



Senado Académico  
Secretaría

# Certification No. 69

## 2010-2011 Academic Year


I, VALERIE VÁZQUEZ RIVERA, Temporary Secretary of the Academic Senate of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, HEREBY CERTIFY THAT:

**D**uring an extraordinary meeting held on March 24, 2011, the Academic Senate considered **Item No. 1: The consideration of the Ad Hoc Committee report to incorporate follow up recommendations to the Monitoring Report of March 1, 2011**, and resolved:

- To receive the report, as amended, prepared by the Ad Hoc Committee, titled: **Second Monitoring Report (RP-MR2) of March 1, 2011: Addendum (March 24, 2011)**. This report will be sent to the *Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)*, no later than Monday, March 28, 2011.
- Section 1 of the Report was amended to incorporate that one of the factors that contributes to the fiscal crisis that affects this Institution is the shift in relevance of the University as the principal focus for the research, creation and dissemination of knowledge.
- Moreover, appendices will be included of documents related to the *Monitoring Report* that have been received up to this date, including the report prepared by the Library System dated March 23, 2011.

**T**he report, as amended, is part of this Certification.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I issue this Certification with the seal of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, on the twenty-fifth day of the month of March, two thousand and eleven.

  
Valerie Vázquez Rivera  
Temporary Secretary



rema



**UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO  
RIO PIEDRAS CAMPUS**

**Monitoring Report  
(UPR-RP MR) of March 1, 2011**

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**Addendum**

March 24, 2011

Date of Team Visit  
April 6-7, 2011

*ACADEMIC SENATE*  
Certification Number 69, 2010-2011

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### Attachments Index

- Attachment 1: Documents received from University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus Faculties, Schools, and Library Systems in response to the Academic Senate’s Certification 37 (2010-2011): a) Faculty of Humanities, b) Faculty of General Studies, c) Faculty of Education, d) Faculty of Natural Sciences and e) the Schools of Law, f) Architecture, e) Communication, f) Graduate School of Urban Planning and g) Library Systems
- Attachment 2: Documents received from faculty members in response to the Academic Senate’s Certification 31 and 37 (2010-2011): a) Questions and Suggestions by Professor Carmen R. Rabell and b) Commentary on Standard 4 by Working Group of Convergences, March 19, 2011.
- Attachment 3: Documents received from other university sectors in response to the Academic Senate’s Certification 31 and 37 (2010-2011): a) Senators for the Faculty of Education’s, b) Faculty of General Studies Students’ proposals, c) Report of the Academic Senate’s Faculty Affairs Committee of March 8, 2011.
- Attachment 4: University of Puerto Rico Board Certification 8 (2010-2011)
- Attachment 5: University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus Academic Senate Certifications Num. 31, 33, 37, 50, and 65 (2010-2011)
- Attachment 6: University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus Office of Chancellor Communication Num. 42 (2004-2005)

## Section 1 Introduction and Narrative of Events

### Introduction

The accreditation status of the UPR-RP has been under scrutiny since June 24, 2010, when a Statement of Accreditation Status by the MSCHE placed the UPR-RP on probation for lack of evidence of compliance with Standard 3 (Institutional Resources), Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance) and Standard 11 (Educational Offerings). A systemic Consolidated Action Plan was then submitted and later, on September 1, 2010, the UPR-RP submitted its first Monitoring Report. On November 22, 2010, a Statement of Accreditation Status from MSCHE concluded that UPR-RP had presented enough evidence to comply with Standard 11 (Educational Offerings) but probation status continued for lack of evidence of compliance with Standard 3 and Standard 4. Hence, a second Monitoring Report (RP-MR2) was requested, due by March 1, 2011.

On March 1st, the RP-MR2 was submitted, but due to deadline constraints, as explained by Chancellor Dr. Ana Guadalupe, it was made available to the community, including the members of the Academic Senate, on March 2, 2011. Hence, upon review of the document, the Academic Senate deemed appropriate to amend the aforementioned report, in order to provide the accreditation agency with additional information regarding UPR-RP efforts to comply with Standards 3 and 4, and guarantee the continuity of its education, research and public services, as stated in its institutional mission. Therefore, the goal of this addendum to the RP-MR2 is to provide MSCHE with further evidence of compliance and furnish the academic community's input concerning the implementation of the UPR Action Plan.

