reported having a professional development plan for their faculty. These plans are consistent with the requirement that professional development committees be formed at the departmental level. The remaining 54% depend on their faculty attending either institutional or external professional development activities. Appendix L-2 presents the number of professional development activities hosted by academic departments.

UPR-Ponce has consistently provided economic support for faculty to attend professional development activities off-campus. For academic years 1999-2000 to 2001-2002, the institution allocated \$22,500 yearly for this purpose. This amount was reduced to \$10,000 in 2002-2003 due to budgetary constraints, and in 2003-2004 it was increased to \$15,000. The Chancellor makes annual budget re-allocations according to faculty's professional development needs and to available fiscal resources. Table 7.8 depicts the fiscal resources spent during the last five years.

**TABLE 7.8**

**Budget spent for off-campus  
Faculty professional development activities**

	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Budget spent	\$10,317	\$8,526	\$13,420	\$11,561	\$41,750
Percent of institutional budget spent	0.06	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.20

Source: Budget Office

As can be seen in the above table, the budget spent for faculty professional development slightly fluctuated for the first four years, significantly increasing in the last. This was due to a non-recurrent fund allocation which raised professional development funding from \$15,000 to \$41,750.

Another means of providing professional development for faculty is the use of leaves for professional improvement. Article 50 of the UPR General By-Laws provides the general dispositions regarding the leaves which can be used for this purpose: sabbaticals and extraordinary leaves with pay, leaves with economic aid and without pay. Article 50 also states faculty obligations regarding these leaves. Sabbaticals provide the opportunity for faculty to improve professionally or culturally by means of activities such as artistic and literary creation, research, cultural trips, and formal studies. According to Article 51, tenured faculty is eligible for sabbaticals after completing five (5) years of satisfactory service. After resuming their teaching duties, another cycle of five (5) years must be completed before being eligible for this type of leave again. Extraordinary leaves and leaves with economic aid are granted to tenured or tenure-track faculty with at least three (3) years of satisfactory service to: carry out special tasks, pursue graduate work in or out of Puerto Rico, carry out artistic, literary, or research endeavors, and represent Puerto Rico or the institution in international, educational, scientific, artistic, literary, or sports events. Leaves without pay are granted for a year, and they are renewable for another year, to teach or study in another institution, to serve in a government agency, or for personal reasons. All leaves require faculty to commit to a number of years of service which has to exceed the number of years of leave. Table 7.9 shows the budget and number of leaves granted by the UPR-Ponce.

**TABLE 7.9  
Budget allocated to leaves and number of leaves granted  
(Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04)**

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Budget allocated for leaves	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Sabbatical leaves	0	1	3	0	0
Leaves with pay	6	3	0	2	3
Leaves with economic aid	1	2	0	0	1
Special aids	4	2	4	6	8
<b>Total leaves</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>

Source: UPR-Ponce's Administrative Board

The table reflects a continuous commitment of UPR-Ponce to use scarce resources assigned for leave purposes to help faculty improve professionally. As a direct result of this funding, a mathematics professor got a doctorate in pure mathematics from the University of Iowa and another faculty member from the same department is finishing a degree in the discipline. A biology professor got a doctorate in the field and another faculty member from the same

department is finishing a degree. The library director obtained a doctorate in History, while other faculty members have received aid to complete doctorate degrees in Education. The Self-Study Survey provided a means to assess faculty satisfaction with professional development opportunities at the institution. While 61% of the faculty was satisfied with professional development opportunities provided by the institution, only 20% was satisfied with the budget allocated to their departments for these purposes.

### Technology in Teaching

UPR-Ponce supports and stimulates the use of technology in the teaching-learning process, as attested by 73% of the faculty who responded to the Self-Study Survey. While the institution has always supported technology as an effective tool for enriching the teaching-learning process, and providing students with the experience needed to develop technological competency, it was in 1999 that technology received a boost on campus. In that year, a \$2.5 million dollar U.S. Department of Education Title V proposal was approved. Project activities included improving student performance and retention rates in the basic Spanish, English, and Mathematics courses through infusion of technology into curricula; and improving faculty's expertise through intensive training and provision of technological resources in order to aptly apply technology for curriculum delivery. Appendix L-3 provides a list of training activities sponsored by Title V during the last five years.

Title V funding has led to the revision of 25% of the courses and syllabi to include technological resources in teaching. It has also facilitated the creation of three Multi-Activity Teaching Centers, a Faculty Computerized Work Center, and an Interdisciplinary Computerized Center for students. Internet access has been improved on campus and now includes the Blackboard Platform. Twenty-five classrooms have been equipped with smart boards. In 2002-03, faculty was surveyed about the project's impact with a 42% response rate. Ninety-four percent of the faculty who answered the questionnaire indicated that they were familiar with the project; 90% of them considered it as excellent or good. Eighty percent of those who used the project's services considered them as either excellent or good. Workshops offered to faculty were rated excellent or good by 86% of respondents. Seventy-seven percent of respondents believed that they had enriched their courses and teaching strategies.

### Excellence in Teaching

As stated in UPR-Ponce's Mission Statement, "the institution recruits and retains faculty dedicated to the arts of teaching and advising". UPR-Ponce faculty offers outstanding teaching and there is evidence to support this statement. Faculty evaluations are important tools to measure teaching effectiveness. Table 7.10 presents scoring results for peer, student, and department head evaluations.

**TABLE 7.10**  
Faculty scoring more than eighty percent in different evaluation components

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Total number of faculty*	169	184	172	160	156
Number and percentage of faculty scoring more than 80% in peer evaluation	168 (99.4%)	167 (90.8%)	163 (94.8%)	154 (96.3%)	150 (96.2%)
Number and percentage of faculty scoring	160	177	167	160	155

more than 80% in student evaluation	(94.7%)	(96.2%)	(97.1%)	(100.0%)	(99.4%)
Number and percentage of faculty scoring more than 80% in department head evaluation	169 (100.0%)	184 (100.0%)	172 (100.0%)	160 (100.0%)	156 (100.0%)

\*Excludes full professors

Source: Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs

Consistent positive evaluations evidence UPR-Ponce faculty's noteworthy excellence in teaching. This is also reflected through students' performance as professionals. Program assessment (discussed in more detail in the next chapter) has provided results that consistently show that the UPR-Ponce faculty is fully committed to this endeavor. Other results of this commitment are provided by surveys of alumni and graduation candidates. Table 7.11 synthesizes some of these findings.

**TABLE 7.11**  
Percentage of students rating as excellent or good different elements that reflect quality of teaching in institutional surveys

	2000 Alumni Survey	2001 Graduating Students' Survey	2003 Graduating Students' Survey
Quality of teaching	91%	90%	88%
Faculty concern for student learning	78%	75%	79%
Course content	82%	78%	77%
Teaching methods	74%	71%	71%

Source: UPR-Ponce's Office of Planning and Institutional Research Surveys

The quality of teaching at the institution is rated consistently high, while faculty concern for student learning, course content, and teaching methods are rated lower.

The 2004 NSSE has provided the Institution with a means for benchmarking institutional results related to teaching and learning (see Exhibit 32). The NSSE has created five clusters or benchmarks of effective educational practice, described in Appendix M. Table 7.12 shows institutional, baccalaureate-general, and national results for each of the clusters:

**TABLE 7.12**  
NSSE benchmark scores for educational practices' clusters

Cluster	First year			Senior		
	UPR-Ponce	Bac. Gen.	National	UPR-Ponce	Bac. Gen.	National
Level of academic challenge	55.4	53.2	53.6	58.5	57.8	57.6
Active and collaborative learning	48.1	44.5	42.3	58.4	53.4	51.4
Student to faculty interaction	35.4	35.3	33.3	39.9	45.5	44.0
Enriching educational experiences	22.8	26.3	26.7	33.2	40.7	40.9
Supportive campus environment	63.2	64.7	62.8	60.7	62.3	59.7

UPR-Ponce exceeded Baccalaureate-General and National levels for first-year and seniors in both *level of academic challenge* and *active and collaborative learning* clusters. *Student-Faculty interaction*

showed higher values for first-year students but lower for seniors when compared with baccalaureate-general and national values. The *enriching educational experiences* cluster showed UPR-Ponce trailing behind baccalaureate-general and national values for both first-year and senior students. The *supportive campus environment* cluster showed UPR-Ponce surpassing national levels, but it did not surpass baccalaureate-general ones.

Table 7.13 presents an analysis of the *enriching educational experiences* cluster.

**TABLE 7.13**  
**Analysis of items in**  
***enriching educational experiences* cluster**

Item	Performance
Participated in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, student government, sports, etc.)	Significantly lower for freshmen when compared to bac-gen and national; significantly lower for seniors when compared to bac-gen; lower for seniors when compared to national
Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	Significantly lower for freshmen compared to bac-gen and national; lower for seniors when compared to bac-gen but higher when compared to national
Community service or volunteer work	Significantly lower for freshmen when compared to bac-gen and national; significantly lower for seniors when compared to bac-gen and national
Foreign language course work & study abroad	Significantly lower for freshmen when compared to bac-gen and national; significantly lower for seniors when compared to bac-gen and national
Independent study or self-designed major	Higher for freshmen when compared to bac-gen and national; significantly lower for seniors when compared to bac-gen and national
Culminating senior experience (comprehensive exam, capstone course, thesis, project, etc.)	Equivalent for freshmen when compared to bac-gen and national; significantly lower for seniors when compared to bac-gen; lower for seniors when compared to national
Serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	Lower for freshmen when compared to bac-gen; significantly lower for freshmen when compared to national; lower for seniors when compared to bac-gen and national
Serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity	Significantly lower for freshmen when compared to bac-gen and national; significantly lower for seniors when compared to bac-gen and national
Used electronic technology to discuss or complete an assignment	Significantly higher for freshmen when compared to bac-gen and national; significantly higher for seniors when compared to bac-gen and national
Campus environment encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	Lower for freshmen when compared to bac-gen and national; lower for seniors when compared to bac-gen and national

Source: NSSE 2004 Means Comparison Report

Results from this cluster indicate that UPR-Ponce students use technology to enhance their learning process at levels which surpass their peers at comparable institutions and at national level. Low results on the item related to conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity may be interpreted in the context of institutional homogeneity regarding ethnicity; all other elements in the cluster need to be examined in order to develop strategies that will enrich the educational experiences on campus.

## **Academic Freedom**

As previously stated in Chapter 4 under the topic of Integrity, Article 11 of the UPR General By-Laws defines academic and research freedoms and points out the system's commitment to protect them. Faculty was questioned about the institutional commitment to academic freedom. As a result, 80% perceived that the UPR-Ponce guarantees academic freedom to each of its faculty members. No legal claims have been filed by UPR-Ponce faculty regarding academic freedom violations.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

After examining information related to faculty, the following conclusions can be reached:

1. The UPR-Ponce benefits from the fact that its faculty is well-qualified, experienced, primarily tenured, and primarily full-time.
2. Faculty roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in institutional rules and regulations.
3. The standards and procedures for appointment, promotion, and tenure are well known by faculty; some concern arises from the level of faculty satisfaction with them.
4. The institution supports the advancement and development of its faculty.
5. Faculty actively participates in teaching, research, and service in order to help the institution comply with its mission.
6. UPR-Ponce faculty members are excellent teachers, as evidenced by multiple institutional measures.
7. There is a strong perception that the institution upholds the rights and prerogatives of faculty by respecting academic freedom.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on findings and conclusions, the following actions are recommended:

1. Continue efforts to strengthen the faculty professional development program in order to further enhance teaching effectiveness.
2. Develop a project based on findings of the enriching educational experiences cluster to enhance faculty involvement with students.



## INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the content, rigor, and coherence of the UPR Ponce academic programs and related educational activities as well as the extent to which they serve institutional goals. It also investigates expected learning outcomes for each program to gauge institutional effectiveness in achieving them. The sufficiency and effectiveness of program resources are also evaluated. The chapter also looks at how curricula are designed to ensure that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills in oral and written communication in Spanish and English, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. A documented analysis of these areas is presented together with recommendations for improvement.

## EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

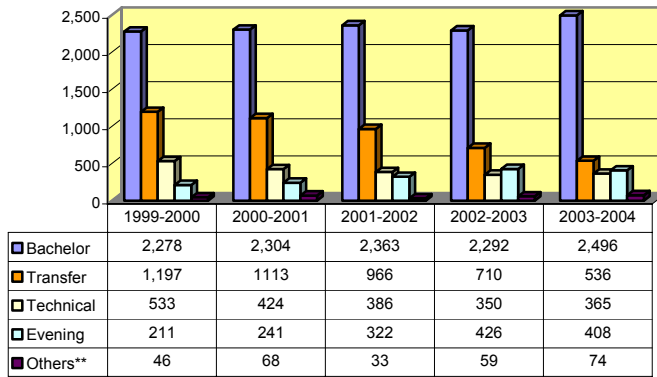
UPR-Ponce offers a wide variety of programs to satisfy the needs of the southern region in the areas of science and the arts. **Baccalaureate degrees** are offered in Business Administration, Computer Information Systems, Office Systems, Social Sciences (Psychology and Mental Health, and Forensic Psychology), Elementary Education, Athletic Training, and Natural Sciences (Biomedical Sciences and Biology with three sub-specializations: Bio-diversity Evaluator; Biotechnology; and Marine Coastal Environment Evaluator). **Associate degrees** are also offered in Business Administration, Computer Information Systems, Office Systems, Physical Therapy, Civil Engineering Technology (Drafting and Construction), and Industrial Engineering Technology. The campus also offers **transfer programs** in the Natural Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics), Mathematics, Engineering, and Arts (Humanities and Social Sciences). The Division of Continuing Education offers non-credit and credit courses and workshops.

### Enrollment

UPR-Ponce's enrollment reflects major changes in student preferences throughout the past five years, as shown in Figure 8.1. Enrollment in technical programs has diminished from 533 in 1999-2000 to 365 in 2003-2004; this represents a 32% decrease. Baccalaureate program enrollment showed a slight but continuous increase (except for academic year 2002-03) from 2,278 in 1999-2000 to 2,496 in 2003-2004; this represents a 10% increase in enrollment. In 1999-2000 baccalaureate programs comprised 53% of the total enrollment; however, in 2003-2004, they constituted 64% of the enrollment. The new baccalaureate programs in Social Sciences and Natural Sciences might have contributed to this increase. Transfer program enrollment diminished by 55% during the same period. With the establishment of new baccalaureate programs, students have the opportunity to complete their baccalaureate degrees at UPR-Ponce, thus, reducing their need to transfer to other UPR campuses. Enrollment in evening programs has grown from 211 in 1999-2000 to 405 in 2003-2004; this is a significant increase of 93%.

FIGURE 8.1  
Total Headcount Enrollment by Type of Program

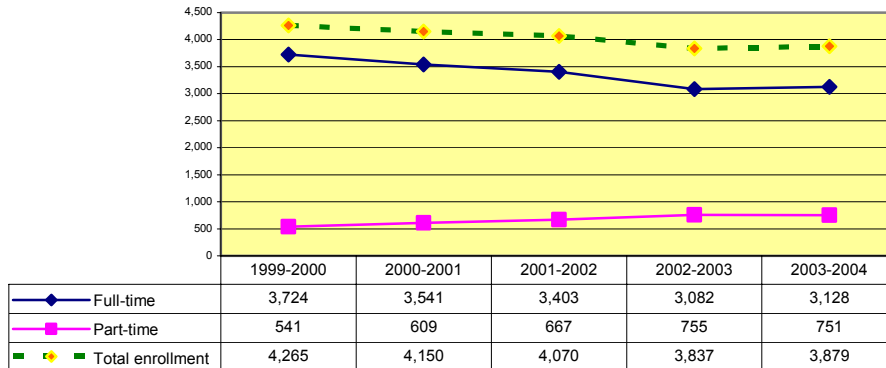
**Academic Years 1999-2000 to 2003-2004**



\*\* Professional development; Special permits  
 Source: Office of Planning and Institutional Research

As can be seen in Figure 8.2, total enrollment at UPR-Ponce decreased by 9% from 1999-2000 to 2003-2004. This decline may be attributed to enrollment management strategies used to deal with budgetary constraints. The table also shows full-time and part-time enrollment patterns during the last five years. Full-time enrollment has declined by 16%, while part-time enrollment has increased by 39%. The increase in part-time enrollment may be due to a 93% increase in the evening program enrollment. The average ratio of full-time to part-time students during the period studied was 5:1.

**FIGURE 8.2**  
**Distribution of Full Time and Part Time Enrollment**  
**Academic Years 1999-2000 to 2003-2004\***



\* First Semester Enrollment  
 Source: Office of Planning and Institutional Research

### Curricular Structure

The curriculum is structured into four interrelated components: general education, specialization, specialization-related and elective courses. These four components are directed to form a professional citizen with an integrated education. The general education component emphasizes the development of personal and social awareness, effective communication skills, reasoning and critical thinking skills, and ethic and aesthetic sensibility. Table 8.1 presents an analysis of the curricular structure of all associate and baccalaureate degree programs offered.

**TABLE 8.1**  
**Distribution of credit-hours**  
**in UPR-Ponce's academic programs**

Program	General Education*	Specialization	Specialization-related	Free Electives	Total credit hours
<b>Baccalaureate degree programs</b>					
Business Administration - Management	24 (19%)	33-35 (26-28%)	58 (45-46%)	12 (9%)	127-129
Business Administration – Marketing or Finance	24 (19%)	27-29 (21-23%)	63-64 (49-50%)	12 (9%)	127-128
Business Administration - Accounting	24 (18%)	35-37 (26-28%)	62-63 (46-47%)	12 (9%)	134-135
Computerized Information Systems	31 (22-23%)	52-53 (38-39%)	42 (30-31%)	12 (9%)	137-138
Office Systems	36 (27%)	63 (48%)	21 (16%)	12 (9%)	132
Elementary Education	42 (31%)	83 (61%)	29 (21%)	12 (9%)	136
Athletic Training	33 (24%)	62 (46%)	28 (21%)	12 (9%)	135
Social Sciences – Forensic Psychology	46 (35%)	50 (38%)	24 (18%)	12 (9%)	132
Social Sciences – Psych. and Mental Health	46 (35%)	41 (31%)	33 (25%)	12 (9%)	132
Biomedical Sciences	42 (33%)	33 (26%)	39 (31%)	12 (10%)	126
Biology – Bio-diversity Evaluator	36 (29%)	41 (33%)	36 (29%)	12 (10%)	125
Biology – Biotechnology	36 (29%)	41 (33%)	36 (29%)	12 (10%)	125
Biology – Marine Coastal Environment Evaluator	36 (29%)	41 (33%)	36 (29%)	12 (10%)	125
<b>Associate degree programs</b>					
Physical Therapy	26 (36%)	28 (39%)	18 (25%)	0 (0%)	72
Civil Engineering Techn. – Construction	18 (26%)	39-40 (56-59%)	11 (16%)	0 (0%)	68-69
Civil Engineering Technology – Drafting	18 (26%)	39-40 (56-59%)	11 (16%)	0 (0%)	68-69
Industrial Engineering Technology	15 (21-22%)	35 (50-51%)	18 (26%)	0 (0%)	68-70

\* English, Spanish, Social Sciences, Sciences, Humanities, and Mathematics courses not related to the specialization  
Source: University of Puerto Rico in Ponce 2003-2006 Catalog

The previous table reflects a diversity of distributions among all components of the programs. At the baccalaureate level, all programs have 12 credit hours of free electives, with the general education component ranging from 24 to 46 credit hours and comprising from 18 to 35% of the total credit-hours of each program. At the associate degree level, the general education component provides from 15 to 26 credit hours, which make up from 21 to 36% of the total credit hours. The specialization and specialization-related components constitute the highest percentage of the programs. All programs comply with the required number of credit hours for

their levels. At the associate degree level, programs have at least 15 credit hours of general education course work. At the baccalaureate level, the Business Administration program's 24 credit hours of general education do not include 6 credit hours in quantitative mathematical analysis (which were included in the specialization-related component); all baccalaureate degree programs comply with the required minimum of 30 credit hours of general education course work.

The curricular structure of transfer programs is the same as the first two years of the equivalent program at other campuses of the University of Puerto Rico. There are two types of transfer programs: articulated (students entering these programs are guaranteed a space in their sophomore year in the UPR unit with which the articulation agreement was signed) and general (students entering these programs have to apply to another UPR unit when completing transfer requirements and have to compete for available spaces).

Programs are structured so that their curricula provide for skill building, attitude development, and mastery of increasingly difficult subject content. Appendixes N-1 to N-3 provide an analysis of the curricular structures of representative baccalaureate, associate, and transfer programs. The analysis of the baccalaureate program in Elementary Education (Appendix N-1) shows that the major development of general education skills takes place during the first two years of the program. Courses taught in these years also prepare students for methodology courses taken in the sophomore and senior years. The senior year teacher Practicum experience provides for a synthesis of learning.

As a technical program, the Associate Degree in Industrial Engineering Technology (Appendix N-2) places special emphasis on developing a strong knowledge in the discipline. Spanish and English courses help students develop language skills. Quantitative reasoning is developed in Mathematics, Statistics, and other courses in which these skills are applied. The general education component is completed with a Humanities or Social Sciences course.

The curriculum of the Engineering articulated transfer program (Appendix N-3) is determined by the Engineering School of the Mayagüez Campus of the University of Puerto Rico. Most courses are technical in nature. The basic courses in Spanish and English enhance the development of language skills and the pre-calculus and calculus courses develop quantitative reasoning skills.

Appendix O presents all institutional offerings, pointing out which programs have a course which provides for a synthesis of learning. Of the 14 programs offered at the baccalaureate level, 12 (86%) provide a course option which promotes it; 10 (71%) require course work geared toward synthesis (through a capstone course such as a Practicum, Internship, or Project). At the associate degree level, 1 (25%) provides this option. Other programs provide course-embedded activities which promote this synthesis.

The Self-Study Survey provided for student assessment of academic programs. Seventy-nine percent of students participating in the survey perceived that they are informed of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which they have to develop through their programs. Seventy-six percent considered their programs are up-to-date with respect to recent trends in their disciplines; eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed that the courses in their program promote a

variety of learning activities. The course sequence of the programs was considered adequate by 78% of the students.

### Program Assessment

As discussed in Chapter 5, the development and use of the *Guidelines for the assessment and evaluation of academic programs* has provided a framework for the institutional assessment of academic offerings. The evaluation model chosen, Stufflebeam's Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP), guided the development of six evaluation objectives:

Evaluation Element	Evaluation objectives
Context	Determine to what extent the program responds to society's needs. Determine to what extent the program responds to the College's mission and goals and to System and College Strategic Plans.
Input	Determine to what extent the program responds to its students' characteristics. Determine if the curricular structure and programmed resources are adequate for program implementation.
Process	Determine if the program has developed as planned.
Product	Determine to what extent the program is effective in: a) graduating its students within the stipulated time, b) employing its graduates, and c) developing capacities needed for graduates' employment.

In order to comply with evaluation objectives, the plan is complemented with evaluation questions, criteria, strategies and/or instruments, and resources. Program evaluation is conducted by a Departmental Program Evaluation and Revision Ad Hoc Committee, consisting of members of the Departmental Curriculum Committee, the department head, and a student from the program. The Director of the OPIR, a professor with expertise in curriculum development and evaluation, a community representative, and a librarian act as consultants.

The first evaluation cycle (starting in 2003) included the following programs: the baccalaureate programs in Business Administration, Computer Sciences, Elementary Education, Forensic Psychology, Psychology and Mental Health, Athletic Training, and Office Systems; and the Associate Degree in Industrial Engineering Technology. Although the Physical Therapy program will undergo an evaluation in the second cycle, guidelines prepared by the American Physical Therapy Association, its accrediting agency, will be used for that purpose.

The Office of Planning and Institutional Research supported the evaluation process by:

- Preparing the documents *External Environment Needs Assessment*, which provided socio-economic, demographic, and educational data of the southern region was provided, and *Physical Plant Needs Assessment*, which described the physical resources needed by departments to comply with standards set by external agencies.
- Providing statistical data on students' socio-demographic characteristics, retention and graduation rates, performance by General Application Index, and other data as needed.

In May 2004, the Deanship of Academic Affairs presented the results of the assessment process to the Academic Senate. All evaluated programs informed that their graduates can satisfy projected societal demands. They also respond to the University's mission, and to System and University Strategic Plans. Appendix P-1 shows the findings related to curricular structure and

programmed resources. Most programs show adequacy in curricular structure and faculty; however, the resources needed vary by each program.

Program effectiveness was analyzed by using retention data for the 2000, 2001, and 2002 cohorts. Appendix P-2 shows the institutional retention rate and that of each individual program. The overall institutional persistence rate (based on freshmen returning to the same program in their sophomore year) is fairly consistent (60 to 63%) for the three cohorts analyzed. The rates for the Elementary Education, Accounting, Psychology and Mental Health, and Forensic Psychology programs consistently surpass the institutional rate. The 2002 cohort showed an increase in program retention rates. Programs consistently scoring lower than institutional averages include Marketing, Computerized Information Systems, and Industrial Engineering Technology.

Graduation rates were also used as an indicator of program and institutional effectiveness. Appendix P-3 includes baccalaureate and associate degree program graduation rates for specific cohorts. At the baccalaureate level, the 6-year graduation rate for Elementary Education, Office Systems, Athletic Training, and Finance consistently exceed institutional values which average 33%. The average graduation rates for the remaining baccalaureate programs are lower. The appendix also includes the 3-year Industrial Engineering Technology graduation rate. It is consistently lower than the institutional average for associate degree programs (28%).

