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

the University of Puerto Rico at Utuado
(UPR-Utuado)
P.O. Box 2500
Utuado, Puerto Rico 00641

by
A Small Team of Visitors Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared After Study of the Institution’s Monitoring Report and a
Follow-Up Visit to the Institution on:
September 14-15, 2011

The Visitors:
Stephen Bronn, CHAIR - Former Vice President for Administration and Finance (Retired)
Mansfield University, Mansfield, PA 16933
Mailing Address: 619 Breezeway Lane, Georgetown, TX 78633

Juan R. Sandoval Vice President for Administration and Finance
Midwestern State University
3410 Taft Boulevard, Wichita Falls, TX 76308

Working with the Visitors:
Dr. Tito Guerrero, III Vice President, Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

At the Time of the Visit:
Campus Chancellor Professor Eladio Gonzalez, Interim
Campus Dean for Academic Affairs Dr. Eneida Rodriguez Rossy, Interim
Chair of the Board of Trustees (UPR System) Ms. Ygri Rivera de Martinez
I. Institutional Overview

The University of Puerto Rico at Utuado (UPR-Utuado) is one of the 11 campuses of the University of Puerto Rico and is located on a campus of 118 acres in the central region of the island of Puerto Rico. UPR-Utuado was created by the Legislative Assembly of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1978 and began operations in August 1979. UPR-Utuado is a public institution and has an enrollment of 1,268 students for the fall semester of 2011. UPR-Utuado has a mission based on providing post-secondary education of relevance and quality in the fields of agricultural technology, education, and business administration, as well as in the arts and sciences.

II. Nature and Conduct of the Visit

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) initially accredited UPR-Utuado in 1986 and reaffirmed accreditation in 1990, 1995, 2001, and 2006. In 2010 UPR-Utuado was placed on probation and an on-site evaluation was scheduled for March 2011. As a result of the March 6-9, 2011 on-site evaluation (MSCHE), in June 2011, provided the following action: “To accept the monitoring report and to note that an evaluation visit took place. To continue probation due to continued insufficient evidence compliance with Standard 3 (Institutional Resources), Standard 4 (Governance), and Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal) based on the evaluation visit. To note that the institution remains accredited while on probation.”

In its June 2011 action MSCHE further acted: “To request a monitoring report, due September 1, 2011, providing evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain compliance with Standards 2, 3 and 4, including but not limited to (1) evidence that its goals and objectives reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results and are used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels (Standard 2); (2) a broadly participatory budget and priority setting exercise that will link its strategic plans and goals with available resources based on various economic scenarios, particularly a plan-B scenario that does not assume budget increases from the government; (3) development of a three- to five-year financial projection that outlines possible strategies that the institution can take in view of its precarious financial situation (Standard 3); and (4) a complete set of policies outlining governance responsibilities of administration and faculty and clearly assigning authority and responsibility for policy development and decision making.”

The MSCHE action further requests monitoring reports for March 1, 2012 and March 1, 2013, but this small team visit restricts itself to the action described in the previous paragraph.

The MSCHE small team of visitors was organized in late July 2011 and was scheduled to visit UPR-Utuado on September 13-15, 2011. The visitors were designated as Dr. Carlos Hernandez and Mr. Juan R. Sandoval to be assisted by Dr. Tito Guerrero, III a Vice President for MSCHE. For health reasons, Dr. Hernandez withdrew from the team and was replaced by Dr. Stephen Bronn in early August 2011. Dr. Bronn agreed to serve as the Chair.

During the site visit the visitors met with the following UPR-Utuado officials: Chancellor – Professor Eladio Gonzalez, Dean for Academic Affairs – Dr. Eneida Rodriguez Rossy, Dean of Administrative Affairs – Dr. Luis Tapia Maldonado, Dean of Student Affairs – Prof. Silma Maldonado, Director of Assessment – Dr. Javier Lugo, Budget Director – Mr. Edgar del Toro, Planning Director – Professor Hector Reyes Ayala, Director of External Resources – Dr. Angel Custodio, plus other faculty, staff, and students. From the central office of the UPR System, the
visitors met with the following officials: President – Dr. Miguel Munoz, Vice President for Academic Affairs – Professor Ibis Aponte, plus the Budget and Finance Directors and other appropriate staff. Prior to and during the site visit the visitors also reviewed the monitoring report prepared by UPR-Utuado and relevant appendices, reports, financial information, and other evidence provided by UPR-Utuado.

The visitors take this opportunity to express appreciation to the leadership, faculty, staff, and students of UPR-Utuado and to the President of UPR and his staff in San Juan for the courtesy and warm hospitality that they were shown prior to and during this focused visit.

