

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This 1995-2004 Self-Study Report is the product of the concerted effort of 600-plus members of the Río Piedras Campus community and the community at large. In January 2003, Chancellor Gladys Escalona de Motta approved the Executive Committee proposed by the Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA). This Committee was charged with designing and monitoring the self-study process with the DAA's full administrative support. The Chancellor submitted the Self Study Design as part of this process of reaccreditation by the MSCHE and renewal of the Campus license by the PRCHE in June 2003.

The most recent reaffirmation of accreditation by the MSCHE occurred in June of 1995 with a request for a progress report on the implementation of the new undergraduate degree approved by the Academic Senate in May of 2001. The PRCHE visited the Campus in November of 1997 and granted the Institutional Renewal License in 1998 with a three year follow up report on some of the physical facilities.

This Self-Study is guided by our institutional mission. The Self-study model is comprehensive with special emphasis on graduate and undergraduate academic program evaluation, which has been one of the Campus's main concerns in recent years. This emphasis underscores our commitment to evaluation and assessment as fundamental elements of Campus planning, support and renewal processes.

The 1995-2005 Self-Study has two main goals: to gauge the harmony between the Campus's programs, services, and organizational support, on the one hand, and the Campus's mission, goals, and objectives, on the other. Secondly, to determine their impact on student learning, services and research. All of these are to be seen, in turn, in relation to the Campus's planning processes and strategies. We can thus foreground our strengths and our critical issues.

This summary presents both aspects.

Chapter 1 begins with a brief history of the Río Piedras Campus, the oldest in the University of Puerto Rico. In 2003, we held our centennial celebration, an occasion that afforded us the opportunity to appraise our history and value our position as Puerto Rico's foremost institution of higher education.

Chapter 2 discusses the Campus's planning processes during the last decade. The Campus's decision-making and overall planning respond to our Mission statement and the Strategic Plan. The Mission, approved in 1990, firmly expresses the Campus commitment to Puerto Rican socio-economic and cultural development, which constitutes its main *raison d'être*. Foremost among Campus's priorities are student learning and a pledge to an excellent undergraduate education geared to graduate studies, research, and creative work.

Approved in 1997, the Strategic Plan (PLEA), constitutes the frame of reference for each unit's own development plan. In 2002, Chancellor Escalona de Motta set the priorities leading to strategies in the main areas of her program:

1. Strengthening the Campus research culture conducive to creative work and new knowledge
2. Enhancing quality of undergraduate and graduate programs through program evaluation and accreditation
3. Revising and reconceptualizing administrative processes as fundamental support for teaching, research, and creation
4. Monitoring physical facilities development in harmony with academic and service needs

The aforesaid planning efforts require the Campus to strengthen its ties with alumni to establish a solid fund-raising network; also, to enhance existing student exchange programs and create new exchange opportunities that may benefit from the international ties established by faculty members. The Campus is implementing a planning process for priority-setting that incorporates indicators of performance for periodic evaluation of achievements, whose outcomes may be fed back into the planning process. Along those lines, the Campus has recently approved a technology plan; a Distance-Learning Policy is in the process of approval. There is also an ongoing plan to establish a systematic budgeting process that more effectively takes into account outcomes assessment and planning in the light of new priorities.

Planning for the Campus physical facilities is supported by a Capital Improvements Program approved by the Board of Trustees for 2003-2007. A long term vision for the Campus physical development is being designed within a project supported by the Office of the President. Over the last five years, twenty five construction projects have taken place, including four new buildings. In addition, the Campus has built alliances with the government agencies in charge of the Urban Train Project to develop student training and education programs emphasizing mass transportation.

The PLEA has made technology infrastructure development an area of high priority for the Campus. Technological updating is now a common denominator in all colleges and schools. Various proposals since 2000 are aimed at the integration of technology into the curricula. A technology plan was recently elaborated by a consulting firm in conjunction with the Campus Technology Board. What remains is designing the structure through which the plan will be implemented and assessed in support of current and future distance learning initiatives on the Campus.