Appendix P-4 shows other findings related to program assessment. Alumni surveys reflect satisfaction with all programs assessed. Not all programs reported using employer surveys, but those who did presented satisfactory results.

Departmental committees are currently using the results of program evaluations to develop proposals for curricular revision or to implement changes for program improvement.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

An examination of syllabi shows that all courses specify knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should develop in order to satisfy the expectations set in the graduating or transfer student profiles. Appendixes Q-1 to Q-3 present an analysis of the relationship between intended outcomes, courses, and achievement for a baccalaureate, an associate, and a transfer program. From the information analyzed, it can be concluded that assessment at UPR-Ponce is embedded in departmental concerns about how students are acquiring skills and that it takes multiple forms. A concern is raised with the uneven distribution between direct and indirect measures used to assess skills.

The Physical Therapy and the Elementary Education programs use external standard measures to determine the effectiveness of their curricular offerings and the extent to which these results reflect and promote the institution's mission and goals. Table 8.2 presents data on the Physical Therapy Assistant Comprehensive Test results.

**TABLE 8.2**  
**Physical Therapy Assistant Comprehensive Test Results UPR – Ponce**  
**1999-2000 to 2002-2003**

Percent of students approving the test	
October 2000	83
October 2001	84
March 2002	86
March 2003	*
November 2004	88

\* Information not available  
 Source: Allied Health Sciences Department

Passing rates exceed those required by the American Physical Therapy Association which professionally accredits the program (the next reaccreditation visit is due in 2008).

Table 8.3 shows scores obtained by Elementary Education students on the College Board’s Teacher Certification Test.

**TABLE 8.3**  
**Passing Rates for Teacher Certification Test UPR – Ponce**  
**1999-2000 to 2002-2003**

Year	Number of UPR-Ponce students tested	Number of UPR-Ponce students who passed	UPR-Ponce Pass rate	Puerto Rico Pass Rate	UPR – Ponce’s Quartile
1999-2000	74	69	93	84	I
2000-2001	85	79	93	86	I
2001-2002	111	102	92	79	I
2002-2003	100	89	89	77	I

Source: Title II – State Report

For the period assessed, UPR-Ponce students maintained an approval percentage that is higher than the approval percentage of the total number of students tested islandwide. Not only have students outperformed Puerto Rico’s passing rates in the Teacher Certification Test, but they have consistently placed in the first quartile.

Academic departments design assessment plans on a yearly basis. An analysis of these plans revealed that 95% of the objectives were assessed either in the year they were proposed or the year after. Different actions have been taken in response to findings. Some of these include syllabi revision, adjustments in course objectives and activities, revision of educational materials and textbooks, methodology changes in Physical Therapy classes, peer tutoring programs for Chemistry classes, and reemphasis on the study of ethics in the Business Administration courses. Departmental assessment plans provide evidence of the actions taken by the departments based on the assessment results.

Alumni and graduating student surveys have shown satisfaction with both academic and professional skills development received through the curricula. When asked in 1999-2000, 79% of alumni interviewed evaluated the preparation received at UPR-Ponce related to their jobs as excellent or good. Eighty-five percent were totally satisfied or satisfied with their program, and 92% were totally satisfied or satisfied with the institution. They also stated that they found a job

in their area of specialization in less than a year (66%). The 2000-2001 Graduating Student Survey reflected that 75% of students surveyed would enthusiastically recommend their area of specialization to others, and 86% evaluated their experience at UPR-Ponce as either excellent or good. The 2002-2003 Graduating Student Survey provided similar results: 75% informed they would recommend their area of specialization to others with much enthusiasm, and 95% evaluated their experience at UPR-Ponce as excellent or good.

These results are supported by the NSSE 2004 results (Table 8.4) where 85% of the seniors surveyed evaluated the entire educational experience at the institution as good to excellent (3.42 on a 4.00 scale). UPR-Ponce freshmen and seniors expressed that, if given a choice, they would select UPR-Ponce again at rates that significantly exceeded those for baccalaureate-general and national institutions participating in the survey.

**TABLE 8.4**  
**NSSE 2004 results of satisfaction with institution**

Criterion	UPR-Ponce		Bac-Gen		NSSE 2004	
		Mean	Mean	Sig.	Mean	Sig.
Evaluation of entire educational experience at the institution	FY	3.14	3.23		3.22	
	SR	3.42	3.27		3.25	
<i>1 = poor; 2 = fair; 3 = good; 4 = excellent</i>						
If starting over again, would go to the same institution	FY	3.56	3.22	***	3.23	***
	SR	3.50	3.17	**	3.18	**
<i>1 = definitely no; 2 = probably no; 3 = probably yes; 4 = definitely yes</i>						

### Honors Study Program

The Honors Study Program (HSP) is an academic program that enriches the students' collegial experience by providing them with a curriculum that fosters leadership, social responsibility, independent study, and collaborative work. The students are enrolled in block form in special sections of the program's core courses. The HSP does not grant degrees or titles, but it offers a certificate to students who satisfactorily complete all the program requirements. These include the following: commitment to approving all courses with outstanding grades and maintaining a GPA higher than 3.33; taking six credit hours of Honors courses offered in an interdisciplinary approach to achieve the academic program goals such as Introduction to Astronomy, Management and Conservation of Natural Resources, English Media Lexicon, Introduction to Italian, ESL Technical Writing, and Medicine Topics; conducting research in their field of specialization which is then presented to the Honors Program Committee; providing a minimum of 30 hours of community service; and applying for participation in a summer and/or semester research program such as those offered by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

The Honors Program is part of the National Collegiate Honors Council and the Northeast National Collegiate Honors Program. The students have participated in their activities and have been recognized in and out of Puerto Rico. Some of the students have been awarded special legislative scholarships, the Anheuser Bush Scholarship, the Richard Carrión Scholarship, Academic Excellence Awards, and the Alliance for Minority Participation special scholarship, among others. As part of their required participation in research programs, they have worked for research programs in well-known universities such as Duke University (Medical Education),



Case Western University (Medical Education), Ponce School of Medicine, UPR Medical Sciences Campus, and others.

Program learning goals were assessed in 2003-2004 by means of a survey. Students expressed their satisfaction with the program's contribution to the development of certain skills:

- Independent study (62% satisfied; 6% unsatisfied; 32% did not answer or express an opinion)
- Analytical and logical reasoning (66% satisfied; 2% unsatisfied; 32% did not answer or express an opinion)
- Social and civic responsibility (74% satisfied; 2% unsatisfied; 24% did not answer or express an opinion)
- Personal growth and development (72% satisfied; 2% unsatisfied; 26% did not answer or express an opinion)
- Cooperative work in program courses (62% satisfied; 4% unsatisfied; 34% did not answer or express an opinion).

### **Transfer Credit**

An analysis of student records from 1999 to 2003 shows that acceptance of transfer credit is fair and consistently applied. The information on requirements for acceptance of transfer credit is disseminated by different means, including the institutional catalog, which states the institution's criteria for course transfer, based on the Academic Senate's Certification 2002-2003-34. These criteria take into consideration student achievement in approved courses.

### **New Programs**

An analysis of the proposals for new programs reveals that they were carefully and realistically proposed in terms of the institution's mission, strategic plan, market demands, and impact on budget, space, faculty, support services, and existing programs. Two new academic programs were authorized since the last evaluation visit: a baccalaureate degree in Social Sciences with two specializations (Psychology and Mental Health and Forensic Psychology) and a baccalaureate degree in Natural Sciences, also with two specializations (Biology and Biomedical Sciences). Both were approved by all university governing bodies and evaluated by the Puerto Rico Council on Higher Education (PRCHE). Even though the proposals include a proposed budget, the Board of Trustees and the President determine the budget assigned for the new programs. The PRCHE evaluated the baccalaureate degree in Social Sciences in terms of the factors mentioned above, approved it, and gave some recommendations regarding the improvement of library resources. The baccalaureate degree in Natural Sciences, authorized in 2001-2002, will be evaluated in 2006.

### **Degrees Conferred**

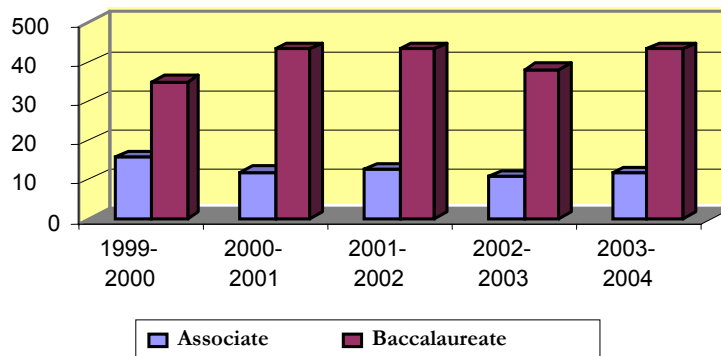
Table 8.5 illustrates the distribution of degrees conferred by academic program from 1999-2000 to the present, and Figure 8.3 compares the total number of associate degrees to the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded during this period.

**TABLE 8.5**  
**Distribution of Degrees Conferred by Academic Program**  
**Academic Years 1999-2000 to 2003-2004**

PROGRAMS	ACADEMIC YEAR				
Technical Programs	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Business Administration	3	3	2	3	3
Computer Information System	0	0	0	0	0
Office Systems	4	5	3	1	2
Physical Therapy	56	40	30	26	25
Sciences	0	1	0	0	0
Industrial Engineering Technology	10	10	6	13	8
Civil Eng. Technology in Construction	49	28	43	28	40
Civil Eng. Technology in Drafting	32	30	39	34	38
Arts	2	1	2	0	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>117</b>
Baccalaureate Programs					
Biomedical Sciences*	-	-	-	-	5
Business Administration					
Accounting	47	52	41	47	34
Management	37	47	41	22	24
Marketing	16	28	26	18	21
Finance	10	15	19	15	22
Computerized Information Systems	36	33	23	23	22
Elementary Education	75	87	91	92	130
Arts in Social Sciences					
Forensic Psychology	25	44	57	52	55
Psychology and Mental Health	9	37	48	43	53
Athletic Training	37	30	33	28	15
Office Systems	57	61	54	42	53
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>434</b>
<b>Total Degrees Granted</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>551</b>

Source: Annual Institutional Data Profiles

**FIGURE 8.3**  
**Distribution of degrees conferred by type of program**



UPR-Ponce has awarded a total of 2,655 degrees during the last five years. In 2003-04, 551 degrees were conferred. This represents a 9% increase when compared to 1999-2000. The number of graduates in baccalaureate programs has outnumbered that of graduates receiving associate degrees. Total baccalaureate degrees awarded increased by 24% from 1999-2000 to 2003-2004. The Social Sciences and the Elementary Education programs contributed significantly to this increase showing a 218% and 73% growth, respectively, in degrees granted during this period.

The number of associate degrees granted in 2003-04 was 117, representing a 25% decrease compared to those of 1999-2000. Students in transfer programs may request an associate degree in Arts or Sciences if they fulfill all requirements. Not all transfer students do so. Table 8.6 shows that an average rate of 51% of UPR-Ponce graduates completed their associate degrees within 150% of normal time (three years) during the period indicated.

**TABLE 8.6**  
**Time to degree: Technical Programs**  
**Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-2004**

<b>TIME TO DEGREE</b>							
<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Degrees Granted</b>	<b>Two Years</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Three Years</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>More Than Three Years</b>	<b>%</b>
1999-2000	156	19	12	72	46	5	42
2000-2001	118	11	9	28	32	69	58
2001-2002	125	10	8	60	48	55	44
2002-2003	107	10	9	48	45	49	46
2003-2004	117	15	13	49	42	53	45
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>37</b>

Source: Annual Institutional Data Profiles

As Table 8.7 shows, on average, 78% of graduates completed their baccalaureate degree within 150% of the normal time (6 years), and 22% took more than 6 years.

**TABLE 8.7**  
**Time to Degree: Baccalaureate Programs**  
**Academic Years 1999-2000 to 2002-2003**

<b>TIME TO DEGREE</b>									
<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Degrees Granted</b>	<b>Four Years</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Five Years</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Six Years</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Over Six Years</b>	<b>%</b>
1999-2000	349	41	12	193	55	61	17	54	15
2000-2001	434	67	15	216	50	93	21	58	13
2001-2002	433	51	12	170	39	81	19	131	30
2002-2003	382	42	11	172	45	93	24	75	20
2003-04	434	70	16	173	40	70	16	121	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2032</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>22</b>

Source: Annual Institutional Data Profiles

## Library Services and Information Literacy Skills

The Adelina Coppin-Alvarado Library building, considered symbolic of the University, was closed in December 2003, due to sick building syndrome. Services were relocated to different sites on campus. Measures have been taken to offer all services and to lend resources as expeditiously as possible. The library is staffed by 8 librarians, 13 assistant librarians, 2 library assistants, 1 administrative assistant, 4 secretaries, and 3 audiovisual technicians.

