



**Monitoring Report to the
Middle States Commission of Higher Education**

**From
Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico – Ponce Campus**

Prepared by

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**Subject of the Follow-up Report:
Documenting the development and implementation
of a comprehensive institutional strategic plan
and a comprehensive written plan for the assessment
of institutional effectiveness
and student learning at the institutional,
program and course levels**

**Accreditation Evaluation Visit
November, 2003**

2. ISSUES AND TOPICS COVERED

On March 4, 2004 the Commission of Higher Education renewed the accreditation of the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico – Ponce Campus. At the same time, the commission requested a monitoring report to be submitted by October 1, 2005.

The President asked the Accreditation Office under the Vice President for Academic Affairs to request the work plan of the Institutional Assessment and Research Office and the Institutional Research and Planning Office. These offices with the assistance of other members of the university community, have undertaken the task of preparing this monitoring report which will address two main points in accordance with the request of the Commission. These points are:

- I. A comprehensive institutional strategic plan which links long-range planning to the decision-making and budgetary processes.
- II. A comprehensive written plan for the assessment of institutional effectiveness and student learning at the:
 - i. institutional
 - ii. program and
 - iii. course levels.
- III. Appendixes
 - 1 Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP) 2003-2008
 - 2 Evaluation of the Institutional Strategic Plan for the year 2004-2005 and the Operational Plans for the years: 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006
 - 3 Summary of the Most Important Accomplishments of the Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP)

- 4 Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP)
- 5 Schedule of the Activities for the Implementation of the Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP)
- 6 Institutional Assessment Form (Draft)
- 7 Alumni Competencies and Performance Indicators
- 8 Operational Chart for the Center for Data Collection and Support (CDCS)
- 9 Budget for the Implementation of the Institutional Assessment Plan

The next Periodic Review Report is due by June 1, 2009.

COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN WHICH LINKS LONG-RANGE PLANNING TO DECISION MAKING AND BUDGETARY PROCESSES

3. Institutional Context/Update

The Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico (PCUPR) Strategic Plan 2003-2008 was finished in December 2003. The plan was approved by the Board of Trustees Planning and Development Committee on February 2004 and by the PCUPR Board of Trustees on March 2004.

The Strategic Plan¹ (copy is enclosed) established the Mission and Vision of the Institution for the period 2003-2008, and the PCUPR Planning Strategic Model, including how the plan will be implemented and evaluated. The Plan established seven priorities areas:

1. Integration of faith and life
2. Attention to students needs
3. The revision and update of the curricula
4. The human resources both academic and non-academic personnel.
5. The Technological Infrastructure
6. The Physical (buildings, laboratories, etc.) Infrastructure
7. Administration and Finances

Each priority area in the plan includes several goals, objectives and strategies to reach the appropriate and successful results during the 2003-2008 period.

The plan will be monitored by the Institutional Planning Committee (The President, the Vice Presidents, the Executive

¹ See Appendix 1: Institutional Strategic Plan

Directors, the Planning Consultants and the Coordinator of the Institutional Assessment & Research Office).

Each University main division will submit each year an evaluation of the strategic plan of his/her specific area and the corresponding operational plan for the next year. The Institutional Planning Committee will evaluate the results and progress of the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan in each of the units and will make the appropriate recommendations if necessary.

4. Progress To Date

Each Vice President and Executive Director have already submitted the evaluation of the strategic plan of his/her specific area for year 2004-2005, and the operational plans for years 2003-2004, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006² (copy of each of these documents in Spanish is enclosed for your information).

A summary of the most important accomplishments of the Strategic Plan for each established goal is enclosed for your information³.

5. Conclusion

The previous description of the main accomplishments of the Strategic Plan demonstrates that PCUPR has made important progress in the stabilization of the enrollment through a well designed plan for recruitment and relationship marketing, major improvements in the technological infrastructure and a

² See Appendix 2: Evaluation of the Institutional Strategic Plan 2004-2005 and the Operational Plans for the years 2003-2004; 2004-2005; 2005-2006

³ See Appendix 3: Summary of the Most Important Accomplishments of the Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP)

substantial increase in external resources. These improvements and a very well designed plan for finances and budget processes through the appropriate operational plans have provided the University the necessary fiscal stability. It should be pointed out that appropriate planning through the preparation of the operational plans have provided a significant participation of all the main divisions of the Institution in the decision-making and budgetary processes. It is anticipated that this participation with better internal communication and administrative processes will increase during future years.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

3. Institutional Context/Update

In July, 2004, Mrs. Marcelina Vélez de Santiago, President of the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico (PCUPR), named Dr. Juan Quintana, Ph.D., as Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. One of his responsibilities was to develop and implement an Institutional Assessment Plan in coordination with the Institutional Assessment and Research Office. Starting in August, 2004, Professor Gaspar Torres, who is in charge of the Institutional Assessment and Research Office, was changed from part-time to full-time employment in order to dedicate more time to the development of an Institutional Assessment Plan.