Chapter 3 describes institutional governance. The University of Puerto Rico Board of Trustees governs the University of Puerto Rico and issues general regulations therefor. The President is the chief executive officer of the System and discharges his functions with the advice of the University Board and the Chancellors. There are organizational diagrams that clearly portray the hierarchy, authority, and functions of each level of the organizational structure.

Organizational quality is one of the key administrative areas of the PLEA, addressed in Chapter 4. In 2004, the Campus Administrative Board approved the Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan (PAEI, for its Spanish acronym) for ensuring quality services backed by a systematic evaluation and assessment approach. The Campus community feels that follow-up and evaluation of these changes is crucial for the development of research, and in general, for the profile that the Campus wishes to achieve.

Chapter 5 examines Campus's integrity policies. The Campus has widely publicized fair and impartial procedures for handling grievances and complaints from all sectors concerning policies and regulations. Students and faculty concerns are handled in an equitable manner. Adequate personnel training on ethical issues has been set in place.

Regarding institutional assessment, Chapter 6 highlights the period from 2000 to 2004. The DAA has taken significant actions to articulate and implement the PAEI, covering academic and support units, including student learning, program evaluation, and service by support units. This Evaluation and assessment as a systematic approach constitute an important and ongoing challenge for the Campus. The self-study process has boosted achievement of this objective.

Chapter 7 shows that Campus admission policies and regulations are well defined and offer access to a variety of student populations. Incoming undergraduate students exhibit high

academic potential and most show interest in pursuing graduate studies. Presently, close to 60% (and more than 90% in some schools or colleges) of admitted students have a GPA of 3.5 or more. This percentage has been increasing at a relatively steady rate since academic year 96-97. Between 30% and 35% of admitted students have a high school GPA of 3.75 or higher. The Campus is intensifying recruitment efforts aimed at students with the highest potential. Consistent utilization of statistical data and other available information is needed for improving admissions, retention, and academic progress.

The wide variety of support services available to students, is the subject of Chapter 8. The institution ensures the quality of its academic programs and seeks to provide the appropriate learning environment. The Río Piedras Campus is keen to the needs of the diverse groups that make up the academic community. Among its most important achievements, the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research (DEGI for its Spanish acronym) evaluated and revised financial aid programs for graduate students. As a result it has created new opportunities and services recommended an innovative electronic graduate admission process. In January 2004, the Dean of Students (DE, for its Spanish acronym), in coordination with the Campus Office of Academic Planning (OPA, for its Spanish acronym), initiated an intensive evaluation of its services and programs as part of the Campus intention to signal student services as a top priority. The Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan will use these findings for planning and improving programs and services.

The Campus aims to increase the number and diversity of international and local students who participate in exchange programs. From 1995 through 2003 the number of international students increased by nearly 30%, over the same period. Another 30% increase has

been registered in the number of students studying abroad. Campus evaluations of student exchange experiences led in 2002 to a more integrated and effective model for these programs.

Faculty qualifications are the topic of Chapter 9. Faculty is one of the main strengths the Campus can count on to design, develop and update educational curricula, research projects, and service programs. Seventy-three percent of the regular teaching faculty has a doctorate degree. In some Colleges and Schools they constitute more than 90%. In addition, over 80% of teaching faculty has a full time appointment.

As outlined in the self-study, the faculty is active in artistic, intellectual, and scientific production, as well as in teaching and service. Faculty has shown an outstanding record of creative contributions to the disciplines, through books, articles in peer-reviewed journals, and conference presentations. In this respect, faculty are also designing program learning objectives and assessment plan.