Table 8.8 shows the distribution of library resources for the period indicated.

**TABLE 8.8**  
**Library resources and services**  
**Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-04**

Resource	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Book titles	59,281	59,729	50,992	52,414	57,079
Book volumes	61,365	63,349	61,411	68,206	68,836
Printed periodicals (Titles)	798	395	812	542	544
Periodicals in Microform (Titles)	55	9	9	55	55
Periodicals on-line	2,341	12,757	12,757	18,238	18,238 aprox.
Newspapers	14	10	10	13	5 (local)
Newspapers on-line (Titles)	1	159	159	225	226
Records (LP)	1,517	1,517	1,517	1,513	1,513
Audiocassettes (Titles)	1,559	1,563	1,564	1,524	1,526
Audiocassettes (Volumes)	1,571	1,582	1,583	1,539	1,541
Videocassette recordings (Titles)	3,105	3,250	3,302	3,331	3,454
Videocassette recordings (Volumes)	3,363	3,538	3,598	3,642	3,777
Compact Discs (Titles)	94	99	100	101	107
Compact Discs (Volumes)		100	102	102	108
Slides	1,225	1,225	1,225	1,225	1,225

Source: UPR-Ponce Library

Book titles decreased significantly in 2001-02 because many books contaminated with fungus were discarded. The number of book titles and volumes has steadily increased since then; many printed and microform periodicals have been supplemented with periodicals on-line, which have significantly increased the number of titles available to patrons. The faculty is constantly asked to evaluate resources received in the Library as well as others in catalogs sent by suppliers. Each academic department has a Library Committee that makes recommendations for new resources.

The library offers many important services to support the teaching-learning process and to help students develop information skills that will prepare them to be lifelong learners. These services are adapted and enhanced in light of technological advances and assessment activities. Important examples are the strengthening of the library instruction program, the acquisition of the largest Spanish language database currently available, and the digitalization of reserve reading materials. A document transmission system, Ariel, was installed to facilitate interlibrary loans of magazine or journal articles from other libraries in the UPR system. The library's home page provides a useful means for faculty and students to access online services, the digital reserve, and bibliographies prepared by library staff, as well as to keep up to date on library news. In 2002-03, a new area, Academic Computation, was made available so that students can prepare documents with different computer software, search the Internet, and communicate with their professors. The Electronic Library, previously used for the purposes set aside for the Academic

Computation Area, is now used to search institutional and periodical databases and to use library resources in diskette or CD-ROM format. Table 8.9 shows the use of library resources and services for the period indicated.

**TABLE 8.9**  
**Use of library resources and services**  
**Academic year 1999-2000 to 2003-04**

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Reference	8,083	10,722	3,450	7,821	10,816
Circulation loans	7,579	8,953	8,948	13,001	13,642
Reserve section loans	39,112	32,930	39,112	44,163	32,524
Serials	17,934	16,116	8,913	13,058	12,450
Non print resources used	5,717	6,889	4,803	2,834	3,039
Puerto Rican Collection resources used	5,190	6,045	5,834	6,280	4,930
PRODDDIB (Library instruction)	1,263	614	2,466	1,297	939
Electronic Library	16,272	23,179	24,252	2,900	3,240
Academic computation area usage	-	-	-	7,978	8,034
Graphics arts production	3,991	*	*	*	*
Photography production	2,087	2,461	1,116	1,005	1,156
Audio/TV production	218	293	235	200	135

\* Graphic Arts Production was moved to a different administrative unit

Source: Annual Institutional Data Profiles

Reference service increased by 34% for the period under consideration, and circulation loans by 80%. Reserve section loans decreased by 17%, and the use of non print and Puerto Rican Collection resources by 5%. The decrease in serials loans is due to the fact that more on-line resources have been made available. Audiovisual services such as audio/video editing and recording and the insertion of music, narrative, and electronic titles, decreased in recent years due to new digital technologies that facilitate and support the teaching-learning process.

The Information Skills Mastery Development Program (PRODDDIB for its Spanish acronym) was designed to facilitate the learning and teaching processes and to help students use library resources more effectively. The staff promotes the use of information resources and teaches the use of information access tools through workshops and individual or group instruction. These activities are coordinated with professors and are related to different course content. In academic year 2001-2002, 98% of the students completing a library services satisfaction questionnaire evaluated PRODDDIB as excellent or good. In 2002-2003, students assessed the following aspects of bibliographic instruction sessions as excellent or good: content, presentation, materials provided, resources used, time distribution, opportunity to apply what was learned, opportunity to participate, and quality of presentation.

The 2002-03 library assessment plan used mini quizzes and several items on the Graduating Students Survey administered by the OPIR to assess both student and faculty information skills. One of the outcomes of the plan was achieved completely, while the remainder were partially achieved. Ninety-three percent of graduating students surveyed indicated that they believe that their information skills will be useful in their personal and professional lives. Using these results, different strategies were implemented to improve information skills mastery. Some of these include workshops offered to the faculty of each academic department, orientation for freshmen

before classes begin in the fall, and greater emphasis placed on Boolean logic in library instruction sessions.

The 2003-04 assessment results showed that students attending a bibliographic instruction session could correctly answer questions related to Boolean logic. Students could also correctly identify most Library sections, except the reference and periodicals sections. Strategies are being explored to improve faculty awareness of the variety of library instruction services available and to encourage them to enhance student information skills in collaboration with professional librarians.

## GENERAL EDUCATION

The UPR-Ponce mission states that the institution’s offerings combine the liberal arts with areas of specialization in order to provide students with enriching experiences. While the curricula of the academic programs develop proficiency in general education and basic skills, only two institutional goals address specific skills:

- To provide students with the appropriate mechanisms for developing skills needed in order to think and to communicate effectively, orally and in writing, in both Spanish and English.
- To enable students to develop the capacity for self-directed learning and independent study.

No evidence was found of a clear statement of purpose which defines a curricular structure for the general education component at the institutional level. Appendix R shows an analysis of how UPR-Ponce delivers general education skills. From this appendix, it can be seen that all institutional programs embed their general education courses across the curriculum.

The assessment of student development of communication proficiency is directly conducted by the departments. The English Department tests students in the basic courses to ensure that they have acquired and developed basic communication skills as well as specific skills. Elements assessed include grammar and reading skills (through multiple choice items) and writing skills (open-ended composition scored with a rubric). Table 8.10 shows test results for the past three academic years in the Basic English courses (3101-3102).

**TABLE 8.10**  
**Test Results of Basic Skills in English**  
**(English 3101-3102)**  
**From 2001-2002 to 2003-04**

Academic year	Number of students tested	% students approving test with a grade of 70% or higher
2001-02	724	72
2002-03	638	71
2003-04	653	74

Source: UPR-Ponce English Department

The Spanish Department has been discussing the possibility of designing a basic skills test to obtain evidence of student mastery of communication skills in Spanish. Meanwhile, each course

in the Spanish Department has instruments to measure the specific skills developed in each one. Departmental assessment is done in order to determine if skills developed through courses have been mastered.

In terms of quantitative reasoning skills, the Mathematics Department offers a variety of courses to enable students to develop skills needed in their disciplines. No formal assessment of computational skills developed through math courses is conducted.

Several courses have embedded research skills. The English Department, for example, offers the course INCO 4006 (Report Writing), which requires that students prepare a research proposal, design and administer a questionnaire to collect data, analyze findings, draw conclusions, present research results orally to the class, and submit a written report. Another example is provided by the Social Sciences Department which requires students taking the course SOCI 3265 (Social Research Techniques) to carry out original research which includes designing and administering instruments, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting findings. In Chemistry 4999 and in Biology 3108 students have the experience of undertaking scientific research on a topic related to the area. The results of this research have been presented in different universities through federal programs such as Alliance for Minority Participation and Transitions to Research Careers.

An examination of syllabi reveals that some academic departments have explicitly included the study of ethics in their courses. Others have included some activities related to ethics and values. An examination of assessment plans and annual reports of academic departments shows that most of the programs have conducted assessment of general education skills, especially oral and written communication in Spanish and English, and of appreciation for ethical and moral values. In light of the findings, syllabi were revised to enhance ethical values. Faculty from the English and Spanish departments has collaborated with colleagues in academic majors in the development of teaching strategies to improve communication skills.

Although the Institution could make more use of direct means in assessing general education skills, indirect means provide multiple examples of how it has performed in this area. Table 8.11 shows results of several surveys in which students indicated their degree of satisfaction with the manner in which the University contributed to skills development.

**TABLE 8.11**  
**Satisfaction with UPR-Ponce's contribution to general education skills**

Skill	2000 Alumni Survey (Percentage assessing contribution as high or fair)	2001 Graduating Students Survey (Percentage assessing contribution as high or fair)	2003 Graduating Students Survey (Percentage totally satisfied or satisfied)
Ethical values	*	*	83
Reading comprehension in Spanish	87	81	83
Written expression in Spanish	91	86	85
Oral expression in Spanish	89	84	86
Personal and familiar relationships	78	69	81

Skill	2000 Alumni Survey (Percentage assessing contribution as high or fair)	2001 Graduating Students Survey (Percentage assessing contribution as high or fair)	2003 Graduating Students Survey (Percentage totally satisfied or satisfied)
Social and civic responsibility	*	*	82
Team work	90	*	78
Information search skills	*	*	79
Analytical and logical reasoning	87	*	75
Computer literacy skills	61	67	60
Reading comprehension in English	*	*	62
Written expression in English	80	75	51
Oral expression in English	76	74	50
Mathematical skills	75	65	51
Responsibility and self-discipline	96	*	*
Leadership and service	85	*	*
Personal growth and development	*	91	*
Library use	*	78	*
Self-esteem	83	*	*
Tolerance	88	*	*

\* Not assessed

Areas of strength in the development of general education skills include ethical values, reading comprehension in Spanish, written and oral expression in Spanish, social and civic responsibility, team work, responsibility and self discipline, leadership and service, personal growth and development, self-esteem, and tolerance. Areas for improvement include mathematical skills, computer literacy skills, and oral expression in English.

The Self-Study Survey and results from the NSSE 2004 have provided additional evidence of the institution's commitment to developing students' general education skills. The student Self-Study Survey revealed the following facts:

- 87% agreed that they could apply the skills and abilities acquired in the basic courses in their specialization courses.
- 83% agreed that their program promotes the development of research skills.
- 87% agreed that courses promote independent study.
- 89% perceived that the basic courses in their programs incorporate the study of ethics, values, and respect for diversity in areas such as age, gender, race, nationality and others.
- 80% perceived that UPR-Ponce supports and stimulates the use of technology in the teaching-learning process.
- 72% agreed that faculty use technology effectively in the classroom.

Table 8.12 presents NSSE 2004 results on educational and personal growth.



**TABLE 8.12**  
**NSSE 2004 Results:**  
**Educational and Personal Growth**

Criterion	UPR-Ponce Mean		Bac-Gen		NSSE 2004	
			Mean	Sig.	Mean	Sig.
Acquiring a broad general education	FY	3.14	3.15		3.15	
	SR	2.87	3.13	*	3.14	*
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	FY	3.09	2.76	***	2.67	***
	SR	3.43	3.10	**	3.02	**
Writing clearly and effectively	FY	2.99	3.03		2.97	
	SR	3.31	3.14		3.12	
Speaking clearly and effectively	FY	3.04	2.84	*	2.73	**
	SR	3.33	3.07	**	3.01	**
Thinking critically and analytically	FY	3.34	3.17		3.17	
	SR	3.44	3.35		3.37	
Analyzing quantitative problems	FY	2.89	2.62	**	2.63	*
	SR	2.96	2.84		2.87	
Using computing and information technology	FY	3.43	2.90	***	2.85	***
	SR	3.48	3.12	**	3.12	**
Working effectively with others	FY	3.01	2.92		2.85	
	SR	3.52	3.17	**	3.14	***
Voting in local, state, or national elections	FY	2.04	1.83	*	1.88	
	SR	2.46	1.87	***	1.84	***
Learning effectively on your own	FY	3.08	2.92		2.91	
	SR	3.21	3.10		3.09	
Understanding yourself	FY	3.03	2.81	*	2.74	**
	SR	3.16	2.95		2.88	*
Understanding people of other ethnic and racial backgrounds	FY	2.76	2.55		2.53	*
	SR	2.96	2.61	**	2.58	**
Solving complex real-world problems	FY	2.72	2.52	*	2.50	*
	SR	3.10	2.71	**	2.69	**
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	FY	2.99	2.73	**	2.60	***
	SR	3.23	2.87	**	2.72	***
Contributing to the welfare of your community	FY	2.62	2.42		2.32	**
	SR	3.12	2.54	***	2.42	***
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	FY	2.30	2.42		2.10	
	SR	2.63	2.36	*	1.99	***

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (2-tailed); 1 = very little; 2 = some; 3 = quite a bit; 4 = very much

UPR-Ponce freshmen excelled over their Carnegie classification and overall counterparts in the following: acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills; speaking clearly and effectively, analyzing quantitative problems, using computing and information technology; understanding oneself, solving complex real-world problems, and developing a personal code of values and ethics. Seniors excelled in the following areas: acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills, speaking clearly and effectively, using computing and information technology, working effectively with others, voting in local, state, or national elections, understanding people of other ethnic and racial backgrounds, solving complex real-world problems, developing a personal code of values and ethics, contributing to the community's welfare, and developing a deepened sense of spirituality. Areas for improvement include writing clearly and effectively, thinking critically and analytically, and effective independent learning. Some concern arises in seniors' perception of acquiring a broad general education.