In the spirit of the principles of shared governance embodied in Standard 4, this document thus represents the Río Piedras Academic Senate's steadfast commitment to actively participate in efforts to achieve full compliance with all the MSCHE standards of excellence. In that same spirit, the Academic Senate approved Certifications Num. 31 and 37 (2010-2011) (Attachment 5) encouraging the input of all the Río Piedras campus colleges to obtain broad faculty collaboration by expanding opportunities for ample and effective incorporation of multiple college and departmental opinions. As the Index of Attachments attests, a significant representation of the academic community provided the Academic Senate with their positions and recommendations concerning the accreditation process. Furthermore, on March 10, 2011, the Academic Senate designated an Ad Hoc Committee in order to prepare an amended RP-MR2 in coordination with Chancellor Dr. Ana Guadalupe (Academic Senate Certification Num. 65) (2010-2011) (Attachment 5). The Ad Hoc Committee presented its report to the Academic Senate in an extraordinary meeting held on Thursday, March 24, 2011, when it was then considered and approved by the Academic Senate (see Certification Num. 69, 2010-2011).

The present document, as approved by the Academic Senate, addresses first the Summary of Events included in the RP-MR2, in order to provide a collegiate representation of the period covered by the report. The following section, which is dedicated to Standard 3: Institutional Resources, presents a series of initiatives, strategies and recommendations developed with the benefit of the community's input, to address the challenges posed by the unprecedented budget reduction. The next section presents additional information concerning compliance with Standard 4: Leadership and Governance.

Finally, in its conclusion, the document sums up the challenges and efforts undertaken to obtain full compliance with MSCHE Standards 3 and 4.

### **Narrative of Events**

During the 2010-2011 academic year, the University of Puerto Rico system faced an unparalleled budget decrease of over \$144 million in recurrent funds. The impact of such reduction in institutional resources has posed great challenges for the public higher education system of Puerto Rico, particularly the UPR-RP community.

Starting in 1968, the University of Puerto Rico has been financed by public funds calculated on a formula that allocates to the UPR a fixed percentage of the government's annual budget. The formula evolved from 7.8 percent initially, to the current 9.6 percent, in use since 1996.

Since 2006, Puerto Rico has been facing an economic crisis that has had a negative impact on virtually all private and public sectors of the Island. In 2009, a number of statutes were passed to address the government's fiscal deficit. One of those, Law Num. 7 of 2009, better known as the Fiscal Emergency Statute, declared a state of fiscal emergency and redefined several budgetary provisions, which had a negative impact on UPR-RP resources. Thus, the drastic reduction in institutional funds, stemming both from the general economic downturn and from Law Num. 7's erosion of the UPR's budget, has posed an enormous challenge that can only be overcome with the involvement of all members of the UPR-RP community. The conundrums produced by these serious financial constraints are not today unfamiliar to many other public institutions of higher education. The search and diffusion of knowledge, that age old definition of the university's mission, is no longer a monopoly of the academic realm. In the past few decades, the growth of other institutions of research and knowledge diffusion has made less evident the university's role as a center par excellence of learning. Although this is still a subject of a strong debate, the result has been that the State and private sectors no longer recognize the same priority once accorded to the university. This has meant a reduction in public appropriations and donations.

Naturally, these budgetary constrictions have had negative impacts on all the academic and administrative sectors that comprise the university community. With UPR's mission in mind, these sectors have risen to the challenge, instituting changes to face and adapt to the situation at hand. Towards that end, most constituents of the university community have implemented pro-active and creative strategies to fulfill their academic, research and administrative responsibilities. Nevertheless, as a result of these financial hardships, atypical events have taken place at the UPR-RP Campus during the period covered by the RP-MR2. These events, as difficult and trying as they have been, are reactions to a series of changes that affect a socially-engaged community. This complex situation cannot be fairly portrayed by a list of calendar events, for such a list does not appropriately summarize the extent of the challenges, or the breadth of the measures taken at the UPR-RP to ensure the continuance of academic offerings and the standards of excellence required by the MSCHE. Therefore, as was mentioned before, once the RP-MR2 was made available to the community on March 2, 2011, the Academic Senate, as well as some faculties, professors groups and students, expressed that further information was necessary to provide a fully accurate account of how the university community

understands and intends to address this important process and furthermore, how the situation represents, from an academic standpoint, a valuable opportunity for all sectors of the University to apply their disciplinary expertise to resolve the crisis.