III. Affirmation of Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation Under Review

Based on a review of the UPR-Utuado’s Monitoring Report and appendices, interviews, and other institutional documents, the visitors affirm that the institution continues to meet the Requirements of Affiliation under review.

IV. Commendations and Summary of Institutional Strengths

The visitors commend:
- The faculty, staff, administration, and students of UPR-Utuado for fully embracing the mission of the institution.
- The leadership of UPR-Utuado for improving communication with faculty, staff, and students on issues of importance to the campus.
- The UPR central leadership for assisting UPR-Utuado in its planning and financial efforts.
- The institution for operating with a balanced budget during the past several challenging financial years.
- The resolve of the system and UPR-Utuado to persevere during the challenging financial conditions that face Puerto Rico and many US states.

V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards Under Review

This report restricts itself to a review of Standard 2, Standard 3, and Standard 4 as specified in the Commission action of June 24, 2011.

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.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:
Based upon a review of the Monitoring Report and other related documents, a review of documentation relating to the newly initiated strategic planning process, interviews with campus and system leadership, and interviews with students and faculty we developed the following conclusions related to Standard 2:
The institution exhibits a significant history of planning. The institution is making significant progress toward the development of its new 2012-2017 strategic plan having already completed the first two of its six step development process with the third step (preparing an initial draft) to be completed by the end of September 2011. The process for developing the new UPR-Utuado strategic plan is broad-based and allows for stakeholder input. Assessment was utilized to review the institution’s strengths and weaknesses. Though the budget process is highly centralized and overly reliant upon maintaining current operations, some special allocations from the UPR System are related to strategic issues. The new 2012-2017 Strategic Plan will include a component on Resource Allocation and the institution is providing workshops to key personnel on the relationship between planning, assessment, and budgeting. The first such workshop was held on August 16, 2011. Goals, or action steps to achieve the goals, in the new 2012-2017 Strategic Plan are quantifiable in nature to ensure that the plan can be assessed. Enrollment at UPR-Utuado is decreasing having dropped from 1,682 in fall 2008 to 1,268 in fall 2011. This 25% decrease in enrollment is significant, but receives little analysis in the institution’s monitoring report. The Monitoring Report attributes the decrease to “disturbances throughout the System”, referring to the System student strike of 2010, and asserts that enrollment is expected to return to its usual level. The visitors are less optimistic that enrollment will rebound as quickly as the institution projects. Institutional IPEDS reports indicated that first time enrollment began dropping prior to the student strike and hence the low level of enrollment in fall 2011 may be the result of having admitted fewer first time students since 2008. The institutional planning process for the new 2012-2017 Strategic Plan does not appear to fully address the enrollment issues facing UPR-Utuado, however, the Chancellor has initiated steps to better understand the issue through the appointment of recruitment and retention committees.

Therefore, the visitors’ judgment is that, at this time, the institution is in compliance with MSCHE Standard 2.

Due to the recent enrollment trends at the institution, the visitors make the following recommendation and the following suggestion.

**Recommendation:**
- UPR-Utuado should conduct a comprehensive review of enrollment along with a demographic analysis of its primary recruitment area to more fully understand the reasons for its declining enrollment. The analysis should ascertain if the decrease is more severe in particular programs and should also address the impact of tuition/fee increases on enrollment.

**Suggestion:**
- UPR-Utuado should utilize the recommended enrollment review in its strategic planning effort and should consider the establishment of enrollment goals in the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan.
Standard 3: Institutional Resources

*The human, financial, technical, 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.*

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

Based upon a review of the Monitoring Report and other related documents, a review of documentation relating to the system’s and the institution’s budget, interviews with campus and system leadership, and interviews with students and faculty we developed the following conclusions related to Standard 3:

- The institution and the System submitted a balanced budget to the Board of Trustees for Fiscal Year 2011-12.
- The institution provided a 5-year projected trend analysis projecting resources growth and expenditures not to exceed revenues and embracing key core areas of instruction and infrastructure support, consistent with the new Strategic Plan.
- The institution’s allocation of general fund revenue from the System is not enrollment dependent. Tuition and fees are a relatively small component of general fund revenue since the major component of that revenue is the Commonwealth appropriation that is calculated as a fixed percentage (9.6%) of Commonwealth revenues.
- The institution established cost savings measures and revenue enhance to mitigate the reduction in General Fund revenues of $473,196 in FY 2010-2011, and most will impact expenditures in the 5-year trend analysis.
- The institution reorganized Continued Education and Professional Services that resulted in a new source of support of $795,660 during FY 2010-11.
- The institution made infrastructure improvements during 2010-11 of $127,991 that included funds for the Agricultural Technology Department, electric system repairs, installation of eleven water fountains, and others.
- The UPR System transfers funds from a central contingency to help campuses. In 2010-2011 UPR-Utuado received $1,191,303 as discretionary support for emergency/one-time issues.
- UPR-Utuado has a commitment to instruction with 42.9% of the total budget and to facilities maintenance and operation with 18% of the total budget.
- The UPR System is developing and installing new software and information systems, UFIS, and the financial module is operational.
- UPR System financial officers are relatively conservative in their estimate of the revenue sources that are used for the general fund allocation to institutions.

