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Supplemental Information Report to Middle States Commission on Higher Education

University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez
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Introduction

The University of Puerto Rico, founded in 1903, is a state supported university system reorganized by Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966, as amended. UPR's mission is to serve the people of Puerto Rico and contribute to the development and enjoyment of the fundamental, ethical, and aesthetic values of the Puerto Rican culture, and it is committed to the ideals of a democratic society. To advance its mission, the University strives to provide high quality education and foster the creation of knowledge in the arts, sciences, and technology.

Along this line, and to acknowledge the particulars of our faculty and students, the mission of the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM) is to provide excellent service to Puerto Rico and to the world by:

- Forming educated, cultivated, capable, critical thinking citizens professionally prepared in the fields of Agricultural Sciences, Engineering, Arts, Sciences, and Business Administration so they may contribute to the educational, cultural, social, technological, and economic development of society.
- Performing creative work, research, and service to meet society's needs and make the results of these activities available.

We provide our students with the needed skills and sensitivity to effectively resolve problems and to exemplify the values and attitudes that should prevail in a democratic society that treasures and respects diversity.

Overview

The University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM), founded in 1911, has been, since its establishment, distinctive in a number of essential ways which has made it a key institution in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

First, it was established "as a land-grant institution committed to teach agriculture, military tactics, and the mechanic arts, as well as classical studies so that members of the working classes could obtain a liberal, practical education."

A second distinctive aspect of UPRM has been its commitment, unique in Puerto Rico and in the Caribbean, to a combination of high quality programs in Agricultural Sciences,

Engineering, Arts and Sciences, and Business Administration. UPRM has effectively expanded its programs to include a teacher preparation program that graduates students who consistently obtain the highest scores in the teacher certification program in Puerto Rico.

A third distinctive characteristic is the consistent quality of its students and graduates. Highly selective student admissions can be credited to improvements in institutional value, which presents superior expectations by stakeholders of the faculty both in teaching and in scholarship. UPRM has become a top Engineering school with Hispanic graduates, and it ranks third in the number of Bachelor's degrees in Engineering awarded to women in the United States. Every year, approximately one hundred companies participate in the fall Job Fair, which recruits hundreds of students for permanent positions and internships in Puerto Rico and the US. Through its MARC, Sloan, and Howard Hughes programs, more than fifty undergraduate science students have been accepted to, and completed Ph.D. programs in Science, at top universities in the continental U.S.A., such as Yale, Harvard, Michigan, Stanford, and MIT.

Context

To accomplish its mission, during the First Semester of the 2012-2013 academic year, UPRM offered 96 academic programs attended by 11,984 students (more than 20% of the UPR system student population) in the fields of agricultural Sciences, Engineering, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, Arts, and Business Administration. About 92.2% of the students are enrolled in undergraduate programs. During the 2012-2013 academic year, the UPRM institutional budget was \$141,937,777 (about 15% of the total UPR budget); whereas, for the coming 2013-2014 academic year, the total approved recurrent budget is \$145,966,062 (about 14.1% of the total UPR budget). The increase of \$77.1 million in the total UPR system budget shows the commitment of the Puerto Rican government to our University, the importance given to higher public education in Puerto Rico, and the relevance of the Institution to meet the country's developmental challenges.

The 96 programs offered at UPRM consist of 53 Bachelor's degrees, 38 Master's degrees, and 5 doctoral degrees. The College of Business Administration offers 7 Bachelor's degrees and 4 Master's degrees. The College of Arts and Sciences offers 27 Bachelor's degrees, 12 Master's degrees, and 2 doctoral degrees. The College of Agricultural Sciences offers 12 Bachelor's degrees and 9 Master's degrees. The College of Engineering offers 7 Bachelor's degrees, 13 Master's degrees, and 3 doctoral degrees. All six of the Bachelor's degree programs in Engineering are accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). The offerings in Engineering and Agricultural Sciences distinguish our institution from others in the system since it is the only campus that confers degrees in those areas. In addition, UPRM offers a Teacher Preparation Program accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The UPR Mayagüez

Campus was first accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) in 1946. For the past sixty-seven years, our accreditation has been recurrently reaffirmed, in many instances with commendations recognizing the excellence that has distinguished our institution during its over 100 years of existence, with the brief exception of probation in 2011.