## **RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

### **Developmental Education**

As stated in its Mission and Goals Statement, UPR-Ponce helps students overcome their academic deficiencies through various means. To ensure that students master basic quantitative reasoning skills before taking courses required in the different disciplines, the Mathematics Department organized a series of basic math skills workshops during five consecutive summer sessions. Using institutional enrollment information, freshmen students whose scores fall under 625 on the College Board Mathematics Achievement Test are encouraged to take a diagnostic test to identify areas for improvement. Students scoring under 70% on this diagnostic test are given the option of taking any or all of three ten-hour non-credit workshops offered to enhance their math skills. An assessment report presented to the Academic Senate on the effectiveness of these workshops revealed that they improved students' probability of passing the math course required by their program.

Students with academic deficiencies in English (determined by a score of less than 500 in the College Board English Achievement Test) may take a summer remedial course. The English Department is currently working on a proposal to create a one credit hour pre-basic course that will substitute the summer remedial course. The Spanish Department does not offer any developmental education courses.

Tutoring programs are also in place to help underprepared students achieve their educational goals. The Title V Project, discussed elsewhere in this report, has also contributed to student development of basic skills through the use of technology. Results reported by the Title V staff substantiated the fact that the Project has increased retention in basic courses, most notably in Mathematics. It also increased the percent of students approving basic skills courses with A, B, or C.

### **Continuing Education and Professional Studies Division**

The Board of Trustees Certification 190-2000-2001 (Institutional Policy and Strategic Direction for Continuing Education and Professional Studies of the UPR) and institutional goal number eleven (to provide citizens of the southern region with educational opportunities that contribute to their continuing professional, intellectual, emotional, and physical development) guide the offerings of the Continuing Education and Professional Studies Division (DECEP for its Spanish acronym). Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the certification establish the academic offerings and the market to be served.

The objectives of the DECEP are to:

- Create awareness in students, alumni, and the community about the importance of continuous learning as a tool for personal and professional development geared to active participation in the social, cultural, and economic development of the country, to improve the individual and collective quality of life.

- Provide a credit and non-credit academic offer that is innovative, broad, dynamic, flexible, and that responds to the educational needs and training of non-traditional students in the different sectors of the Puerto Rican community.

The main objective of noncredit courses at the DECEP is to provide education and retraining to professionals of industries or public and private agencies to help them complete their continuing education hours, renew their professional licenses, or improve professionally. Offerings are divided into the following categories:

- Short noncredit courses for professional and personal improvement.
- Workshops, seminars, and conferences.
- Continuing education activities sponsored by professional organizations or other dependencies of the university.
- Training programs designed according to specific needs of particular entities, companies, or agencies

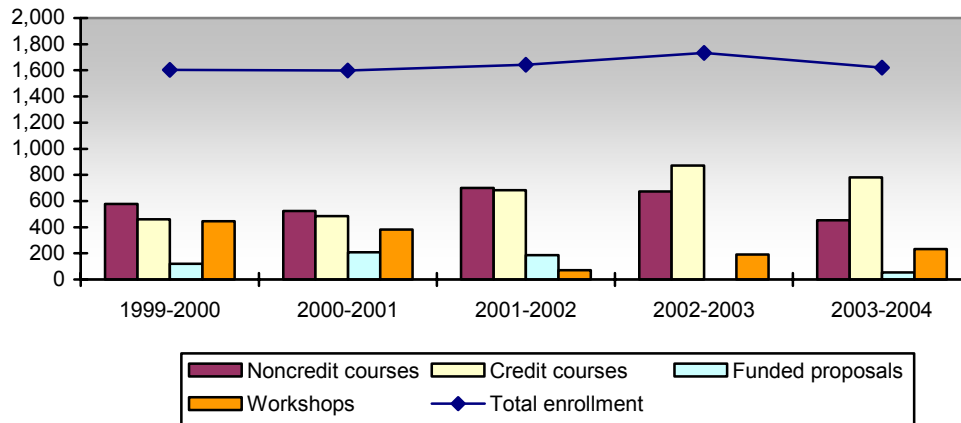
Public and private organizations or industries request that the DECEP offer the noncredit courses or seminars they need. The DECEP prepares a proposal using institutional resources.

The short noncredit courses, seminars, and workshops last 40 hours or less and are not part of the regular academic offerings. These courses are offered during the evening or on Saturdays. The programs are semester based, but the starting date of a course does not follow the academic calendar established for the regular programs. The courses are conducted with nonrecurrent funds and are subject to enrollment in order to be offered. The courses do not have a curricular sequence since the students select them according to their interests and needs.

The Evening Program offers credit and professional improvement courses in Business Administration and in Education. These courses are given during the evening for working professionals or students who need to complete some requirements to get a professional license. Institutional or external human resources are used. The program offers the courses required by the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) for those who wish to obtain a certification or license to work as teachers. The curricular sequence of the different specialization/certification courses is determined by the PRDE.

Appendix S presents the number of courses and enrollment in the DECEP, and Figure 8.4 show the enrollment pattern for DECEP offerings.

**FIGURE 8.4**  
**Enrollment trend by type of offering and total enrollment**  
**Continuing Education and Professional Studies Division**  
**Academic years 1999-2000 to 2003-2004**



Total enrollment for the Division has remained relatively constant during the last five years. Credit course enrollment increased steadily during the first four years, while noncredit enrollment fluctuated during that time.

DECEP publications set out registration processes, dates, and tuition fees. There is no specific admission policy for noncredit courses. The Evening Program has an application form for professional credit courses, especially for readmission or transfer students. It explains the admissions process. All offerings are published in southern and islandwide newspapers, radio programs or advertisements, and in brochures.

Noncredit courses are assessed using different criteria, which include general (enrollment process, schedule, quality of services, physical facilities), course (achievement of expectations, physical facilities for course offering, contribution to professional growth, general recommendation to others), and professor (explanation of course objectives and themes, organized presentation of course content, mastery of discipline, clarity of conceptual presentation, promotion of open and participative class discussion, use of audiovisual resources, respect for students, enthusiasm, punctuality) aspects. Data is shared with faculty to enhance the teaching-learning process. The Evening Program also conducts student evaluations and the Personnel Committees of the academic departments evaluate their professors in class.

The institution provides students enrolled in the programs and courses offered by the DECEP with library resources, technology, registration, counseling and orientation, financial aid, and bursar services. Different studies have been conducted to determine student satisfaction with services. In 2002, ninety-four percent of students taking Continuing Education courses assessed them as either excellent or good.

Table 8.13 presents results of a survey conducted in 2002 among students in the Evening Program to assess different services.

**TABLE 8.13**  
**Assessment of Evening Program Services**

Aspect	Criterion	Level of satisfaction (satisfied)
Office Personnel	Received with respect and courtesy	90%
	Telephone calls answered in a respectful and friendly manner	91%
	Telephone calls answered promptly	63%
Faculty	Professor treats students with respect and courtesy	88%
	Students receive total answers to their questions	80%
	Professor available when needed for questioning about course	75%
	Professor knowledgeable of his/her discipline	81%
	Professor imparts knowledge in course	87%
	Professor uses audiovisual resources	66%
	Professor is punctual	68%
	Satisfaction with professor's teaching methods	80%

Source: Cajigas Irizarry, E. (2002). *Results of a Student Satisfaction Survey*

Students expressed lack of satisfaction with security on campus and the schedule of library services. They recommended that these be improved. The administration took immediate action on their recommendations.

### **International Student Exchange Program**

The International Student Exchange Program was established in academic year 2002-03 as an initiative of the Presidency of the University of Puerto Rico. As part of a commitment to internationalize the University, agreements were signed with several higher education institutions in Spain to have students from different UPR campuses spend up to a year in an internationally accredited institution to experience a different cultural environment. UPR-Ponce selected the following Spanish institutions: *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid* and *Universidad de Salamanca*. Baccalaureate programs selected for exchange purposes were: Social Sciences, Business Administration, and Elementary Education. A prototype has been prepared for each of the academic programs so that students participating in the exchange program would know which courses offered at each of the Spanish institutions can be transferred to UPR-Ponce. Requirements for participants include being a sophomore and having a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Five students participated in the exchange program during 2003-04: Social Sciences – 3 (*Universidad de Salamanca*); Elementary Education – 1 (*Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*); and Business Administration – 1 (*Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*).

### **Experiential Learning**

The students at UPR-Ponce may acquire out-of-class experience in various ways. The Córdova Congressional Internship was created by Puerto Rico Law 59 in 1993 with clear objectives and requirements. It is a one semester experience in which students are assigned to an office in the U.S. Congress where they are provided with relevant learning experiences. Students are evaluated periodically by a supervisor and must prepare a portfolio for assessment purposes. The internship is given the equivalent of 9 credit-hours (INTD 4000) and is complemented with a 3 credit-hour Washington Center Academic Seminar (INTD 4010).

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) Internship and the Walt Disney World Work-Study Program also provide students with meaningful experiential learning. Participants are evaluated in the workplace by a supervisor. They also prepare a report and a portfolio which are evaluated by one of the professors at UPR-Ponce. Students receive 3 credits for this experience (SICI 3101).

Study trips enable students to learn about and experience the culture, geography, social organization and idiosyncrasies of different countries. Students enrolled in HUMA 3005 visit different European countries accompanied by one or two professors. Evaluation criteria include an essay and two tests.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on an analysis of findings, the following conclusions have been reached:

1. The educational offerings of UPR-Ponce reflect and promote its mission and goals, and are of sufficient content, breadth, length, and academic rigor for college level programs.
2. The curricular sequences of the academic programs foster coherent learning experiences, enhance development of research and independent thinking, and promote a synthesis of learning.
3. Program assessment revealed that, in general, academic programs are effective in providing skill building and attitude development, and presenting clear student learning outcomes. Some programs face challenges regarding persistence and graduation rates.
4. The institution identifies students who are not fully prepared for college-level study and provides support services to prepare them to be successful in their educational goals.
5. Experiential learning experiences have standards of rigor consistent with good educational practices; criteria for awarding credit evidence student learning.
6. The conceptual framework of the general education component is not clearly defined at the institutional level.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on findings, the following recommendations are submitted:

1. Necessary improvements and revisions identified through academic program assessment should be promptly undertaken.
2. Outline UPR Ponce's general education philosophy, structure, and learning goals and establish a well defined approach for their assessment.

## INTRODUCTION

In order to demonstrate accountability to its various constituents, a quality educational institution must be committed to assessing the outcomes of student learning and using the results of that assessment to improve the educational experiences of its students. Since the last Self-Study in 1995, UPR-Ponce has made notable advances in its efforts to assess its educational effectiveness. A significant amount of research has focused on assessing student learning expectations at institutional, program, and course levels. This chapter analyzes the process by which the institution assesses student learning outcomes to determine the effectiveness of its courses and programs. It includes a documented review of this area and recommendations for improvement.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Student learning goals are the core of a meaningful assessment process. Assessment activities must be focused by a set of clear statements of expected student learning outcomes that include knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals, which students will have achieved by graduation. UPR-Ponce's expectations of student learning at the institutional, program, and course levels are analyzed to determine their articulation and connection with the institutional mission, and with the standards of higher education and of the disciplines.

### Institutional Level

At the institutional level, student learning expectations are found in the Mission and Goals Statement (1994). In this document, the UPR-Ponce states its commitment to providing a challenging environment that promotes student learning and the achievement of academic goals. Among the set of goals established to achieve its mission, the following student learning goals can be identified:

- To provide students with appropriate mechanisms for developing skills needed in order to listen, to think, and to communicate effectively, orally and in writing, in both English and Spanish.
- To enable students to develop the capacity for self-directed learning and independent study.
- To prepare students for a specific occupation or profession.

Clear and well articulated institutional student learning goals are important in order to assure that students achieve important goals, to provide structure for academic and cocurricular programs, to ensure that general education skills are included in programmatic plans, and to provide focus for the assessment of student learning, at institutional, program, and course levels.

