

**Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students
of**

The University of Puerto Rico Cayey, Puerto Rico

by

**A Self-Study Evaluation Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**Prepared After a
Visit to the Institution on:
April 2 – 5, 2017**

The Visitors:

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At the Time of the Visit:

**President/Chief Executive Officer:
Dr. Mario Medina Caban, Chancellor**

**Dean for Academic Affairs:
Dr. Raul Castro**

**Chair of the Governing Board:
Dr. Carlos Perez Diaz**

I. Institutional Overview

The ***Universidad de Puerto Rico en Cayey*** (University of Puerto Rico at Cayey, henceforth UPR-Cayey) is part of the University of Puerto Rico System--the state-supported university system consisting of eleven campuses. Cayey is a municipality located in the central-southeastern region of the island about 55 kilometers south of San Juan in a valley surrounded by mountains. The geographical region served by UPR-Cayey consists of 11 municipalities with a combined population of almost 440,000 inhabitants. Caguas is the largest municipality with 132,000 inhabitants, followed by Cayey with 45,000.

- UPR-Cayey was established in 1966 and began its operations in 1967 as the *Colegio Regional de Cayey* responding to the need of providing access to higher education to the residents of the central-southeastern region of the island. In 1999, the UPR Board of Trustees authorized the change of name to the Universidad de Puerto Rico en Cayey.
- UPR-Cayey was initially accredited in 1967 by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) under the institutional coverage of the University of Puerto Rico's accreditation. In 1975, MSCHE granted UPR-Cayey accreditation as a separate unit.
- The University of Puerto Rico at Cayey is committed to a well-rounded education of excellence through undergraduate programs in the preparation of teachers, and in the disciplines of natural and social sciences, humanities and business administration.
- UPR-Cayey offers interdisciplinary and innovative education which incorporates research and community service as part of the teaching and learning process.
- The UPR-Cayey's Carnegie classification since 2015 is Baccalaureate Colleges Arts & Science Focus.
- UPR-Cayey offers 27 baccalaureate programs in five academic fields:
 - Teacher Preparation (11)
 - Natural Sciences (4)
 - Social Sciences (4)
 - Humanities (4)
 - Business Administration (4)
- UPR-Cayey conducts program reviews on a five-year cycle following UPR guidelines.
- Twelve programs have specialized accreditations.

- UPR-Cayey enrollment is in the range of 3,700 students. The majority (93%) enroll full-time. Seventy-one percent of the student received financial aid in 2015-2016 and 91% of the financial aid awarded came from Pell grants.
- A total of 70% of the UPR-Cayey's students come from the 11-municipality regional area. The remaining 30 percent come from different areas of the island and a small number are international students.
- UPR-Cayey produced 479 graduates in 2015-2016.
- The first-year fall-to-fall retention rate is 80 percent and the six-year graduation rate is 48 percent.
- UPR-Cayey has the second highest graduation rate in Puerto Rico.
- UPR-Cayey has 211 faculty. Two thirds (67%) have doctoral degrees. The student to faculty ratio was 21 to 1 in 2015-2016.
- The five-year (2012-2016) average annual operating budget for UPR-Cayey was \$36 million.

UPR-Cayey has played a central role in training and providing skills and credentials to many residents. It has had a central role in the economic development of the region by forming professional and community leaders that have promoted economic growth and social development.

UPR-Cayey has high academic standards and promotes intellectual inquiry, research skills, and social engagement among its graduates.

UPR-Cayey's faculty members are committed to teaching and learning and have developed a culture of assessment to improve student learning. UPR-Cayey's faculty has also developed and expanded research initiatives that have resulted in increased grants and publications.

UPR-Cayey is efficiently managed by a team of committed administrators that have established effective shared governance systems.

The UPR-Cayey, like all the units of the UPR System, has experienced challenging times associated with the ongoing financial crisis of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. These challenges have resulted in budget reductions for several years. Up to now, UPR-Cayey has been able to develop mechanisms to continue operating efficiently and fulfilling its mission under continued budget constraints.

At the time of the visit, the UPR Board of Directors and the Interim President were involved in negotiations with the Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the newly created Oversight Board to maintain state funding at the maximum level possible for the UPR System.

II. Nature and Conduct of the Visit

The visit was conducted by a team of peer evaluators as part of the institution's self-study.