During the last academic year (2012-2013), UPRM conferred 1,901 degrees (51.6% to women); 1,698 undergraduate and 203 graduate, reflecting a slight decrease of 4.75% from the total degrees conferred in 2012, (refer to Table 1).

Table 1. Degrees Conferred During the Last Five Academic Years

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Undergraduate	1513	1564	1431	1800	1698
Graduate	206	250	160	196	203
Total	1719	1814	1591	1996	1901

Motivation of this Report

On June 24, 2013 the UPRM Chancellor received a letter from Dr. Tito Guerrero, III, MSCHE Vice President. The letter requested that a Supplemental Information Report be prepared by the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez that “addresses the impact on institutional leadership of the recent changes in governance and administration, the investigation by the National Science Foundation's Office of the Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and actions planned or taken by the University to ensure ongoing compliance with Standards 4, 5, and 6”. The letter also requested that the report be received by the Commission no later than August 1, 2013.

UPRM considers that the concept of governance mainly relates to the internal structure, organization, and management of the institution. In particular, the organization of UPR’s governance, at the system level, consists of a Governing Board, the UPR President, and the UPR University Board. At the campus level, it comprises the UPRM Chancellor, institutional deans, deans of colleges, the UPRM Administrative Board, the Academic Senate, and department chairs. In addition, students have their own Student Council and representation on all the institutional boards.

This document focuses on the impact of institutional leadership within the recent changes in governance and administration, specifically Standard 4: Leadership and Governance, Standard 5: Administration and Standard 6: Integrity and it was prepared at the request of the Chancellor’s Office. Input and opinions of the current Deans of the Academic Colleges and the Dean of Academic Affairs regarding this issue were requested. In addition to general issues related to the Standards of Excellence 4, 5, and 6, this report openly and honestly addresses the Commission's policy on "Political Intervention in Education."

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

Changes in the UPR Law

On April 29, 2013, the Government of Puerto Rico amended Article 3 of Act No. 1 of January 20, 1966, known as "University of Puerto Rico Act", for the purpose of replacing the Board of Trustees of the University of Puerto Rico with a new Governing Board of the University of Puerto Rico". The rationale and motivation given by the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico to approve these changes in the UPR law are outlined in the following paragraphs.

For more than one hundred years, UPR has provided thousands of Puerto Ricans with access to excellent postsecondary education and has served as the principal research center of Puerto Rico. UPR has been, and is, an invaluable instrument for the development of intellectual wealth and for the diffusion and enrichment of values of the Puerto Rican people. The Puerto Rican legislature has a commitment to the Puerto Rican people to periodically reexamine governmental institutions and ensure that they comply with their public duties. The Constitution of Puerto Rico, in Article III, Section 16, authorizes the Legislative Assembly to "create, consolidate or reorganize executive departments and to define its functions." Thus, the Legislative Assembly has the power to reconfigure and structure all agencies of the Puerto Rican Government that are responsible for managing public resources and providing services to all citizens. The way in which each agency, administration, or public corporation is configured, in terms of its functions and operations, is crucial to the success or failure of the public policies that initially justified its creation.

The University of Puerto Rico has been, and is, key to the social transformation that the Puerto Rican Government wants to carry out to improve the public education system and the quality of life across the Island. As established in Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966, the objectives of the University of Puerto Rico are to:

- spread and increase knowledge through the development of the arts and sciences;
- foster the love of knowledge to support freedom;
- promote the development and enjoyment of democratic and cultural values;
- ensure the full training of students to serve the Puerto Rican community; and
- develop the intellectual wealth of our people.

Without a doubt, in the exercise of its duties and responsibilities, the decisions and the management style of the governing body of UPR are essential for making all university projects possible, and they define the success or failure of the Institution in reaching its wide-ranging objectives. When the session of the newly elected Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico was convened in January 2013, they exercised their prerogatives to evaluate the leadership and governance structures at UPR. They concluded that a change in the composition and profile of the members of the Board of Trustees would best suit the stability, direction, and administrative strength needed to forward the mission of the

University. Consequently, the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico exercised its constitutional prerogative and authority and reorganized the Board of Trustees of UPR so that the Institution might be able to fully reach its mission and objectives. In this reorganization, the Legislative Assembly ensured that the new Governing Board of the University had the agility, talents, abundance of backgrounds, and amplitude of knowledge to ensure the promotion of policies, plans, and guidelines of interest for the Institution and Puerto Rico. To accomplish this task, the Legislative Assembly of PR decided:

- First, to reduce the size of the Governing Board back to 13 members, for it to recover its functionality and agility. The decision to increase the Board to 17 members, taken more than two years ago, has no known justification, and has not proven to be in the best interest of the University.
- Second, by reducing the size of the Board, the participation and influence of the faculty and students increased proportionately to four of thirteen as compared to three of seventeen in the former composition.
- Third, to include the Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Education as a member, to ensure proper synergy between the public school system and the public University system. This cooperation is an issue of high priority for Puerto Rico and of great significance in the public policy, which is focused on generating a true educational culture from pre-kindergarten instruction through the college level for Puerto Rico.
- Fourth, given the recent challenges at UPR, to emphasize the responsibility of the new Board in ensuring the fulfillment of all requirements made by accreditation agencies of recognized academic value, including both institutional and professional accreditations, as well as to be in full compliance with all the regulations of agencies providing funding and sponsoring research.
- Fifth, to establish that, although the Board represents the public interest of the University, the public interest is not necessarily related to interests of political parties. Consequently, the main role of the UPR Governing Board is to protect the University from political interventions as well as any anti-intellectual trends, which may manifest themselves within the community, which are prejudicial to the academic and public mission of UPR.
- Sixth, mandate that it is the responsibility of the Governing Board to generate a culture of philanthropy in favor of the University; and
- Seventh, to establish that it is the duty of UPR to exist as a valuable scientific and cultural link between Puerto Rico and the world.

The intention of Law 13 of April 30, 2013 is to efficiently initiate efforts in reclaiming the interests of UPR, so that the Institution may possess the necessary conditions to advance teaching and research and continue offering its services for the benefit of society. In addition, this law addresses other demands voiced by the academic community, such as the restoration of the 9.6% assignment in the University budget formula, the return of the lands that were taken from its experimental agricultural stations, and the elimination of the \$800.00 stabilization fee per academic year that had been imposed on students, regardless of the number of credits taken.

Conclusions

The changes made to the UPR Law by the Legislative Assembly, in the exercise of its duties and responsibilities as defined by the Constitution of Puerto Rico, have not significantly affected the governance structures of the UPRM, and consequently, UPRM continues to have all the characteristics of excellence of a MSCHE accredited institution:

1. UPRM has a well-defined system of collegial governance, including well known policies that describe the governance responsibilities of administration and faculty.
2. UPRM continues to have the same governing documents, by-laws, and certifications that
 - a. Describe its governance structure and promote collegial governance.
 - b. Assign authority and accountability for policy development and decision making.
 - c. Define the selection process for governing body members.
3. UPRM has not changed student participation in any of its governing bodies; consequently, students continue to have appropriate opportunities for providing input regarding decisions that affect them.
4. The new UPR Governing Board is capable of reflecting constituent and public interest and has an appropriate size to fulfill all its responsibilities. Its members have adequate expertise to guarantee that the body's fiduciary responsibilities can be fulfilled.

Standard 5: Administration

On April 29, 2013, the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico decided to substitute the complete 17 member Board of Trustees for a new 13 member Governing Board. The following day, the former UPRM Chancellor, Dr. Jorge Rivera-Santos, presented his resignation effective May 1, 2013. On May 2, 2013, the new UPR Governing Board elected Dr. Jorge Sánchez as Chair, and Dr. Carmen Ana Miranda-Rivera as Secretary. During the same meeting, the Board also appointed Dr. José A. Lasalde-Dominicci as UPR Interim President. In a May 13, 2013 extraordinary meeting, the Governing Board appointed Dr. Andrés Calderón-Colón as UPRM Interim Chancellor.

At UPRM there are seven deans: the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Students, the Dean of Administration, the Dean of the School of Engineering, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of Agricultural Sciences, and the Dean of Business Administration. After the change of the UPRM Chancellor, two of the seven deans continued in their positions but almost all of the academic Department Chairs have remained in their administrative positions. The continuity in these positions has guaranteed that day to day operations and all academic activities continue without interruption or disruptions. Moreover, the UPR system of governance continues to define clearly the roles of UPR constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The **UPR governance structure has been kept intact** (see attachment 1) and it continues to include an active governing body with the autonomy to assure institutional integrity and fulfill its responsibilities of policy, and now, to possess a clear mandate of resource development to foster the mission of the UPR system.