An analysis of student learning goals, as currently defined at the institutional level, revealed that they are not fully consonant with higher education expectations. They do not explicitly include student learning expectations such as computer literacy skills, values awareness, information

skills, problem-solving, and quantitative reasoning. However, although the third institutional goal most likely refers to discipline-related skills, it is broad enough to include any student learning goal not specified in the institution’s Mission and Goals Statement.

This analysis could suggest that the learning expectations for students are not very well articulated at the institutional level, nor are they all-encompassing. Sixty-two percent of the faculty who responded to the Self-Study Survey agreed that the goals established by UPR-Ponce provide direction to the academic programs in defining their student learning expectations.

### Program Level

An important requirement for the creation of an academic program is that it responds to the mission and goals set by the UPR-Ponce (Certification 93-113 PRCHE). This certification also requires that student learning expectations be included in the program’s graduating student profile. It also provides for the evaluation of each program to determine if it is effectively reaching its goals and objectives. These requirements help to ensure that program learning outcomes are clearly articulated and consonant with the institution’s mission.

A random sample analysis of the course syllabi from different programs, graduating student profiles, brochures and other department documents, revealed that the majority of the academic programs have clear and specific expectations for student learning in both general education and the discipline. It also showed that they are related to the Mission and Goals Statement. These findings were confirmed by the results of the faculty Self-Study Survey in which 81% agreed that their program has clear and specific student learning expectations.

Departmental self-studies reflected that the majority of the academic programs include learning expectations related to general education such as oral and written communication in Spanish and English, critical thinking, technological skills, research skills, independent study, and self-directed learning. This analysis suggests that the learning expectations of the programs are more specific than those at institutional level.

Analysis of the departmental self studies also confirmed that the learning expectations of most programs are consonant with the standards set for their disciplines, according to corresponding organizations or regulations. Table 9.1 presents the findings of this analysis.

**TABLE 9.1**  
**Organizations and Regulations Guiding Academic Program’s Discipline Related Goals**

<b>Academic Program</b>	<b>Organizations/ Regulations</b>
Physical Therapy	American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)
Athletic Training	National Athletic Training Association (NATA)
Elementary Education	US Department of Education Teacher Report Card, PR Department of Education Teacher Preparation Program, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)
Business Administration (Accounting)	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)
Business Administration (Management)	Society of Human Resources Management Code of Ethics and Professional Standards in Human Resources Management, and the Occupational Outlook Handbook (2002-2003 Edition), US Department of Labor



Academic Program	Organizations/ Regulations
Business Administration (Finance)	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Occupational Outlook Handbook 2002-2003 Edition, US Department of Labor, Finance Professionals Association of Puerto Rico
Business Administration (Marketing)	American Marketing Association (AMA), UBS Certification Program, Public Relations Society of America, Occupational Outlook Handbook 2002-2003 Edition, US Department of Labor, Sales and Marketing Executives (CSE and CME), and American Association of Advertising Agencies
Psychology and Mental Health	Laws, regulations and organizations that prevail over the psychology profession in Puerto Rico
Forensic Psychology	Laws, regulations and organizations that prevail over the psychology profession in Puerto Rico

Other programs modify their learning outcomes in light of professional literature, studies carried out by the Chamber of Commerce, government agencies, research reports, alumni surveys, employer surveys, and input from the professional and business community.

### Course Level

During the last five years, the institution has intensified its efforts towards the assessment of learning, and has created greater awareness in the faculty of the need to establish explicit learning goals for all courses and to ensure that they are achieved. Certification 130-1999-2000 of the Board of Trustees (Exhibit 33) requires that course syllabi include, in a clear and concise manner, the intended learning goals that students are supposed to achieve as a result of the educational experiences within the course. These outcomes could include the acquisition of information, development of skills and intellectual capabilities, changes in attitudes, perceptions, interests or values, improvement of interpersonal relationships, or the development of motor skills. This certification also establishes that these goals must be student-centered.

As part of the current self-study process, academic programs were required to carry out an analysis to determine correspondence between the learning goals of the program and those of the courses. The analysis revealed that the learning outcomes of each program were clearly articulated with those of the curriculum. Ninety percent of the faculty responding to the Self-Study Survey agreed that the courses offered by their departments or programs have clear and specific student learning expectations. A review of a sample of the course syllabi within the departments also showed that most include clearly articulated expectations of student learning. However, in some of the syllabi examined it was found that the learning goals were not student centered, that general education competencies were not so clearly specified, or that means of assessment were not specified for all learning goals.

The findings included in this section of the report were discussed in the workshop *Reaccreditation Process: Opportunity for Renewal*, which was offered to the faculty and to the Academic Deans by some members of the Self-Study Steering Committee and the Subcommittee on Assessment of Student Learning on May 27, 2004. Suggestions were presented for improving course syllabi and for revising learning goals at the institutional, program and course levels. As a result, most programs have been revamping their learning goals and syllabi, accordingly.

## STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

UPR-Ponce recognizes that student learning assessment is paramount to determining and achieving its educational effectiveness. Evaluation and analysis of the data gathered and the use of assessment results are crucial for the improvement of the educational programs. Through the assessment process, the institution determines if students possess, upon graduation, the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes that are consistent with the established educational goals, both at the institutional level and at the program level. In its commitment to assessment, the UPR-Ponce has taken steps, since 1995, to develop and establish institutional processes for the systematic assessment of its effectiveness in all areas, including the assessment of student learning, as explained earlier in Chapter 5.

The institution has developed written guidelines and procedures for evaluating its educational effectiveness, including the quality of student learning (*Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Student Learning Assessment Plan, 2003; Guidelines for the Assessment of Academic Programs, 2002*). Evaluation is conducted within three integrated levels across the institution: at the institutional, program and course level. In this way, it collectively involves the university community in a continuous and systematic process, which results in a meaningful improvement of its educational effectiveness.

### Institutional Level

During the past twenty years, UPR-Ponce has distinguished itself as a pioneering institution in the assessment of student expectations and outcomes. Since its creation in 1984, the OPIR gathers, analyzes and disseminates statistical data and the results of the studies they conduct regarding student outcomes. Results are communicated by means of bulletins, brochures and publications, and, since the year 2002, its Web page (<http://www.uprp.edu/opei>). In 1984-85, the OPIR established a Student Tracking System, that includes questionnaires for incoming students, second year students, graduating students, and alumni in order to assess how the institution responds to students' needs and learning expectations. Assessment results help to continuously determine how effectively the institution satisfies its student needs

The assessment of student learning at the institutional level includes methods for qualitative as well as quantitative data gathering, with the objective of documenting students' educational experiences from the moment they are admitted to the UPR-Ponce, until they graduate. Qualitative methods include a series of questionnaires for active students, graduating students and alumni. The OPIR periodically conducts surveys of student opinions to determine their level of satisfaction with the university educational experience and its contribution to the achievement of their learning goals. Quantitative methods include statistical data on the academic success and performance of students such as course grades, institutional and program graduation and retention rates, course passing rates, and withdrawal rates. The OPIR publishes an *Annual Institutional Data Profile*, which contains a statistical compendium of relevant data.

During the current academic year 2003-2004, UPR-Ponce has participated in the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE), which constitutes a valuable and fundamental tool for the assessment process. It provides useful information about institutional quality, focusing on the teaching-learning process. Students' perceptions of their educational experience are assessed in terms of "the extent to which they participate in proven educational processes that contribute to

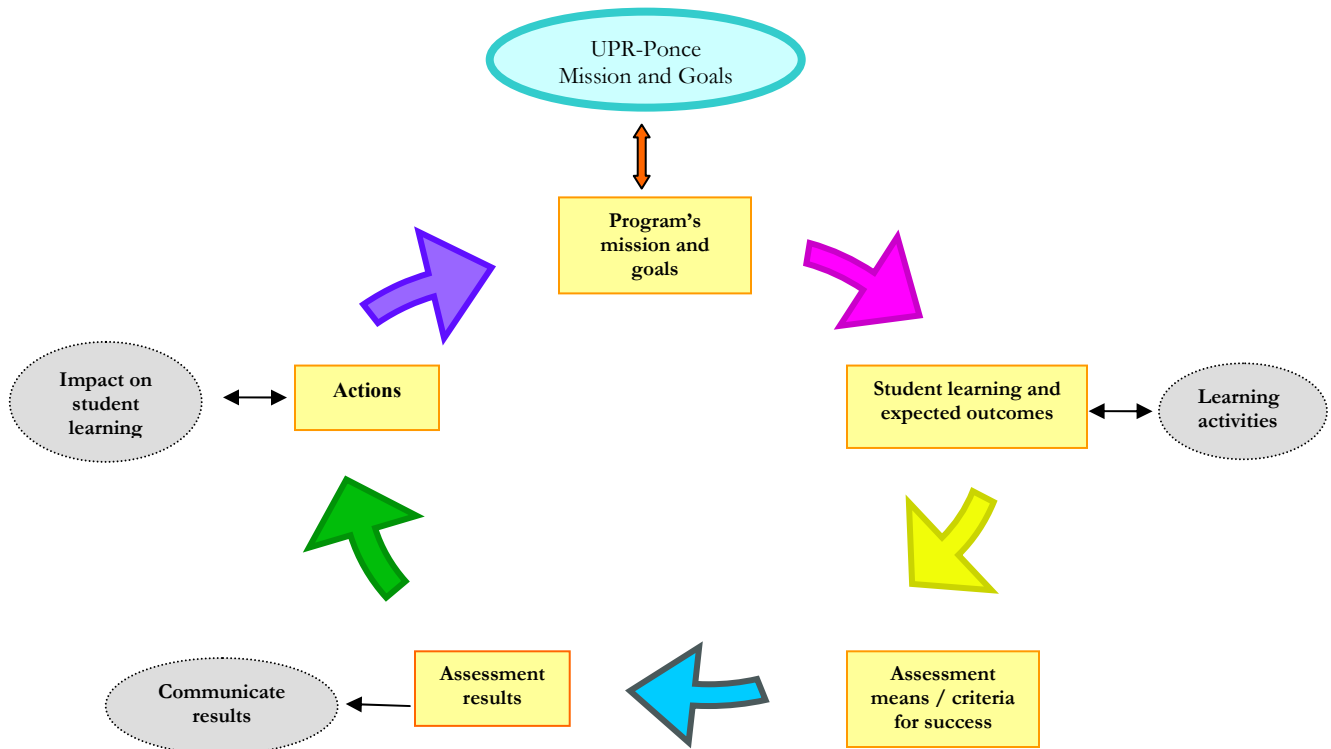
outcomes”. The results of this survey have provided the Institution with an invaluable benchmarking tool and will pave the way to measure progress over time. As a participant in this study, the institution has been invited to participate in the BEAMS Project (*Building Engagement & Attainment of Minority Students*), designed to increase the number of minority students obtaining bachelor degrees. Data from NSSE will be used as a starting point for institutional improvement by developing data-based decision making and for increasing student engagement and learning. UPR-Ponce’s initial commitment will be to send a group of faculty members to the 2005 AAHE Summer Academy to analyze data to determine strengths and weaknesses, and to work on an action plan to overcome deficiencies.

### Program Level

The results of the assessment of student learning provide useful information to the program assessment process, contributing to the refinement of the program and its curriculum. One of the objectives of this process, as specified in the *Guidelines for the Assessment of Academic Programs (2002)*, is to determine the effectiveness of the program in “developing in its students the required capacities for the job market.” These capacities include a series of competencies, skills, and attitudes identified by each program which constitute their alumni profile, and that are consistent with institutional mission and goals. The results of the assessment of student learning validate the goals established for the courses and programs.

As discussed earlier, in 2000-2001 UPR-Ponce adopted Nichols’ five column institutional effectiveness assessment model, which provides a means for closing the planning and evaluation loop by following the cycle in Figure 9.1.

FIGURE 9.1  
UPR-Ponce Student Learning Assessment Cycle



Academic programs develop their assessment plans of student learning based on this model, and follow the guidelines and timeline established at the institutional level for its development and implementation (see Chapter 5). The academic department heads appoint departmental assessment committees. At meetings, the faculty determines which educational goals will be assessed each year, based on the institutional and program mission and goals, as well as on program learning goals. Assessment priorities are established because not all learning goals can be assessed every year. For each learning expectation included in the plan, direct and indirect means for assessment are identified. Success indicators are also set by consensus among the department faculty or through the standards established by reputable agencies.

Currently, the Dean of Academic Affairs has the responsibility of overseeing and coordinating the assessment activities of the academic departments. The Academic Assessment Committee, which is coordinated by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, evaluates and makes recommendations to the plans submitted each year by academic programs for the assessment of their learning goals. While assessment plans are reviewed by this Committee, “ownership” plans rests with the departments themselves. At the end of each academic year, departments submit an assessment report to the Dean of Academic Affairs using the established institutional forms. Departmental annual reports also include a summary of assessment activities and changes resulting from this process. Assessment results are discussed in department meetings, where the faculty explores strategies for the improvement of student learning. An analysis of program assessment plans and reports conducted as part of this Self-Study process revealed that almost every academic program has been involved in assessment activities during the last five years. The Dean of Academic Affairs prepares an annual report compiling every plan submitted by the academic departments, as well as evidence of their implementation and the use of the results (Exhibit 34). The plans are designed, not simply to evaluate programs, but primarily to assist them in self-reflection, analysis of goal attainment, and course improvement. Appendix T includes examples of the assessment plans of three academic majors.