The visiting team met with the following UPR-Cayey groups and individuals:

- Self-Study Steering Committee
- Self-Study Committees for Standards 1-14
- Chancellor and Staff
- Department Chairs
- Dean of Academic Affairs and Staff
- Dean of Student Affairs and Staff
- Student Governing Body and other Student Organizations Representatives
- UPR-Cayey students who participated in guided campus tours, student luncheon, and other visit activities
- Institutional Assessment & Assessment of Student Learning Staff
- Administrative Board
- Academic Senate
- Faculty Representatives

In addition, the visiting team met with the following staff and individuals from the University of Puerto Rico system:

- UPR Board of Trustees Representatives
- UPR President
- UPR Vice President for Academic Affairs
- UPR Chief Financial Officer
- UPR Budget Director

The visiting team reviewed evidence supporting the self-study through various sources including:

- Resource Room documentation
- Self-study supporting evidence submitted as electronic attachments
- UPR-Cayey's self-study data repository available in the UPR-Cayey website
- UPR-Cayey's website
- UPR's website

- Special data requests provided at the request of team members
- Special document translations prepared exclusively for the use of the visiting team

III. Affirmation of Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

Based on a review of the institution's self-study and appendices, interviews, and other institutional documents, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet the Requirements of Affiliation.

IV. Compliance with Federal Requirements; Issues Relative to State Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements

Based on the separate verification of compliance with accreditation-relevant provisions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 and, as necessary, review of the self-study, certification by the institution, other institutional documents, and/or interviews, the team affirms that the institution meets all relevant federal and state regulations and the requirements of other Department of Education recognized accreditors.

The team conducted additional reviews of the following compliance categories: Transfer of Credit Policies and Articulation Agreements, Institutional Records of Student Complaints, Required Information for Students and the Public, Standing with State and Other Accrediting Agencies, and Assignment of Credit Hours. The team affirms that the institution is in compliance with the federal requirements of these categories.

V. Commendations and Summary of Institutional Strengths

Commendations made by the team are addressed in the narrative addressing compliance with individual standards.

VI. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates who the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are used to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- The Institution outlines a clearly defined mission with four specific goals:
 1. An undergraduate education of excellence
 2. Campus commitment to performance excellence
 3. Campus as a primary center of academic and cultural activities
 4. Social responsibility
- The goals are aligned to the UPR System Strategic Plan, are clearly stated, and serve to guide the faculty and administrators in the planning process, allocation of resources, and assessment of program outcomes. The goals are consistent with the expectations of the university.
- Every five years, the institution conducts program reviews relative to the first three goals. Program reviews include a comprehensive assessment of elements such as course sections offered; faculty allocation; enrollment patterns; graduation and retention; and student exit evaluations concerning admissions, registration, financial aid, and other services.
- Relative to the goal of social responsibility, the institution engages students in community projects like the farmer's market with local agricultural producers, environmental and recycling projects, and workshops offered by students in the community.

- The institution supports the creative activities of the faculty and students despite the financial challenges.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- Institutional planning within UPR-Cayey is a disciplined, coordinated, systematic and sustained effort to achieve the institution's mission and goals. The Chancellor has appointed a director to operationalize community participation and to lead the development of UPR-Cayey's next strategic plan which is expected to reflect the overarching priorities published within the recently developed UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2020. The UPR-Cayey planning process will invoke participation from all community members through a series of communicative efforts leading to a collective plan development process, with a targeted completion date of May 2017.
- The annual budget process is based on strategic priorities, assessment results, and institutional data generated during the previous year. Budget compilation is the result of a collegial process that considers academic and administrative needs, and allocates resources to support institutional mission and goals. UPR-Cayey has employed a culture of linking budget allocations toward the UPR-Cayey Strategic Plan and UPR Ten Challenges: 2006-2016 An Agenda for Planning.
- The Chancellor and Deans have continued to inform the campus community of fiscal constraints and their efforts to manage the budget according to institutional priorities. UPR-Cayey has developed an Action Plan, discussed in greater length within Standard 3, which incorporates a Risk Assessment Plan, to address various strategies.