Despite these changes in the top leadership of UPRM, continuity and stability of institutional policies, particularly in times of governmental transitions, are assured by the adherence and commitment of new administrators to the UPRM Strategic Plan within the context of The University of Puerto Rico Ten Challenges 2006-2016: an Agenda for Planning. Toward that end, on November 2010, the UPRM Administrative Board reaffirmed the importance of strategic planning for the continuity and stability of our Institution, and decided to start the review process for the Strategic Plan. This revision process was envisioned as a comprehensive institutional effort to promote the participation of the university community, and assure an alignment between the administration's priorities and those of the constituents. The strategic planning cycle started in December 2010 and was designed to be completed in three phases: Phase I. Development of Institutional Goals; Phase II. Development of Indicators of Institutional Performance; and Phase III. Operationalization of these goals. Phases I and II were completed as scheduled and, on December 15, 2011, the UPRM Administrative Board

approved the new Strategic Plan. This new Strategic Plan clearly identifies UPRM's priorities for the next 10 years, and provides guidance to current and future administrators for ensuring that UPRM complies fully with its mission and consistently moves toward achieving its vision. The new Strategic Plan is simple and achievable; it is a tool and an essential guide for resource allocation and decision making. The Strategic Plan includes key institutional metrics to assess institutional effectiveness and provide administrators with the information needed to make important decisions that ensure continuity and stability in the strategies, activities, and resource allocations at UPRM.

The University of Puerto Rico charter continues to define the institution's governing structure, roles, and responsibilities in the development of policies and decision-making processes. The management of the institution, both at the system and unit levels, is regulated by applicable laws, University rules and regulations, complimentary bylaws, resolutions by the Governing Board, President's and Chancellors' directives, and rules and regulations adopted by each governing body within their roles and responsibilities.

The President, who is appointed by and responds to the Governing Board, has the responsibility of leading, coordinating, and supervising the academic, administrative, and financial enterprise of the University. Each unit is headed by a chancellor, appointed by the Governing Board upon the President's recommendation, possessing at the campus level responsibilities similar to those exercised by the President at the system level.

Chancellors and key campus leaders are crucial for supporting the coherence and coordination of the University as a system. Chancellors, deans, department and office directors, and other campus leaders continue to participate actively in policy development and decision-making at the system level:

1. Chancellors are members of the University Board.
2. The President meets with chancellors as frequently as needed, and not less than twice a month.
3. The UPR Vice Presidents meet monthly or as frequently as necessary with academic deans, professional accreditation committees, Institutional Research and Planning director, institutional accreditation task force groups, and each unit's institutional accreditation coordinators. Also, they meet at least twice a semester with registrars, directors of the Divisions of Continuing Education and Professional Studies, as well as other committees, groups, university community members, and stakeholders.

At the UPRM level, the campus leadership also participates actively in policy development and decision making.

1. The Chancellor has regular meetings with the staff (deans and the directors of the Budget Office and Center for Research and Development)
2. The Chancellor has individual meetings with members of the staff, as needed.

3. The Chancellor and the Administrative Board meet twice a month.
4. The Academic Senate meets at least once a month, or as often as needed to discuss academic related issues.
5. The Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Students, the Dean of Administration, and the Deans of the four academic Colleges hold periodic meetings with their own staffs.

It is through these series of meetings that the academic leadership of UPRM coordinates and supervises the academic, administrative, and financial issues of the campus, in coherence and coordination with the University as a system. It is also through these meetings that the peculiarities of the UPRM culture are incorporated and consolidated to present a unique position within the larger vision.

In addition, throughout the years, both UPR regulations and UPRM's academic values have continuously provided an environment for teaching and learning that promotes the full exposure to information and ideas, the right to question or dissent, and opportunities to study, research, and debate, free of political pressure. Most academic activities are regulated through the principle of democracy where an elected official represents a group of its peers.

It is relevant to point out that UPRM continues to meet, without delay, the various processes and institutional tasks without adversely affecting any component of the university community or the services offered. The UPRM's administrative structure and services have continued to facilitate learning and research activities, promote quality improvement, and support the UPRM's organization and governance. In particular, continuity and stability has been accomplished in the following activities and processes recently completed or underway:

- Research projects with NASA, NIH and Puerto Rico Education Council (CEPR) and other internally and externally funded research projects 2013-14.
- Admission process of new students 2013-14
- Completion of the second semester 2012-13
- Commencement exercises of 2013 (June 14)
- Academic summer session 2013
- Participation of students in internships and COOP programs during summer 2013
- Approval of the calendar for the academic year 2013-14
- Registration process for the first semester 2013-14
- Orientation to 2013-14 new students
- Assessment and placement tests for new students 2013-14
- Recruitment activities of teaching and non-teaching staff
- Elections to guarantee the continued operation of the General Student Council for the academic year 2013-14
- Follow up of curricular changes in academic programs

- Follow up of current accreditation processes

Conclusions

UPRM is in complete compliance with the fundamental elements of administration as required by MSCHE of all accredited institutions:

- UPRM continues having a Chancellor, Dr. Andrés Calderón-Colón, whose primary responsibility is to lead the institution towards the achievement of its goals and administrate the institution responsibly.
- The UPRM Chancellor has the combination of academic background, professional training, and integrity needed to lead UPRM and contribute to its mission (see attachment 2 - curriculum vitae). Dr. Calderón is a full professor in the College of Engineering with 41 years of service in the institution. He has the support of the overwhelming majority of university community and has administrative experience; he was Associate Dean of the College of Engineering and an Academic Senator for several years. We believe that his appointment has been received with hope and optimism and, with the support of all sectors of the UPRM community; he will help to strengthen the Mayagüez campus and advance our academic agenda.
- UPRM's current administrative leaders, Dr. Jaime Seguel, Dean of Academic Affairs; Prof. Lucas Avilés, Dean of Administration; Prof. Marta Colón, Dean of Students; Dr. Walter Silva-Araya, Director of Research and Development Center; Dr. Gladys González, Dean of Agriculture Sciences; Dr. Agustín Rullán, Dean of Engineering; Dr. Manuel Valdés, Dean of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Mauricio Vásquez, Dean of Business Administration, without a doubt have the appropriate skills, degrees and training to carry out their responsibilities and functions (see attachment 2 - curriculum vitae). Moreover, they continue with qualified staff that are appropriately skilled for the goals, type, size, and complexity of our institution, and possess knowledge and access to the clear documentation of the lines of organization and authority. The new deans are committed to fostering the periodic assessment of the effectiveness of administrative structures and services of their colleges and the institution.

Standard 6: Integrity

The inquiry as to how the recent changes in leadership, governance, and administration in the UPR system and UPRM affect the latter's compliance with MSCHE's standard of integrity can be given both a shorter and a longer answer. The shorter answer is that given the enabling law of UPR, the nature of its regulations and procedures, the existence and inviolable nature of faculty tenure, the long-established custom of a bottom-up decision-making regarding academic decisions, in addition to the traditional of our institution, the strictness of the laws governing the dismissal of governmental employees, both docent and non-docent, and the feisty independent nature of UPRM faculty and the Academic Senate, the institution's integrity is not affected adversely. A longer answer can be developed by elaborating on these points in relationship to MSCHE's stated policies.

MSCHE's policy on "Political Intervention in Education" states that:

Direct intervention by elected or appointed officials, political parties, or pressure groups in the selection of faculty, the determination of curricula, textbooks, course content, or in admission or retention policies, injects factors which are often inimical to the fulfillment of an institution's mission (emphasis added).

Each of the topics underlined above may be considered individually.

- Selection of Faculty - Although faculty appointments are formalized at the level of the Chancellor and the determination of tenure lines is the prerogative of the Chancellor and the Deans, the interviewing and selection of prospective faculty are done primarily at the departmental level; a change of the Chancellor and/or the Deans does not fundamentally affect the integrity of faculty appointments.
- Determination of Curricula and Course Content - The determination of curricula and course content is a bottom-up process established by regulation. Changes are initiated at the departmental level, then they are considered and must be authorized by the curriculum committee of the specific college of the department and by the college's faculty at large, and finally, by the Academic Senate, whose members mostly consists of faculty freely elected by faculty (section 21.4.4 of the *UPR General Bylaws* specifies the number of elected members must be at least twice the amount of the ex-officio members). In fact, the procedure to elect members of the Academic Senate is specified in detail in the *UPR General Bylaws* to guarantee due process, fairness, and ample faculty participation, and to avoid possible intervention or interference from the administration (sections 21.1-21.4.4; section 21.8.2; and

sections 21.8.2-21.11). The Academic Senate, according to Article 11 of the enabling law of the university (18 L.P.R.A. § 610), is the official forum of the academic community. Among its prerogatives are the determination of the general orientation of the different curricula of the campus and the establishment of the general norms for admission, tenure, promotion, and leaves, as well as the general requirements for the advancement and graduation of students. As a result, the integrity of the determination of curricula and course content is not fundamentally affected by changes in the Chancellor and/or Deans.