Course embedded assessment approaches are also considered when establishing assessment means and methodology. Majors in which students are required to complete a professional internship as part of their curriculum (Office Systems, Education, Business Administration, Athletic Training, Physical Therapy, Forensic Psychology, and Psychology and Mental Health) use the results of evaluations conducted by their internal or external internship supervisors, in addition to other means of assessment. The results of certification and licensing exams required for some professions also constitute a valuable tool for the assessment of student learning within some majors (Education and Physical Therapy). Some programs have developed departmental tests to assess basic skills within their discipline (Business Administration, Chemistry, Engineering, Spanish and English). Standardized tests such as the College Entrance Examination Board’s English Language Assessment System for Hispanics (ELASH), have been used by the Office Systems Program to assess the English language skills of their graduation candidates.

### **Course Level**

An analysis of randomly selected course syllabi revealed that multiple quantitative and qualitative means are used by the faculty for both the formative and summative assessment of student learning goals. These include tests, performances, portfolios, rubrics, reflective diaries, oral presentations, quizzes, oral and written reports, and others. A more detailed discussion of

assessment measures identified by academic programs for the assessment of student learning, both at program and course levels, will be included later in this chapter.

## **GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

In 2002-2003, a former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs developed *Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Student Learning Assessment Plans*. This document has served as a useful tool to guide and systematize the development and implementation of more effective student learning assessment plans. Departmental Assessment Committee Coordinators were asked to evaluate these guidelines in terms of quality, clarity, ease of application, and other aspects. They also offered recommendations for their improvement. Eighty-nine per cent believe that the guidelines facilitate the assessment process. Some of the comments made by Assessment Committee Coordinators regarding the document were:

- *It is a great resource that offers systematic direction for the development of more effective plans for the assessment of student learning.*
- *The information presented in the document is clear, specific and well documented. It offers advice that ranges from the most basic concepts of assessment to the practical way of carrying out a plan.*
- *The models, tables and appendixes included in the document help clarify the information.*
- *The content is presented in a structured and organized way, including specific procedures.*
- *It provides specific examples of direct and indirect means which can be used to assess student learning.*

Some recommendations for the improvement of the guidelines were:

- *Include examples of assessment plans to help when writing them.*
- *Include a list of electronic references on assessment of student learning resources.*

Some coordinators recommended wider distribution of the guidelines and additional training in the development of assessment plans, means of assessment, and use of results.

## **MEANS USED TO ASSESS STUDENT LEARNING**

UPR-Ponce uses a wide array of direct and indirect assessment measures at multiple levels of analysis to assess student learning. The institution collects and assesses input measures (such as incoming student characteristics), experience measures (such as student satisfaction), and outcomes measures (such as employment placement) related to expected program outcomes. Many programs have used comprehensive strategies to assess how well students develop the skills and knowledge expected of them in the major.

Assessment instruments used by OPIR have been submitted to extensive validation procedures and have been used consistently. Although instruments used at the departmental level have not undergone a formal validation process, 83% of the assessment coordinators evaluated the effectiveness of their means of assessment as excellent or good.

Departmental self-studies revealed that most academic programs make use of qualitative and quantitative means for assessing student learning both at the program and course level. Student grades, rubrics, quizzes, tests, course assignments, oral and written reports, research projects, simulations, and portfolios are the most widely used direct means of assessment at the course level. Course evaluations by students and reflections are among the most widely used indirect means.

At the program level, student, alumni, employer, and graduating student surveys and interviews, and graduation and retention rates are some of the indirect measures used by the disciplines to assess student learning. Direct means include the use of comprehensive or standardized tests (Social Sciences, Business Administration, English, Mathematics, and Office Systems), licensure passing rates (Education and Physical Therapy), internship supervisor ratings (Education, Office Systems, Physical Therapy, Athletic Training, and Business Administration), and performance evaluations (Business Administration, Education, Psychology, Office Systems). Appendixes U-1 and U-2 provide examples of the means some academic departments and programs are using to better understand learning outcomes, both at the program and course levels.

## **ASSESSMENT OF THE PROCESS**

In 2000-2001, 41% of UPR-Ponce's academic programs completed their assessment activities according to their plans and submitted annual assessment reports. Eighty-eight per cent completed this process in the 2003-2004 academic year, showing a significant increase of 47% in academic program assessment completion rates. Since the beginning of the new assessment cycle in 2000-2001, an average rate of 73% of the academic programs have completed their assessment plans.

Departmental Assessment Committee Coordinators were surveyed in 2004 regarding the effectiveness of the assessment process. Sixty-seven percent evaluated the effectiveness and adequacy of the institutional assessment model as excellent or good. The process was rated as excellent or good by 75% of the respondents. In their self-studies, the department directors stated that both the plan and the process of the assessment of student learning have been effective. Various changes in the curriculum have taken place to improve the programs and the teaching learning process. Assessment results have allowed them to implement action plans to give continuity to the process and to work with those academic goals that have not been achieved yet. They also stated that these results have been useful for evaluating the effectiveness of their academic programs.

Another benefit obtained through faculty participation in assessment activities has been their ownership of the assessment process. Faculty assessment tasks have included the selection of learning goals and means of assessment, the use of classroom assessment techniques, the development and revision of assessment tools, administration of questionnaires, and the gathering and processing of data. They have also taken part in the analysis of assessment findings and in offering recommendations on how to use the results.

The effectiveness of the student learning assessment process was also confirmed in the Self-Study Survey in which the faculty indicated that:

- 85% has participated in preparing the assessment plans.
- 82% has participated in implementing the plans, in preparing assessment tools, and in data gathering.
- 80% has participated in the discussion of student learning assessment results.
- 86% agreed that their program learning goals guide the development of the department's assessment plan.
- 76% agreed that the results obtained from the assessment of student learning are being used to improve their academic program.

In their self-studies, academic departments were asked to identify strengths and limitations regarding the implementation process of their assessment plans during the past years. Some of the strengths identified were:

- Development of an institutional assessment culture within the university community, creating an awareness of the importance of the assessment process as a tool to improve the teaching-learning process.
- Collection of information to recognize strengths and weaknesses of the academic programs in order to establish action plans to improve the academic preparation of students.
- Formative evaluation of student learning to overcome academic deficiencies identified during the assessment process.
- Validation that the mission and learning goals of academic programs and course learning expectations have been achieved.
- Increase commitment and a receptive and collaborative attitude among faculty members toward the assessment process.
- Use of the information gathered to make informed decisions in the academic planning process.
- Increased communication across academic programs in order to develop strategies directed to the improvement of shared learning expectations.

Academic departments also identified the following limitations:

- Limited human resources available to carry out the assessment activities in a timely manner, partially due to heavy teaching loads in some programs.
- Certain degree of resistance from some faculty members toward assessment processes at the program and course level.
- Weak institutional assessment structure for providing guidance, support, and follow up to the assessment process and the use of results, particularly in the general education component.
- Little evidence of the use of direct means for the assessment of student learning at the program level and lack of standardized tests in Spanish for the assessment of competencies within some areas of the general education component.
- Limited personnel at the OPIR to offer effective advice and support to the academic departments in developing assessment tools and in data processing and analysis.

- Lack of an institutional forum where assessment results of the educational effectiveness of the institution and its programs can be analyzed and discussed among faculty, students and administrators, thus, providing feedback and identifying strategies for improvement.
- Limited institutional budget affects optimal use of assessment results to implement changes and improvements at institution and program level.

## ASSESSMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION

General education competencies at the UPR-Ponce are embedded throughout the curriculum because there is no institutionally defined general education program with its own structure, philosophy, goals, and assessment process, as previously explained in this report. The absence of clearly defined general education learning goals at the institutional level has presented great challenges for the development of a more rigorous and purposeful assessment procedure in this area. In addition, nationally-normed or standardized tests are not options for UPR-Ponce because of language issues. However, even though UPR-Ponce has not established a formal and systematic structure for the assessment of general education competencies, this has not hampered the development of assessment activities at various levels.

In order to assess the general education competencies at the institution level, the OPIR conducts several surveys which have supplied valuable information. Active students, graduation candidates, and alumni have been surveyed to obtain their opinion and level of satisfaction with the extent to which the University has helped them to develop general education competencies. These studies, most of which were mentioned in Chapter 5 on Institutional Assessment provide indirect means for the assessment of general education areas such as oral and written communication in English and Spanish, information literacy skills, computing skills, ethical values, social and civic responsibility, analytical and logical reasoning, independent study, critical thinking, and research skills. The *NSSE* Report (2004) has also provided the institution with a valuable tool to assess its general education component. However, little evidence was found of the use of direct measures for the assessment of some general education competencies at the institutional level. Some examples of assessment means used for the assessment of general education at the institutional or program level are included in Table 9.4.

**TABLE 9.2**  
**General Education Assessment Means**

SKILLS	FRESHMEN	SOPHOMORE AND JUNIOR	SENIOR	ALUMNI
Writing- Spanish	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Essays, reports, writing samples	Local survey, writing samples, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey
Writing- English	Local survey, CEEB test, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Essays, reports, writing samples, <i>ELASH</i> test	Local survey, CEEB tests, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey
Speech- Spanish	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Report, simulation	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey
Speech- English	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Report, simulation	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey
Information literacy	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey, quizzes	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	
Mathematics	Local survey, local		Local survey, <i>NSSE</i>	Local survey



SKILLS	FRESHMEN	SOPHOMORE AND JUNIOR	SENIOR	ALUMNI
	test, CEEB test, <i>NSSE Survey</i>		<i>Survey</i>	
Ethics and values	<i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey	<i>NSSE Survey</i>	
Computer	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>		Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey
Social and personal	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>		Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey
Logical and critical thinking	<i>NSSE Survey</i>		<i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey
Independent study and self-directed learning	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey
Research	Local survey, <i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey	<i>NSSE Survey</i>	Local survey

At the program level, academic majors assess some general education related goals by using direct and indirect measures such as capstone experiences, departmental or standardized tests, rubrics, evaluations from internship supervisors, satisfaction questionnaires, and interviews with students, alumni, and employers. Assessment results were discussed in Chapter 8.

At the course level, an analysis of a syllabi sample evidenced that faculty assesses the performance of students in general education goals through a wide array of measures. These include, but are not limited to, tests, rubrics, quizzes, oral and written reports, portfolios, assignments, research papers, reflexive diaries, pre-post tests, and cooperative work. However, few of the syllabi examined reflect the inclusion of general education goals in the description of course objectives. This finding suggests that faculty is aware of the need for developing and assessing students' general education competencies but do not clearly define them in the syllabi.

### Information Skills

The task of developing information literacy skills among students is shared by faculty, librarians, and the students themselves. The main contributions made by the Library include the following areas: knowledge of where to begin to search for information, ability to distinguish between types of sources, ability to make effective electronic searches, understanding the nature and implications of plagiarism, ability to cite sources and prepare bibliographies in the appropriate format, awareness that information skills are transferable and will be useful throughout their lives, and, to a lesser extent, ability to evaluate information sources. Some guides have also been prepared on information sources in different disciplines.

The Adelina Coppin-Alvarado Library has had a bibliographic instruction program in place since 1986 (*Information Skills Mastery Development Program, PRODDDIB*). Its goal is to collaborate in the teaching-learning process. To that end, it pursues the following objectives: to help students and faculty develop research skills and to encourage the use of print and electronic resources.

In addition to the OPIR surveys in which information literacy skills are periodically assessed, library staff has carried out assessment activities such as the administration of mini quizzes and questionnaires to both faculty and students to study these skills. The results have been used to reinforce certain areas of the library instruction program. Efforts are being made to make faculty

more aware of the need to include in their course syllabi both information skills learning objectives and the means for assessing them. Some departments are currently revising their syllabi to comply with this requirement after having attended workshops offered by library personnel.

### **Use of Assessment Results in General Education**

The results of assessment activities of general education competencies at UPR-Ponce are used by some programs to revise and improve their curriculum thus producing educational effectiveness. An analysis of the self-studies submitted by the academic departments revealed that they have used the results obtained from the assessment activities of general education skills to:

- Implement tutoring programs such as Title V Project Activity 1- *Strengthening Students' Basic Communication and Math Skills* (1999-2004), Title V Cooperative Project- Activity 1- *Increasing Student Academic Achievement through Curricular Revision, Integrated Academic Support System, and Faculty Development* (2004-2008).
- Offer remedial Summer English workshops for incoming students with low scores in the CEEB achievement tests.
- Revise syllabi to incorporate general education goals.
- Improve instructional methodologies Offer workshops about new pedagogical practices to faculty members.
- Reinforce information skills through activities such as library instruction sessions for students and faculty, more frequent distribution of printed materials on library services and departments, library tours, and orientation sessions for freshman students prior to the beginning of the fall semester.