Recommendation:

- The next strategic plan for UPR-Cayey should include a supporting multi-year financial projection to ensure that the plan has overall financial viability. Further, it should include metrics, or specific measurable outcomes, to support future detailed assessment and measurement of progression toward these pre-determined goals.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The human, financial, technical, physical facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the UPR System, and UPR-Cayey are each facing significant economic and fiscal challenges. The Commonwealth's challenges include a severe economic recession as GDP has remained negative since 2007, further compounded by reduced revenues, decreased investors' confidence, and reduced borrowing capacity. Unemployment rates within the Commonwealth remain high and the Commonwealth has been unable to address debt obligations.
- As a result of these conditions, the U.S. Congress approved the Puerto Rico Oversight Act which resulted in the establishment of an Oversight Board that took effect in December 2016. In January 2017, the Oversight Board issued a letter to the Governor of Puerto Rico with recommendations to balance the Commonwealth's budget. These recommendations included items which impact UPR, including Year One budget reductions (approximating 10%), accompanied by recommendations to offset reductions, such as an emphasis on recruiting "higher-paying" international and mainland U.S. students, pursuit of increased alumni gifts and government grants, and efforts to right-size faculty and administrative staff.

- Students of the University of Puerto Rico, and the institution itself, are strongly dependent upon federal financial aid. Most notably, over \$200 million in Pell grants are issued annually to UPR students.
- The audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 were not issued until September 7, 2016 and the statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016 have not as yet been issued. The auditor's opinion on the most recently issued statements discloses doubt that UPR can continue to operate as an ongoing concern given its reliance on financial support from the Commonwealth. These conditions could very well hamper the institution's ability to pursue government grants and conduct fundraising efforts both at the UPR System as well as the individual institutions, including UPR-Cayey.
- Based upon decisions of the Oversight Board, budget allocations for the UPR system will affect UPR-Cayey. Therefore, UPR-Cayey has developed an Action Plan to balance its budgets during this challenging period, which includes the restructuring of administrative offices and tasks, continuous monitoring of academic offerings, amendments to faculty compensation practices, and programmatic assessment. In addition, UPR-Cayey is planning to establish a Risk Assessment Plan that incorporates the aforementioned initiatives.
- Despite these very challenging circumstances, UPR-Cayey has met all its financial obligations. Further, it has completed projects over the past decade with a total investment in excess of \$16 million. There have been significant upgrades to the safeguarding of UPR-Cayey's data network and UPR has completed the implementation of the University Financial Integrated System. Additionally, UPR-Cayey has maintained enrollment, retention, and graduation levels during the past five years.

Commendation:

- UPR-Cayey has operated in a very resourceful manner during this period of austerity. A sufficient level of resources appears to have been applied to academic programs and campus operations.

Recommendation:

- Given the significant challenging circumstances surrounding the institution's ability to demonstrate that it will continue to have sufficient resources to carry out its mission and execute its plans, the team recommends that UPR-Cayey should closely monitor progress on its related plans and assess the adequacy of available resources.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- The governance structure of UPR and UPR-Cayey clearly delineates responsibility levels and promotes a collegial process.
- The Governing Board is responsible for all macro structural components of the UPR system. This thirteen-member board consists of eight individuals appointed by the Governor (five of whom are alumni), two faculty members, two students, and the PR Secretary of Education. At the time of the visit, the Board had five vacancies. All members are subject to the Law of Governmental Ethics of the Commonwealth. There are eight permanent committees supporting the UPR Board. Information is conveyed to the campus community via a dedicated website. The UPR Board has recently initiated a self-assessment process using a self-evaluation questionnaire.
- The Governing Board appoints the UPR President via a search committee. The President provides leadership and oversees ongoing operations. The "University Board" consists of representatives from corporate functions and each of the campuses, including administrators, faculty members and students. The University Board's primary responsibilities are to ensure compliance with the strategic plan and to serve in an advisory capacity to the UPR President.
- UPR-Cayey campus governance includes the Chancellor, who serves as the Chief Executive Officer, supported by three Deans, the Academic Senate, the Administrative Board, and the General Student Council. In addition to tending to campus academic matters, the Academic Senate also provides recommendations to both the University Board and Governing Board. The Administrative Board approves the budget distribution that the Chancellor submits to Central Administration. The General Student Council serves as the main student representative body on campus.

Commendation:

- The team commends UPR-Cayey's Academic Senate for its effective collegial approach to shared governance.