A diverse range of support and incentives for intellectual creation and faculty development is provided. These involve course-load reductions, assistantships, external funds, leaves, and seminars. In addition, the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research (DEGI, for its Spanish acronym) is actively developing an advanced system for research support. That includes an administrative network to facilitate development of grant proposals. This should address the expressed faculty perception of shortcomings in the grant support structure. In 2003 the DEGI has also set up a systematic process to evaluate graduate programs and research centers. A similar effort has been developed by the DAA in coordination with OPA for the undergraduate programs. With respect to academic offerings, the Campus is examining course availability and scheduling, an issue of student concern.

Campus Academic offerings are discussed in Chapter 10. Some programs are unique to the Caribbean region, such as the Master's degrees in Technology and Information Sciences, professionally accredited, and in Comparative Literature. Offerings comprise one Juris Doctor; 14 doctoral; 52 masters; and 78 bachelor degree programs, as well as several post-bachelor and post-master's certificate. Enrollment in the academic year 2003-2004 was 21,909 students, 81.5% at the bachelor level. Since 2000, enrollment at the doctoral level increased by 38%. In that academic year 64 doctoral and nearly 3,000 bachelor degrees were granted. Since 1999 four new doctoral programs and seven certificates have been approved.

New inter-college options are available to students, at the bachelor and the master's level, such as the double major option and the joint MBA/ID program. The fact that 54 programs have been accredited by 18 agencies testifies to the quality of these offerings. Creation of new programs has been curtailed in recent years due to budget limitations. The Campus is implementing a plan to advance the professional accreditation of eligible programs, including the Museum, within the next three to six years.

The programs are supported by a Library System, which holds the most complete lending and periodicals collections on the Island, in addition to the more specialized Puerto Rican Collection and the Caribbean and Latin American Studies Regional Library. Besides specialized libraries, the Campus also has research centers, laboratories, and specialized "seminar rooms".

As will be seen in Chapter 11, the College of General Studies lays the groundwork of knowledge, communications and language skills, appreciation of art and culture, and development of critical and reflexive thinking. The Campus commitment to continuing the

revision of the bachelor degree through campus-wide discussions geared to revising the institutional definition of general education, reflects the goal of an undergraduate education of excellence. This process has been defined by the Academic Senate in Certification 11, 2003 04, for revision of the undergraduate degree. Next May a committee will present a final draft concerning these issues.

Chapter 12 summarizes the ways in which the Campus meets the mission of serving the academic community and society. During the past academic year the Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies (DECEP, for its Spanish acronym) offered 397 courses, for credit and non credit courses for a total 10,674 enrollments. In general, participants say they are satisfied with DECEP's courses and administrative services. In the coming year DECEPS will be relocated to the new Plaza Universitaria building.

The Río Piedras Campus has numerous alliances and collaborative agreements with universities and professional associations, as well as with non-profit community agencies, among others. Some of these are projects that embody the Campus mission related to community service. Presently, about fifteen projects are coordinated by nine colleges and schools. One such case is the Río Piedras Development Center under the Chancellor's Office, a multidisciplinary effort aimed at the rehabilitation of the Río Piedras urban area.

In recent years financial limitations have urged the Campus to develop alternative strategies for increasing its revenues. Since 1999 faculty productivity has almost doubled external funds for research and service. In 2003, the Chancellor and the Alumni/ae Office developed an Annual Giving Campaign. Last August the Chancellor required deans and directors to set up an annual fund-raising project as one of their priorities.

Chapter 13 summarizes the learning assessment activities implemented over the last decade by Campus, colleges and schools. Several programs have learning assessment plans that have contributed to their curriculum revisions and improvements for assessment of student learning. The College of Education has created a Center for Authentic Assessment.

For its part, the Center for Academic Excellence has trained Campus faculty members in assessment strategies has promoted both a culture of assessment and a community of learning. In addition, a Learning Assessment Plan was prepared in 2004 it will be submitted for approval to the Academic Senate during present semester. In general, the assessment of learning outcomes through direct and indirect measures shows that majority of students is highly satisfied with the education they receive and is performing successfully in licensing exams and academic work.