### **A UPR-Ponce Graduating Student Profile Proposal**

In 2002-2003 the institutional Academic Assessment Committee identified the need to define well articulated institutional student learning expectations that will enable the systematic assessment of the general education skills at the institutional, program and course level. By examining various resources such as *MSACHE Characteristics of Excellence* (2002), *MSACHE Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources* (2003), the student learning goals established at other institutions of higher education, and other literature sources, the Committee identified twenty general education competencies that students should have developed by the time they become eligible to graduate. In order to obtain the faculty's input, these twenty competencies were included in a two column 1-5 rating scale survey which was administered to full-time professors that same year. They were asked to rate the importance of each competency in an UPR-Ponce graduating student in one column, and they to rate the degree to which the institution contributes to their development in another column.

Forty-eight per cent of the faculty responded to the questionnaire. All competencies were rated within levels above 4 (with values fluctuating between 4.25 and 4.69). A report on the results of this survey was submitted by Dr. Jaime García, former Director of the OPIR, and by Prof. Ivonne Vilariño, former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, to Chancellor Jaime Marrero (Exhibit 35). The study was presented to the Academic Senate for consideration and action. The Academic Affairs Committee was charged with revising the report and submitting a

proposal for the formal development of a *UPR-Ponce Graduating Student Profile*. The Committee is currently working on this task.

### **Sharing Assessment Results**

Assessment activities and results are communicated to internal and external University constituents through various means, as reported in departmental Self-Studies. Some of these are:

- Departmental meetings
- Internship meetings with supervisors and students
- *Faculty Research and Academic Creativity Congress*
- Reports to the Dean of Academic Affairs
- Institutional and departmental Annual Reports
- OPIR reports, bulletins and Web Page
- Departmental bulletins and brochures distributed to the faculty, students and the administration
- High School Orientations
- Open class discussions
- Open house activities
- Departmental Web pages

Although departments reported that they use diverse means to communicate assessment activities and results, the Self-Study Survey reflected that 48% of the faculty agreed that program assessment results are disclosed to students and faculty in their departments. However, in the Student Self-Study Survey, 82% stated that they had knowledge of how effective their program is in preparing students to perform effectively in their fields or professions.

### **USE OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

“A commitment to the assessment of student learning requires a parallel commitment to ensuring its use” (*MSACHE Student Learning Assessment*, 66). Although UPR-Ponce is aware of this statement as evidenced in its *Institutional Assessment Statement of Purpose*, it recognizes that ensuring the use of assessment results to improve teaching and learning has been the most challenging part of the process. Seventy six per cent of the faculty surveyed during the self-study process agreed that their department uses assessment results to improve the educational effectiveness of their academic programs, which may suggest that more can be done to “close the assessment loop.”

After completing assessment activities, the department heads meet with their faculty to discuss assessment results and explore strategies that could make an impact on teaching and learning. This stage of the process is significant because it commits faculty to carry out any changes and/or actions they might agree upon. Some examples of the use of student learning assessment information to enhance teaching and learning and to improve curricula, educational programs, and institutional activities are mentioned below.

### **Institutional Level**

- *Title V Project- Enhancement of the Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategies for the Coming Century*, (1999-2004)
  - ❖ Activity 1: Multi-Activity Teaching Center in which technology is used as an auxiliary component within the disciplines to address student needs and deficiencies in listening, speech, computer literacy, reading, writing, and math skills.
  - ❖ Activity 2: Educational technology provided across the curriculum and faculty training towards its use.
- *TRC Project- Transition to Research Careers*, (2004-2008) Student workshops to strengthen students' science and math skills in order to improve their performance in introductory science courses, and to promote their research interest.
- *Title V Cooperative Project- Increasing Student Academic Achievement through Curricular Revision, Integrated Academic Support System, and Faculty Development*, (2004-2008) Implementation of a comprehensive curricular, instructional delivery, and academic support model aimed towards improving student performance in targeted math and science courses and in increasing course passing rates.

### **Program Level**

- One hundred per cent of UPR-Ponce's baccalaureate programs have incorporated student learning results in their curriculum reviews.
- Academic departments have incorporated the use of new teaching strategies such as instructional technology, into their courses. Examples of these are Smart Boards, laptops, data projectors, and other educational media acquired through Title V Project.
- Student tutoring programs were implemented in the Chemistry-Physics, Mathematics, Biology, and Office Systems Departments to complement and remediate students' deficiencies in some courses.
- The Allied Health Studies Department increased the contact hours for the clinical internship from 120 to 200 for the Associate Degree Program in Physical Therapy; entering student quota limits were reviewed; contact hours for the Functional Anatomy Laboratory were increased from one to three hours weekly; biofeedback skills were incorporated into core courses; new laboratories were equipped; and a laboratory session for the course *Application of Physical Therapy and Physical Dysfunction* was created to provide students with real experiences in the fields of pediatrics, geriatrics, orthopedics, and neurology, modern equipment was purchased. These changes resulted from a program assessment conducted by a professional accrediting agency, from the findings of employer and alumni surveys, and from recommendations obtained from the internship clinical instructors.
- Remedial courses were designed within the English Department to help freshmen students with low scores in the College Board Examination English achievement test.
- The Office Systems Department appointed a *Student Retention Committee* to identify and implement strategies to help students succeed in their academic and personal skills; they added introductory electives in transcription in Spanish and English to the curriculum to reinforce language skills applied to document transcription; the *Blackboard* platform and Internet access were provided for academic purposes.

- The Elementary Education program is offering reviews to help students improve their performance in the Department of Education Teacher Certification Exams (*PCMAS*) and increase student passing rates.
- Internship courses were added to the curriculum of the Management, Marketing and Accounting programs.
- New software such as *Oracle Designer* and *Peachtree* were acquired to update computer science and accounting program courses.
- The Social Sciences Department requested that the Spanish Department offer writing workshops to improve the writing skills of their students.

### Course Level

- The English, Mathematics, Spanish, Social Sciences, Office Systems, Biology, Business Administration, Allied Health Studies and Education Departments reviewed their course syllabi to incorporate the use of technological resources in the teaching-learning process.
- The thematic content of the course syllabi was revised in the Allied Health Studies, Spanish, Education and English Departments. In the case of the Allied Health Studies Department, this revision was done to include topics required by the accrediting agency.
- The Office Systems Department acquired new computers and programs for its laboratories, integrated the use of *Peachtree* computer software for the Basic Accounting course, revised the evaluation tool used by supervisors during the Practicum Internship to measure student performance, and incorporated Internet and electronic mail workshops in the Office Systems Concepts and Technologies course.
- The Education Department revised their student-teacher assessment tools for the EDPE 2007 course (Teacher Internship). The content of methodology courses was aligned with that of the State Teacher Certification Tests.
- The Business Administration Department integrated the use of the statistical software SASS to the Business Statistics I and II courses.
- The Social Sciences Department added 15 computers with the SPSS computer program in its Computer Laboratory for use in Statistics and Research courses.
- The Spanish Department equipped one of its classrooms with eleven computers, a Smart Board and other equipment to improve students' oral and written communication skills by using technology and cooperative learning strategies. The focus of the Basic Spanish course was changed to use a reading-writing approach to develop writing skills; a new textbook (*El placer de leer y escribir*) which includes a workbook, was chosen.
- The General Biology course syllabus was revised to redistribute topics and the time schedule.
- The Allied Health Studies Department reduced the number of students per section in all courses that include a laboratory in order to improve the teaching-learning process and to maintain an individualized level of supervision. It acquired updated equipment for its laboratories according to current changes in the field; and incorporated the use of educational technology in the Anatomy and Human Physiology course to update the course.
- The Humanities Department revised the course Introduction to the Western Culture I to make it more pertinent for students and to improve their performance.
- The Mathematics Department incorporated the use of the graphic calculator and the computer to improve the teaching-learning process in Basic Mathematics I and II, Pre-calculus I and II courses. As part of a *MSEIP (Minority Science and Engineering Institutional*

*Program*) Project, computerized tutorial activities were implemented in order to improve student achievement levels in Mathematics and workshops were offered to faculty members. This program has allowed the inclusion of new teaching-learning strategies.

- The Chemistry Department incorporated problem solution workshops in the General Chemistry course with support from the *Transitions to Research Careers Project*.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the student learning assessment process leads to the following conclusions:

1. Numerous strengths are evident in the area of assessment of student achievement at UPR-Ponce. For the past five years, it has engaged in a wide range of student learning assessment activities that have resulted in creating an emergent campus wide assessment culture and awareness.
2. The Institution has made significant progress in enhancing both the depth and breadth of its student learning assessment program. The emphasis of assessment has shifted from one based on “input” measures, such as entering student qualifications, to one that includes many more “output” measures designed to assess student learning and satisfaction with the institution’s contribution to their educational experience.
3. Faculty participates in developing and implementing assessment activities. They have taken ownership over these activities through their involvement in departmental assessment committees, use of classroom assessment techniques, selection and development of assessment tools, and establishment of criteria for success in assessment plans.
4. A diverse array of learning assessment methods is observed in annual program assessment plans and course syllabi.
5. The institution has been least effective in creating an institutional plan for the assessment of general education goals which have mostly relied on indirect means such as freshmen, graduating student, alumni and employer surveys conducted by departments and the OPIR.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

While much progress has been made in implementing student learning assessment plans, UPR-Ponce recognizes the need to make further improvement. Some suggestions are identified below:

1. Provide even greater support and encouragement for assessment through incentives for faculty participation, resources for departments interested in improving learning outcomes, and opportunities for communicating assessment results to the university community.
2. Revise assessment guidelines and practices in light of lessons learned from the past ten years in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the process for the assessment of student learning.
3. Strengthen the OPIR by providing it with the human and fiscal resources necessary to provide effective support to the implementation of assessment activities.

4. Continue with the development and adoption of a student profile at the institutional level that clearly establishes skills, competencies and attitudes that a UPR-Ponce graduating student should possess.
5. Continue enhancing efforts to educate the university community about assessment concepts, use of results and implementation of changes; provide training and orientation to new faculty concerning the assessment of student learning.
6. Develop a structured approach for the assessment of general education competencies that makes greater use of direct measures.

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## CHAPTER *10* CONCLUSIONS

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This comprehensive self-study has provided UPR-Ponce with a unique opportunity to reflect on its multiple contributions to higher education. Through this process, the institution has been successful in achieving the intended outcomes pursued and established in the Self-Study Design:

- To identify strengths and weaknesses in reference to MSA and PRCHE higher education standards and to use findings to engage in a proactive strategic planning process.
- To identify the scope and effectiveness of assessment efforts currently used.
- To produce an accurate Self-Study Report that will provide MSA with the information and analysis necessary to make a decision about our institution's reaccreditation and licensure.
- To formulate recommendations that will set the agenda for institutional improvement in the next five years.
- To strengthen the use of qualitative and quantitative data to support the analysis of the institution's educational effectiveness.
- To make all members of the UPR-Ponce more knowledgeable about the institution in order to nourish their continuing commitment to its mission and goals.

While the time has come for the institution to re-examine its mission and goals, the UPR-Ponce community recognizes that the current Mission and Goals Statement has proven useful in guiding institutional processes such as planning and institutional renewal, articulating its academic offerings, and providing essential student services.

The institution has also been successful in using its assessment efforts to improve its effectiveness and to document its contribution to student learning. Examples of these contributions include: student achievement in licensure examinations, student perceptions of the institution's level of academic challenge and the value placed by the institution on active and collaborative learning, and its encouragement and support of the use of technology to enhance the teaching-learning process. They are the result of recruiting, retaining, and promoting a faculty committed to teaching excellence.

While the institution recognizes that its budget places a strain on the allocation process, sound fiscal policies have made possible an effective distribution, thus, ensuring compliance with its mission and goals. Despite these limitations, the institution has outperformed other public institutions of higher education by continuously receiving the highest scores on the evaluations performed by the Puerto Rico Comptroller's office. Multiple strengths have enabled UPR-Ponce to place itself in a prominent position among the public institutions of higher education.



Future efforts should be directed towards the following challenges:

- Re-examination of mission and goals with wide participation of institutional constituents.
- Revision of the Strategic Plan in light of Self-Study findings and recommendations.
- Restructuring of the planning and resource allocation processes to better align them to assessment results.
- Assignment of the highest priority to the Library renovation project and to the implementation of *UPR-Ponce's Physical and Programmatic Master Plan*.
- Establishment of a clearer conceptual framework for the general education component and refinement of the assessment process by increasing the use of direct measures.
- Further refinement of the assessment of student learning outcomes to include multiple direct and indirect measures.