Standard 5: Administration

The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- UPR-Cayey has a clearly defined administrative structure, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various administrative organizational areas and support offices. Across the institution, there is a clear understanding of UPR-Cayey's mission, goals, and objectives.
- UPR-Cayey's administrative structure is presided by the UPR-Cayey Chancellor, who has the role of chief executive officer and reports to the UPR President and the UPR Governing Board. The Chancellor's duties are defined by the UPR General Bylaws and the University Law. The Chancellor is responsible for providing institutional vision and leadership and for leading the effective management, control, and allocation of institutional resources in compliance with administrative policies of the UPR system and UPR-Cayey.
- At the time of the visit, UPR-Cayey's Chancellor had the appropriate combination of academic and administrative credentials as well as significant experience with the UPR system to manage and lead the institution.
- The Chancellor's leadership and management functions are supported by three Deans who constitute the chief university officers in the areas of: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Administrative Affairs. The Chancellor and the Deans collectively lead UPR-Cayey in the achievement of its goals and objectives. The Deans share the responsibility

of ensuring that UPR-Cayey's academic programs, strategic plans, operational plans, and administrative procedures are effectively executed.

- The UPR-Cayey Chancellor was highly praised by members of the Academic Senate for his commitment in facilitating the Senate's mission as an effective shared governance body, where proposals and ideas are openly debated and considered.
- At the time of the visit, the Deans of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Administrative Affairs had the appropriate credentials and experience to lead the institutions in their respective areas.
- UPR-Cayey has a technological infrastructure which supports the administrative leadership management functions.

Standard 6: Integrity

In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- A fair and impartial process to address grievances and violations of institutional policies is published and widely available. The institution fosters a climate of academic freedom, inquiry, and engagement, supported by widely disseminated policies. Procedures and documents are in place to promote the ethical behavior of faculty, administrators, and students.
- Catalogs are updated periodically and are available to be viewed online. Information about the institution, including graduation, retention, and certification and licensing pass rates, is available to the public.
- The Institution has two committees that deal with grievances: The Discipline Board and the Misconduct Investigation Committee.

- Faculty and non-faculty complaints are handled according to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Law 426, November 7, 2000, and the Bylaws of the University of Puerto Rico. Disciplinary actions, when needed, are addressed in accordance with applicable bylaws and collective bargaining agreements.
- In addition to all complaints coming from any of the campus constituents, the Chancellor handles any appeal or reconsideration of actions or decisions taken at the deanship level. The UPR President and the Governing Board also consider appeals that cannot be resolved locally. Complaints related to academic issues are handled first by the faculty involved; the Academic Dean and the Chancellor address subsequent appeal steps.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards

The team’s judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- The institution has developed an assessment plan that evaluates its strategic plan: *UPR-Cayey Strategic Plan 2006-2016: Responsibilities and Assessment Strategies*. Although the plan identifies assessment measures, such as surveys, annual unit achievement reports, and analysis of assessment data, there is no evidence that the expected annual assessment activities have taken place, that results have been analyzed, or that improvements have been made in response to assessment results.
- The University has an Assessment and Institutional Research Office (AIRO), which provides support to the administration and the academic areas. This office has provided meaningful institutional data that has been the foundation for data-driven decision-making. Institutional decisions, such as those related to enrollment, faculty hiring, and programmatic budget requests, utilize data generated from these data. However, there is insufficient evidence of a documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve the total range of programs and services.

- The institution has used as its main framework for institutional effectiveness assessment the system-based UPR Institutional Assessment Plan, which dates from 2002. This plan was not modified by UPR-Cayey to address their local context.
- Several student support areas report assessment results, some quite comprehensive, such as the analysis of the impact of tutoring on student performance in key courses. Most units rely on satisfaction surveys, some of which have very low response rates or outdated survey data.
- Administrative units manage process assessment through discussions at staff meetings and the development of the annual report to the chancellor. In many cases, documentation of assessment processes is not available.

Recommendation:

- The institution should develop its own institutional assessment plan that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission, ensures integration of processes and instruments, and standardizes best practices throughout the university.

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team arrived at the following conclusions about this standard:

- The admissions policies for undergraduate students are in accord with the mission and goals of UPR-Cayey. The admissions process requires that students apply to the UPR System and select the campus(es) as well as their major (first, second and third choices). The capacity for each of the majors for first-year students is determined through a collaborative, systematic process in which academic departments submit their recommendations for enrollment to the Administrative Board. The Administrative Board then reviews the data, votes, and submits to Admissions a cap or quota by programs of study.