One of the main concerns of the University Community has been the use of force as a method of conflict resolution on the Río Piedras Campus. The following information and standpoints are provided in a spirit of cooperation, and motivated by the belief that these extraordinary events require a sound evaluation, to enhance and complement the already submitted RP-MR2.

Among the strategies implemented to maintain continued operations, a private company was hired to provide security services at the UPR-RP. Far from contributing to a stable academic environment, this strategy exacerbated the situation, given the lack of proper training of the members of this force. Consequently, the services from this firm were suspended and the State Police was then called to intervene. This strategy again proved to be inadequate in promoting and maintaining a peaceful academic climate. Serious confrontations arose between the Police Special Tactical Operations Unit, and students and some other members of the university community. These confrontations escalated into grave instances of police brutality. As stated in the RP-MR2, several students were then arrested but most of the charges were dismissed at the court level. Afterwards, the Governor of the Commonwealth ordered the dismissal of the Tactical Operations Unit from the campus. During this trying and unstable period, professors managed to complete classes and offer final exams, through different strategies and methods, as previously encouraged by the administration in other similar instances.

The Academic Senate has consistently expressed its rejection of police force intervention at the UPR-RP campus. The Senate, along with ample sectors of the academic community, firmly believes that police intervention signaled an abandonment of the Non-Confrontation Policy, an institutional policy that restricts the use of state police as a method of conflict resolution within the Campus. Said policy was adopted after a prudent and extensive dialogue and conciliation process between all sectors of the University Community involved in the historic conflict of 1981. The Non-Confrontation policy, although admittedly not flawless, has proven to be a better strategy than the use of force in our higher education institution. The real challenge is not to depart from its essence, but to find ways to improve this policy and adapt this to our current situation. Many members of the University Community believe that the presence of the Police at the University Campus clashes with maintaining an academic climate. Several multi-sector events indeed took place to communicate this position. In sum, ongoing operations at the Campus have been maintained in spite of this challenging time. Promoting dialogue between all the members of the university community to consider their different points of view in the process of decision-making will undoubtedly contribute to overcome the hardships posed by the current serious fiscal constraints.

## Section 2 Standard 3: Institutional Resources

RP-MR2 describes the specific actions taken by the university administration according Standard 3, related to the current budget year, five year projections, external funding, academic offerings, physical infrastructure and maintenance, campus safety, student services and faculty load and research. In order to provide an additional perspective that incorporates other positions presented by the academic community, a series of recommendations were developed. These reactions represent a more complete picture of our current situation (see attachments 1 to 3).

The Action Plan for meeting Standard 3—secure continuity and institutional effectiveness with available resources, and maintain and nurture additional sources of funding to continue advancing institutional education, research and research priorities as presented in the RP-MR2—has been implemented.

In order to enrich the alternatives for compliance with Standards 3 and 4, the Academic Senate invited campus departments and college faculties to engage in discussion sessions on this and related issues, through its Certification Num. 37, 2010-2011. As a result, participants in this process recommended a plethora of specific actions, which could be implemented in the near future (see attachments 1 to 3).

To have a clearer picture of budgetary matters at UPR-RP, the Academic Senate herein requests that the Central Administration facilitate the flow of financial data in such a way that information becomes available for decision makers in a timely manner. The absence of timely audited financial information from UPR's Central Administration hinders all efforts to identify and obtain additional institutional resources from different sources. An excessively centralized budgetary planning process compounds the effect of this lack of information on campus.

From the Río Piedras Campus perspective, several measures were developed. For example, as stated in RP-MR2, the Chancellor appointed a *"Task Force on Budget and Finances."* This committee has outlined recommendations aimed to increase income through different activities that involve the academic community (RP-MR2 Appendix 20). The Task Force was charged with preparing an Action Plan to implement specific projects with the direct participation of the community. In preparing the action plan, the *Task Force* should consider other initiatives presented by members of the university community, such as *"Sumando Ganamos Todos"* and *"Comité de Eficiencia Fiscal (CEFI)."*

In addition to the recommendations presented in the RP-MR2, special attention should be directed at the enhanced research productivity of the faculty. One of the possible actions should be the evaluation of the policies used to compensate and motivate faculty members (see attachment 2.a).