Therefore, the visitors’ judgment is that, at this time, the institution is in compliance with MSCHE Standard 3.

Due to the recent installation of the new financial software package and the prospect of relatively flat Commonwealth appropriations to the System, the visitors make the following recommendation and the following suggestion.

**Recommendation:**

- UPR-Central Office should institute a training program of all key personnel, ensuring uniformity and comparability of financial and non-financial data across all institutions.
Suggestion:

- With limited General Fund support, and consistent with the Strategic Plan, consider increasing the full-time equivalent (FTE) support of External Resources, an investment that will pay for itself with the increase in sponsored projects with contracts and grants.

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.

Summary of Key Evidence and Developments:

Based upon a review of the Monitoring Report and other related documents, a review of documentation relating to the system’s and the institution’s governance, interviews with campus and system leadership, and interviews with students and faculty we developed the following conclusions related to Standard 4:

- The institution, as one of eleven campuses in the University of Puerto Rico System, has a well-organized governing body, the Board of Trustees with well-documented policies that are readily available on its web site.
- There is no independent “lay” board to review institutional local decisions prior to implementation, but UPR-Utuado does not differ from other UPR campuses in this regard. Instead the campus has several review bodies that are advisory to the Chancellor such as the UPR-Utuado Administrative Board and the UPR-Utuado Academic Senate. The Administrative Board consists of seven key administrators, 2 Academic senators, and a student representative and is the primary body used by the Chancellor to review administrative issues. The Academic Senate is composed of 22 members and its primary responsibilities involve academic issues.
- Both the UPR-Utuado Administrative Board and the UPR-Utuado Academic Senate operate with an established set of bylaws.
- The UPR-Utuado Faculty Manual also outlines governance entities and their responsibilities and the Faculty Manual is available on the institution’s web site.
- The Chancellor is a member of the University Board, the primary advisory body of the UPR President.
- The Chancellor meets regularly with the UPR President, but not less than twice a month.
- The Academic Dean is a member of the Board for Degree Recognition which is the primary advisory body utilized by the Vice President for Academic Affairs of the UPR System for reviewing academic programs.
- The President of the UPR System has initiated a new strategic planning effort for the campuses of the System and the central office is working with campus Chancellors as they develop their individual plans.
- There is evidence of an orientation program for new members of the academic community, and there is evidence of periodic faculty and student forums where campus issues are discussed.
- There is evidence of a new student orientation program that includes a component on how the institution operates.
• Both faculty and students indicated that campus leadership communicates regularly with them regarding the central issues facing the institution. This communication is in the form of forums and also electronic in nature. The visitors heard numerous commendations from both faculty and students regarding these communications.

Therefore, the visitors’ judgment is that, at this time, the institution is in compliance with MSCHE Standard 4.

VI. Summary of Compliance

Based on a review of the monitoring report and appendices, interviews, and other documents reviewed prior to and during the visit, the visitors draw the following conclusions.

Requirements of Affiliation
The visitors affirm that the institution continues to meet the Requirements of Affiliation under review.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal
The visitors’ judgment is that, at this time, the institution is in compliance with MSCHE Standard 2.

Recommendation:
• UPR-Utuado should conduct a comprehensive review of enrollment along with a demographic analysis of its primary recruitment area to more fully understand the reasons for its declining enrollment. The analysis should ascertain if the decrease is more severe in particular programs and should address the impact of tuition/fee increases on enrollment.

Suggestion:
• UPR-Utuado should utilize the recommended enrollment review in its strategic planning effort and should consider the establishment of enrollment goals in the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources
The visitors’ judgment is that, at this time, the institution is in compliance with MSCHE Standard 3.

Recommendation:
• UPR-Central Office should institute a training program of all key personnel, ensuring uniformity and comparability of financial and non-financial data across all institutions.

Suggestion:
With limited General Fund support, and consistent with the Strategic Plan, consider increasing the FTE support of External Resources, an investment that will pay for itself with the increase in sponsored projects with contracts and grants.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance
The visitors’ judgment is that, at this time, the institution is in compliance with MSCHE Standard 4.