- The Grade Admission Index (GAI) is a weighted score measuring a prospective student's high school transcript; admissions aptitude exam; and test scores in English, Spanish, and math. The GAI is used as an indicator of a student's ability to succeed in college. UPR-Cayey admits students to programs with a minimum GAI of 258-310 depending on the program of study. Specialized admissions consideration is given to students with special talents (e.g. music or athletics) and an alternative admissions review is provided to students in two categories: students with disabilities and students from low socio-economic status (plus other criteria). Transfer student policy requires students to provide a transcript from an accredited college with at least 30 hours of completed courses and a 3.0 GPA. Coursework is evaluated for transfer credit by the appropriate academic department.
- Freshman-to-sophomore retention for the 2015 cohort was 87% and the six-year graduation rate for the 2009 cohort was 48%. A Title V grant is supporting various initiatives to support retention through academic advising and tutoring, a summer bridge program, supplemental instruction, mentoring strategies, and emphasis on aligning graduation priority requirements for seniors. The Counseling and Psychological Services Center (CEDE) helps students identify potential academic roadblocks, provides students with vocational guidance, offers personal and crisis counseling, and supports students with disabilities. CEDE is accredited by the International Association of Counseling Services and performs regular assessments to measure impact of their services on student well-being.
- Students are advised by their faculty in upper level courses as well as in providing professional/career opportunities (i.e. career advising and/or graduate school guidance).
- The units impacting admissions and retention are adequately staffed by professionals who are qualified in their roles/responsibilities.
- Data and assessments are utilized to make strategic decisions for enrollment and capacity for student growth by departments.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- UPR-Cayey has a wide variety of student support areas including Academic Support Services, Registrar, Continuing Education, Student Support Center, Financial Aid, Counseling & Psychological Services, Health Services, Student Organizations, Social and Cultural Activities, Study Abroad, Athletics, Bookstore, Cafeteria Services, and Safety and Security.
- UPR-Cayey General Student Council (GSC) helps facilitate student input to the University administration through proposals, grievances, and requests for information about the institution. Students are also represented in the Academic Senate through their position in their GSC and/or by election by the student body.
- The Student Support Center offers peer mentoring and tutoring in collaboration with faculty. Data shows that students who participate in tutoring perform more successfully in classes.
- Financial Aid awarded more than \$14 million of support with over 90% of funds coming from Pell Grants; 70% of students at UPR-Cayey receive Pell Grants. Only \$423,000 of student loans were awarded in 2015-16, which is reflective of previous years. While the institution has a relatively low volume of student loans, the student loan default rate is eight percent.
- Counseling and Psychological services had over 2,500 student visits for personal, vocational, and educational counseling, as well as crisis intervention and disabilities accommodations.
- Health Services had over 8,000 student visits a year; 59% of students rated the services as very satisfied.
- Over 50 student organizations engage approximately 34% of the students in their activities.
- Social and Cultural activities sponsored more than 70 events during the past year, such as conferences, plays, and concerts.
- The Athletic Program has adequate support staff for the 215 students participating in 14 competitive sports.
- The Student's Ombudsperson Office coordinates grievances; cases are appropriately monitored and resolutions are documented per federal compliance requirements.
- The office of the Dean of Students works to build a strong sense of community through the promotion of the Alma Mater and engaging in key milestones with students such as orientation and graduation traditions.

- The office of the Dean of Students collaborates with Alumni Affairs to continue connecting the student experience with alumni involvement.
- The Security Office offers 24-hour security to the campus.

Standard 10: Faculty

The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- The faculty is appropriately prepared and qualified for the positions they hold. As of 2016, out of 211 faculty members, 142 hold a doctorate and 67 hold master's degrees, as compared to 111 doctorates and 81 master's degrees in 2011.
- There is a sufficient number of faculty to fulfill academic needs, as evidenced by a 21:1 student to faculty ratio in 2016.
- The institution's faculty demonstrate excellence in teaching as evidenced by the evaluation procedures established by the Academic Senate and carried out by academic programs. Evaluation procedures include classroom observations by peers and program directors, as well as student evaluations. Of the 309 faculty evaluations carried out in 2015-2016, 244 had a score of *Excellent* and 58 were rated *Good*.
- UPR-Cayey has published and implemented standards and procedures for all faculty and other professionals and the criteria for the appointment, supervision and review of the teaching effectiveness of part-time, adjunct, and other faculty are consistent with those for full-time faculty as established by Article 42 of the UPR General Bylaws.