## Section 3 Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

Regarding Standard 4 of the MSCHE, the UPR-RP is committed to “fostering an enhanced institutional climate and identity, cultivate an open-university culture, and revisit and empower leadership and governance at all levels” (see goals as stated in the Action Plan).

Fostering and encouraging such a participative culture in matters relating to university governance has always been at the core of our institutional values. The RP-MR2 presented a series of activities designed and implemented to follow such a culture. In order to comply with these principles, the Academic Senate encouraged the community to participate, at all levels, in the institution's ongoing accreditation efforts (See Attachment 5: Certifications 33, 37 and 65) (2010-2011).

Efforts towards compliance with Standard 4 must encourage democratic participation of all university constituencies. Toward that goal, the Academic Senate deems it appropriate to avoid:

- excessive centralization of the decision making process,
- top-down methods of communication,
- moratoria prohibiting rallies and mass meetings on campus grounds

On the other hand, emphasis should be placed on productive dialogue that is conducive to observable results. In that spirit, the recommendations and proposals formulated by the 7 of 7 Ad Hoc Committees should be brought to the attention of the Academic Senate for opportune consideration.

In respect to these matters, one of the main concerns of the Academic Senate pertains to the application of the "on pause" status affecting certain academic programs disregarding the criteria developed by this body. Similar concerns have been raised in relation to Circular Letter 9 (2010-2011), which could have benefited from input by the Academic Senate.

Another priority for the Academic Senate has been the enhancement of proper conditions that stimulate democratic participation in the discussion of all topics, including the free expression of dissent (See Attachment 5: Certification 50) (2010-2011).

As part of the initiatives to foster an environment that stimulates compliance with Standard 4, the university community has conducted several multi-sector activities, such as formal and informal rallies, meetings at all levels within the institution, colloquia, debates, group discussions and research. These efforts have spawned numerous recommendations, which are available for consideration, and can be incorporated into and enrich the decision-making processes.

The Academic Senate’s feedback and recommendations regarding revisions and improvements parallels the RP-MR2’s action and activities section, particularly regarding the statement that an “Open University Committee will be appointed to draft policies, protocols and conflict resolution mechanisms to sustain compliance with open university statements.” In addition, we recommend that a Leadership and Governance Committee be appointed to further evaluate and educate concerning the roles and responsibilities of campus constituents in alignment with corresponding regulations.



## Conclusion

As a result of the global economic crisis, the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, finds itself experiencing a challenging process that has inevitably resulted in situations that require an exhaustive analysis of present and future strategies and policies.

In the face of adversity, UPR-RP has determinedly given its best to manage and deal with a budgetary cut that implies a serious challenge to maintaining academic excellence without cutting corners. Nonetheless, certain decisions and measures have triggered a chain of events, specifically because of partial compliance with Standards 3 and 4. However, these challenges should not be seen as an overwhelming obstacle, but rather, as a chance to improve the excellence and quality of the university, using the Standards of Excellence espoused by the MSCHE as a guide through a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement.

The Academic Senate believes that the Second Monitoring Report submitted on March 1, 2011 and this Addendum elucidate and present examples that contribute to our partial compliance with Standards 3 and 4. For instance, regarding Standard 3, plans should be made for a continuous evaluation of the budget situation as it evolves and changes, thus enabling adaptation to budgetary projections. This will help ensure both that the university can function within its resources and, at the same time, that the campus maintains a recurrent level of surplus funds in a balanced scenario. This effort should draw from the talent available among members of the faculty, students, and administrative personnel, thus taking advantage of the institution's status as the premier research and educational institution of the Commonwealth.

For Standard 4, measures should be taken in order to ensure the resolution of recent and current issues as well as preventing future ones. We therefore recommend building on the existing policy for crisis management (See Attachment 6: Office of Chancellor Communication 42, 2004-05), improving guidelines for preventing crisis before they originate, managing them if they occur, and establishing precise parameters for any police involvement. It would be best to manage crisis in a manner conducive to the peaceful resolution of conflict.