From September to November, 2004, a proposal was written up for an Institutional Assessment Plan. This proposal was based on the model *Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education* (2002) by Castelli & Green. In December, 2004, this proposal was presented to the President of the Institution. By January, 2005, the President named an Institutional Assessment Committee whose task was to develop an Institutional Assessment Plan based on the original proposal presented by the Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the Institutional Assessment and Research Office.

4. Progress to date

a) Introduction

The document describing the *Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP)*⁴ of the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico is the product of the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC)⁵ named by the President, during the months of January to August, 2005. This first committee was formed of members representing the different sectors of the university community: faculty, administration, students and non-teaching personnel.

The plan will be implemented over a five year period. At the end of five years, all units or departments of the university should carry out the assessment process in an agile and systematic manner. At the institutional level there should be a formative process of supervision and evaluation of the assessment activities of all units. In addition, the Assessment of the Student Learning Process will be taken into consideration, which includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of the acquisition of abilities and skills relating to the competencies which a graduate of the Institution should attain, according to its graduate profile.

The IAC will evaluate the implementation of the IAP to promote an assessment culture within the university community and implement a model for the institutional assessment plan to verify the quality of the assessment plans of the units or departments. According to the criteria established in the IAP, the IAC will carry out its distinct activities, identify the changes and improvements needed and

⁴ See Appendix 4: Institutional Assessment Plan

⁵ See Appendix 5: Schedule of the Activities for the Implementation of the Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP)

supervise the development of action plans to attend to the findings. The IAC will supervise the progress of the implementation of the action plans and will write up an annual progress report.

b) Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness

The Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico defines assessment as a process to collect, analyze and systematically and continuously utilize quantitative and qualitative information concerning the characteristics of the Institution. Our purpose is to achieve excellence through effectiveness, efficiency and acceptability of the processes and procedures that reflect our mission as a living, academic service community consecrated to the fullest realization of the human person.

The IAP will consider the assessment of the priority development areas considered in the Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP) to aid in the attainment of the institutional goals and, finally, the Institutional Mission and Vision. This will assure the integration of the assessment procedures contained in the IAP and the *Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP)*. The seven areas of priority development during the applicable period of the *Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP)* are:

- Integration of faith and life
- Attending the needs of the student body
- Updating the curriculum
- Human resources
- Technological infrastructure
- Physical infrastructure
- Administration and finances

In addition to the seven areas of priority development, the IAC adds an *Eighth Priority: Assessment of Assessment*. This process is fundamental in the establishment of an assessment culture in the university community. The implementation of the IAP as a mechanism for verifying the quality of the assessment processes of the units will be assessed. Based on the goals and objectives relating to the areas of development, the IAP Form⁶ will be constructed for the purpose of verifying compliance with the objectives outlined in the areas of priority development according to the Mission and Vision of the Institution. The IAP Form will consist of the following components:

- Goals
- Objectives
- Assessment Questions
- Assessment Strategies
- Assessment Instruments
- Schedule
- Indicators of Achievement
- Resources

c) Assessment of Student Learning

The assessment plans of the units or academic departments will take into consideration the Assessment of Student Learning at the institutional, program, and classroom levels. Each unit or department will develop its assessment plan based on the document *Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP)*.

i) Institutional Level

⁶ See Appendix 6: Institutional Assessment Form (Draft)

The Assessment of Student Learning includes the assessment of the effectiveness of the skills and abilities related to the requirements of the following institutional competencies⁷:

- a) Understanding of the religious dimension of the human being and answers that the Catholic Church and the Christian faith offers
- b) Critical and Creative Thinking
- c) Effective communication and collaborative relationships
- d) Flexible criteria and open mindedness
- e) Social responsibility and multicultural sensitivity
- f) Information literacy and technology
- g) Quantitative literacy

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the students at the Institution possess the knowledge, skills and competencies in accordance with the institutional goals and its graduates achieve the appropriate higher education goals. Systematic assessment of student learning is essential to evaluate quality and provide information leading to improvement of the learning processes.