Commendations:

Notwithstanding the financial constraints on the institution, several areas of progress are noteworthy of commendation:

- An increase in the number of tenure track faculty and their record of scholarly and research achievement.
- Gender equality across the institution.
- A significant increase in the number of faculty holding terminal degrees.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- The Institution offers 27 baccalaureate programs in five academic fields: Education (11), Natural Sciences (4), Social Sciences (4), Humanities (4), and Business Administration (4). Twelve programs have received accreditation, three (3) in elementary education, one (1) in special education and four (4) in business administration. The other programs are assessed based on enrollment patterns, demand, graduation, and retention rates. Programs with low indicators are required to submit a plan to correct the lack of effectiveness.
- The academic programs are supplemented with other curricular initiatives like interdisciplinary research, community service, honor studies, and scientific research enhancement. These activities are carried out by faculty that ensure that students are engaged in community service and research projects before completing their course of studies.
- The institution continuously reviews and develops new courses. During this past planning cycle, the institution developed 62 new courses, introduced several minors, and had 12 academic programs accredited. The accreditations support the ongoing evaluation of program outcomes that contribute to the sustainability of quality instructional programs.

- The organizational structure supports the evaluation of academic instructional programs, allocation of resources, and ongoing program review.
- The institution has the learning resources, facilities, library services, institutional technology, and faculty to support its academic programs.

Commendations:

The institution is commended for the following:

- UPR-Cayey is among the top colleges and universities of Puerto Rico, with the highest passing rate in the state exam for teacher certification (PCMAS).
- The Carnegie classification for UPR-Cayey has changed to Baccalaureate College of Arts & Sciences Focus as of 2015.
- Since the previous self-study (2005), the institution has achieved the professional association accreditation of 12 academic programs.

Standard 12: General Education

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team arrived at the following conclusions about this standard:

- UPR-Cayey's General Education requirement of 42 credit hours considerably exceeds the minimum required by MSCHE guidelines.
- Two key elements of the General Education program are an interdisciplinary course at the 300-level and capstone courses in all majors.
- UPR-Cayey has appointed a faculty director to coordinate General Education offerings and its assessment processes.

- UPR-Cayey’s general education requirements are properly and appropriately described in its official publications.
- UPR-Cayey’s assessment of the outcomes of general education are incorporated into the institution’s assessment of student learning and its findings are used to improve curriculum.
- Ninety percent of the capstone courses include three central general education outcomes: effective communication; reflexive, creative, and critical thinking; and information and technological literacy (labeled “computational management” in the UPR-Cayey discussion).
- Assessment of Core General Education courses relies heavily on indirect methods, i.e. faculty self-reporting of their own course assessment. Faculty participation in this process is limited, which renders the aggregate results unreliable. Direct methods (e.g., rubrics) are used to assess the capstone projects.

Suggestions:

- That the institution might seek to find ways of determining whether teamwork is emphasized and assessed throughout its course offerings.
- That the institution might seek to revise certain student learning outcomes, e.g. “ability to make sound and just decisions,” to make them more measureable and specific.

Recommendation:

- UPR-Cayey should use more direct methods for assessing the General Education program as a whole, especially the achievement of student learning outcomes in core courses.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution’s programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

The team’s judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- UPR-Cayey offers innovative, collaborative, and entrepreneurial educational opportunities for students that are consistent with its mission and goals. These educational activities engage undergraduate students in research, community involvement, outreach, mentoring, and program-specific certifications.
- UPR-Cayey offers developmental courses, credit and noncredit continuing education courses, and other related educational activities to non-traditional students who wish to pursue a diverse educational background.
- UPR-Cayey offers a summer bridge program that provides pre-college courses for students whose proficiency falls below college-level in Mathematics, Spanish, and English language skills.
- The Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies (DECEP), under the Dean of Academic Affairs, handles all administrative procedures for the offering of the pre-college courses. All preparatory courses include 40 hours of instruction and are geared toward the personal and academic development of underprepared students to help them reinforce, refine, or re-learn the basic skills needed to succeed in college.
- In 2016-2017, 135 students participated in undergraduate research as part of the *Instituto de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias* (Institute for Interdisciplinary Research); 87% of those students have continued to their graduate studies. In addition, the library provides significant access for students to study in groups, use of technology, and reference materials to support their research.