- Textbooks - Choice of textbooks is primarily an individual faculty member decision, or, when a course is a departmental wide course, a decision made by a group of faculty members or the whole department. Thus, textbook selection is not affected by changes in the Chancellor or Deans.
- Tenure/Selection of Faculty part 2 - Tenure is ultimately granted by the Administrative Board, comprising the chancellor, deans, academic senators, and students, in accordance with established policies in a bottom-up procedure beginning at the department level and passing through the respective college's personnel committee. Only then does the Administrative Board consider the case. The make-up of and procedures followed by personnel committees is specified in the *UPR General Bylaws* so as to involve ample faculty participation, foster due process and fairness, and avoid undue interference from administrators. Moreover, the Academic Senate, although not directly involved in individual tenure decisions, has, as indicated above, a significant role in determining the evaluation criteria for faculty and the norms for tenure. The tenure process has not been affected by the change of upper level administrators and thus, its integrity has not been compromised.
- Admission or retention policy - As stated above, among the Academic Senate's responsibilities is the establishment of general norms governing admission policy and the general criteria for the advancement and graduation of students. The latter obviously affects retention policy. Thus, although admission and retention policies are generally determined by the administration, the faculty, via the Academic Senate, plays a part in the development of such policies, consequently helping to safeguard their integrity. Therefore, the few personnel changes that have taken place in the upper levels of the administrative structure have not had an impact in these areas.

Another concern mentioned in MSCHE's policy on "Political Intervention in Education" is that political intervention can create "pressures against dissent on important policy issues." The spiritedness and independence of the faculty and of the Academic Senate, the elected faculty representation on the Administrative Board, the University Board, and the Governing Board, impedes this from occurring. Recent events provide clear evidence of this. During 2013, each of the Colleges at UPRM, followed by the Academic Senate of UPRM, passed resolutions demanding the removal of both the Chancellor of UPRM and the President of UPR. Eight other campuses of the UPR system passed similar resolutions. Political changes at the state level in Puerto Rico, and the changes of top UPR and UPRM administrators that eventually follows such political changes due to modifications in the composition of the Governing Board, does not affect the independence of the faculty, which is based on a long tradition in Puerto Rico of outspokenness and freedom of university faculty. In fact, some have ventured to say that the timing of the recent changes of governance at UPR was due, at least in part, to the government's attempt to comply with the grassroots demands for change emanating from the campuses. Likewise, the climate of academic inquiry and of academic and intellectual freedom (*Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, Fundamental Element 5) is ingrained in the system and forms part of its regulations (see *UPR General Bylaws*, sections 11.1, 11.2 and 11.3).

Conclusion

All of the fundamental and optional elements of integrity listed in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* can be examined one by one in order to demonstrate that they have not been fundamentally affected by recent changes in leadership and governance. However, that would be considered an excessive and repetitive exercise to provide more and more proof for what has already been amply illustrated: that recent changes in leadership, governance, and administration in the UPR system and UPRM have not and will not affect the latter's compliance with MSCHE's standard of integrity. Perhaps a quote from the *2005 Self-Study Report* best summarizes the situation:

[In spite of changes in top level administration] ... students receive a high caliber education, they are granted their degrees, curricula are modified and improved, grants are obtained, research is carried out, graduates are recruited by the best companies in the United States and in Puerto Rico, the institution develops and improves, and the social goods of an institution of higher education are accomplished. The fundamental reason for this, according to the opinion of the task force and of the UPRM-MSCHE Steering Team, is the dedication of the faculty and especially of those who carry out the fundamental work done in committees and in the academic senate, backed up, of course, by dedicated and knowledgeable staff. One member of the steering team has fittingly referred to this as the "permanent

government." ... [T]he dedicated faculty and staff [help] keep the institution on track. (p. 51)

The main point here is that while having the right top administration is important, the rules, regulations, and traditions that govern UPRM, as well as the dedicated faculty and staff, are such that the integrity and excellence of the institution is assured, thus complying with the requirements of MSCHE.

Overall, despite the changes in governance and administration, UPRM complies with standards 4, 5, 6. These standards are very important to our accreditation process and UPRM has ensured compliance, not only for MSCHE but for the day-to-day operations of our institution.