Faculty assessment will be carried out at the level of academic units. For purposes of the IAP, Faculty Assessment is a process performed separately, based on the document *Faculty Evaluation Process*. The fundamental purpose of teaching evaluation is to promote

⁷ See Appendix 7: Alumni Competencies and Performance Indicators

the improvement and growth of professors in all their professional and academic areas.

ii) Program Level

During the month of December, 2003, the Institutional Assessment and Research Office completed its process of validating and checking the new Evaluation Questionnaires for Academic Programs for the following sectors: students, faculty and directors. During the semester January to May 2004 an evaluation study was carried out directed at investigating prevailing conditions in the academic programs of the Institution. This study identifies areas of strengths and needs in academic programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Data collection was carried out using evaluation questionnaires for academic programs by the director, faculty and students. During the months of March and April 2004 the evaluation questionnaires for academic programs were administered to the sectors mentioned. This process involved administration by stratified sampling of the following sectors: directors, faculty and students (in their last two years of study).

Direct and indirect measurements will be used to measure the learning process of students. Some examples of direct measurements of student learning which demonstrate achievement of objectives in academic programs are:

- a) Tests such as pre- and post-tests, standardized tests, among others

- b) Theses and dissertations evaluated internally and externally
- c) Internships based on established objectives
- d) Tests to obtain a license or professional title

Some examples of indirect measurements of student learning which may be considered by the units are:

- a) Surveys to measure student satisfaction
 - b) Surveys of the student body
 - c) Employer surveys
 - d) Job placement statistics
 - e) Interviews with alumni
 - f) Graduation rates
 - g) Retention rates
 - h) Time needed to earn a university degree
 - i) Focus groups
- iii) Course Level

Systematic assessment of student learning is essential to evaluate quality and provide information leading to improvement of the learning processes in the classroom. Since the justification for student learning assessment is to help improve and maintain academic quality, the assessment measurements selected should provide students and the professor with pertinent information, answers to the important questions of the

faculty and useful instruments to evaluate and improve academic quality.

Direct and indirect measurements of the learning process of students in the classroom will be used. Some examples of direct measurements of student learning that show evidence of the achievement of objectives of courses are:

- a) Tests such as pre- and post-tests, standardized tests presentations, tests developed locally, essays, among others (the added value of the pre- and post-tests can be observed).
- b) Specialty courses (including specialty seminars)
- c) Portfolios which continuously measure the learning level for a university degree
- d) Written work of students (essays, reports, . . .)

Some examples of indirect measurements of student learning which may be considered by the units are:

- a) Surveys of student satisfaction
- b) Surveys of the student body
- c) Retention rates
- d) Studies of transfer students
- e) Focus groups

5. Conclusion

The *Institutional Assessment and Research Office* will provide, through institutional assessment and research processes, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the day to day operational processes in the academic and non-academic (student services) areas, working with the seven areas of priority development established in the IAP and in the eighth area *Assessing assessment*. The coordination processes between the custodians and users of data, and the important studies resulting from the formal processes of research, will provide the quantitative and qualitative information necessary for institutional development.

The new *Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC)* will be composed of administrators, faculty, students and personnel from other institutional areas. The IAC will collaborate closely with the Institutional Assessment and Research Office in the implementation and evaluation of the IAP. The Institutional Assessment Committee will be in charge of:

- a) revising the assessment plans of the different units of the Institution
- b) formatively monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the IAP (internally and externally)
- c) supervising all activities of the *Center for Data Collection and Support (CDCS)*⁸

The Institutional Assessment and Research Office, along with the IAC, will rely on a *Center for Data Collection and Support (CDCS)* for purposes of complying with the objectives of the IAP. This center will possess the physical resources necessary to

⁸ See Appendix 8: Operational Chart for the Center for Data Collection and Support (CDCS) & IAC

facilitate the work of the formative implantation and evaluation of the IAP. This center will support the units in the formative development and evaluation of their assessment plans. The CDCS will guide the units in the identification, construction and validation of the necessary instruments for assessing the internal and external environments. This center will have a budget adequate to the fulfillment of the efficient, effective and acceptable implementation of the IAP.⁹

Each unit of the Institution will have an Assessment Committee with representation of some of the following: students, faculty, staff and the director. The first function of the assessment committees will be to design and develop an assessment plan for their units. The assessment committees of the academic units will assess student learning, student development, co-curricular activities and student services. The IAC will review and evaluate the periodic and annual reports submitted by each unit resulting from carrying out the action plans.

The assessment process of student learning will include a time table based on the following components:

- a) Determination of student cohorts
- b) Establish the timetable for each cohort according to the following aspects (enrollment: at the end of a semester, on completion of required courses and on completion of an academic program; graduation; employment; number of years since graduation; among others)
- c) Interpret the results (internal and external assessors)

⁹ See Appendix 9: Budget for the Implementation of the Institutional Assessment Plan

This institutional assessment plan will foment an assessment culture in our university community with emphasis on the strategic planning and budgetary components through development and improvement of assessment strategies and assessment of the following areas:

- Assessment of institutional effectiveness
- Assessment of student learning at the levels of
 - The Institution
 - Programs
 - Classroom