Recommendations:

- UPR-Cayey should develop an assessment plan for monitoring progress and impact of related educational activities and their alignment to the system strategic plan.
- UPR-Cayey should develop a tracking system to monitor the academic performance and progress of students that were part of the Summer Bridge Program pre-college cohort through to graduation.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

The team's judgment is that, at this time, the institution appears to be in compliance with this standard.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions about this standard:

- UPR-Cayey's Institutional Assessment Plan emphasizes Excellence in Undergraduate Programs (Area I) as one of the three principal areas for the establishment of goals and implementation of assessment activities. Area I, in turn, is divided into three assessment levels: General Education (Level 1), programmatic assessment (Level 2), and course-embedded student learning outcomes assessment (Level 3).
- Professional associations accredit twelve programs in Education and Business. In addition, since 2014, all programs are expected to undergo the Program Review Process established in the Board of Trustees' *Guide for the Assessment of Academic Programs in the UPR*, along with complying with discipline-based accreditation procedures, if any.
- The program review process includes evaluation of the faculty allocation required to adequately meet program demands. UPR-Cayey uses assessment results to develop faculty recruitment proposals that are presented to and approved by the Academic Senate before being presented to the central UPR office.
- The University has decentralized the way student learning assessment is done, allowing units to develop methods of assessment suitable to their context, while complying with the program review requirements. Each program has an assessment committee responsible for monitoring progress toward its stated goals; the evidence produced in the unit is then evaluated through Student Learning Assessment Inventory Reports and linked to planning and budgeting.
- Departments are engaging in comprehensive assessment processes that identify the various points in the student's career where progress toward the accomplishment of student learning outcomes is evaluated. The assessment committees carry out direct methods of assessment such as review of student artifacts (e.g., laboratory reports – Chemistry; writing samples – English; system test – Business Administration). Although programs have identified student learning outcomes and are using direct and indirect

methods of assessment, much of the assessment process needs to be appropriately documented.

- Academic programs are also engaged in programmatic assessment, addressing such issues as student retention/graduation rates, characteristics of the students in the program, advising processes, availability of learning resources, faculty complement, time to degree completion, and job placement.

Recommendation:

- UPR-Cayey academic programs should develop more systematic and consistent methods of documenting assessment processes.

VII. Summary of Compliance

Based on a review of the institution's self-study and appendices, interviews, and other documents reviewed during the visit, the team draws the conclusions that:

- The institution continues to meet the Requirements of Affiliation.
- The institution meets all relevant federal and state regulations and the requirements of other Department of Education recognized accreditors.
- The institution seems to meet each of the fourteen individual standards stated in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*.

The team also makes the following recommendations that require institutional follow-up action:

<p><u>Standard 2:</u> Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal</p>	<p>The next strategic plan for UPR-Cayey should include a supporting multi-year financial projection to ensure that the plan has overall financial viability. Further, it should include metrics, or specific measurable outcomes, to support future detailed assessment and measurement of progression toward these pre-determined goals.</p>
<p><u>Standard 3:</u> Institutional Resources</p>	<p>Given the significant challenging circumstances surrounding the institution’s ability to demonstrate that it will continue to have sufficient resources to carry out its mission and execute its plans, the team recommends that UPR-Cayey should closely monitor progress on its related plans and assess the adequacy of available resources.</p>
<p><u>Standard 7:</u> Institutional Assessment</p>	<p>The institution should develop its own institutional assessment plan that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission, ensures integration of processes and instruments, and standardizes best practices throughout the university.</p>
<p><u>Standard 12:</u> General Education</p>	<p>UPR-Cayey should use more direct methods for assessing the General Education program as a whole, especially the achievement of student learning outcomes in core courses.</p>
<p><u>Standard 13:</u> Related Educational Activities</p>	<p>UPR-Cayey should develop an assessment plan for monitoring progress and impact of related educational activities and their alignment to the system strategic plan. UPR-Cayey should develop a tracking system to monitor the academic performance and progress of students that were part of the Summer Bridge Program pre-college cohort through to graduation.</p>
<p><u>Standard 14:</u> Assessment of Student Learning</p>	<p>UPR-Cayey academic programs should develop more systematic and consistent methods of documenting assessment processes.</p>