Report to
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students
of
Inter American University of Puerto Rico
Metropolitan Campus
San Juan, Puerto Rico
00919-1293

Prepared following analysis of the School’s
Periodic Review Report

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Metropolitan Campus of Inter American University of Puerto Rico (MC) was reaccredited in 2003 with a commendation on the quality of its self-study report. A progress letter was requested from the IAUPR central administration documenting how central administration issues and concerns have been addressed. That letter was received and accepted by the Commission on November 17, 2004.

The visiting team did not have any recommendations of its own for the campus but endorsed many of the recommendations that MC had set forth for itself in the self-study. The team noted many institutional strengths and particularly commended MC’s “high degree of responsiveness to change.” It is not surprising, therefore, that the PRR reports significant change and that these changes have served to further strengthen and enhance the institution.

The PRR, which resulted from a highly participatory process, is based upon the objectives identified by the institution in the 2003 Campus Self-Study Action Agenda for Institutional Improvement (SSAAII), which captured self-study recommendations and suggestions made by the visiting team. Those objectives are as follows:

a. university community participation in decision making processes;
b. improvement of enrollment management procedures and customer service to students;
c. faculty development;
d. enhancement of student writing, math, and technology skills;
e. monitoring of new program development and evaluation of enrollment in all programs;
f. support to honor students, adult education (AVANCE), and English Trimester programs;
g. information technology literacy for students and faculty;
h. faculty training in institutional and classroom assessment; and
i. improvements in the analysis and use of data that can enhance institutional effectiveness.

j. Academic advising, mission revision, physical facilities, promotion and recruitment, and external funds were also included.

Eight pages of the PRR are taken up by a chart of all of the objectives from the 2003 SSAAII, the actions taken to meet those objectives, the outcomes of those actions, and the challenges that remain in each area. This documents very effectively how the institution has profited from self-study, implemented recommendations, assessed results, and emerged with a new set of opportunities for further planning.

**Standard 1: Mission and Goals**

Since the 2003 visit, MC has developed a new mission statement and submitted that statement for approval to the President and Board of Trustees.
Although a comparison between the old and new statements was not provided in the PRR, one significant change appears to be recognition that MC provides education to an internationally diverse student population. The explosive expansion of distance learning, discussed later, corroborates the increasingly diverse student population. And there is emphasis as well on community service, democratic values, and the Christian ecumenical tradition of the University.

Again, consistent with objectives set forth in the SSAAII and endorsed by the MSA visiting team to enhance university community participation in decision making, the process for development and institutional approval of the new mission statement was highly participatory, including appointment of a Mission and Goals Committee, workshops attended by 275 faculty, administrators, and students, and broad discussion of the draft both with internal and external constituencies.

**Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal**

There are several significant developments in this area. MC has established a Chancellor’s Strategic Council comprised of deans, academic chairpersons, and other key administrative personnel to serve as a liaison with other institutional constituencies and as an advisory board to the planning and budgeting process. Also new is an Institutional Research and External Funds Center, established in 2005, which supports data needs for the planning, budgeting, and decision making processes. In 2006, the Board of Trustees established performance indicators to address goals and objectives of the System Strategic plan.

**Standard 3: Institutional Resources**

While the visiting team did not have any recommendations in this area, it did make several suggestions for enhancing information literacy training for students and faculty. Substantial accomplishments are reported, including transformation of traditional libraries into Information Access Centers; inclusion of audiovisual materials in the online catalog as educational resources available to the campus community; recruitment of two additional librarians, and professional development of all librarians, particularly in the use of electronic resources.

Other enhancements of information literacy training include the fact that students are now required to take a course entitled Information and Computer Literacy as part of their general education requirements, and training is offered to faculty in information technologies. Students and alumni express strong satisfaction with library and information resources and with the ways by which MC has helped them to acquire information technology skills.

Notable changes have occurred in technology, including significant advances in distance learning. In 2007, the University requested and received
permission from the Commission to establish an Off-Campus Cyber and Classroom Center as an additional location. Distance learning has grown incrementally, with four degree programs offered completely online and more than 100 courses offered online. In addition, significant numbers of courses offered in a traditional format incorporate technology, particularly web based materials. Appropriate structures and procedures have been implemented to assure the quality of course offerings and technological support.

The PRR also documents significant enhancements to computing capabilities. Communication is facilitated through email and intranet services. An SSAAII objective of updating computer hardware and software is being met. Digital signage has been implemented through 15 LCD display panels. A wireless network is being completed. Classrooms have been upgraded to include multimedia technology. And technology training has been provided to assure maximum benefits from the new technology.

**Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

Significant changes include appointment of Marilina Wayland as Chancellor in 2004. Chancellor Wayland has worked to enhance communication among the entire campus community, meets frequently with campus constituents, and provides leadership for the Chancellor’s Strategic Council. The LCD screens mentioned above have also enhanced communications as has a new webpage, launched in 2007.

Other governance changes include reorganization of the Academic Senate to correspond with other campus organizational changes, some of which are noted below. The Senate has approved 24 new academic programs and the revision of 14 other programs. Advisory committees have been formed to respond to objectives identified in the SSAAII, again expanding participation in decision making.

**Standard 5: Administration**

In 2006, MC implemented a new organizational structure designed to foster a client-oriented philosophy in all academic and administrative processes; share faculty resources among departments in order promote a multidisciplinary emphasis in the curriculum; differentiate the roles of deans and chairpersons; facilitate decision making; and create a structure to support institutional research and external funds.

As noted above, the Center for Institutional Research and External Funds was established in 2005. The academic structure is now organized into four interdisciplinary faculties.
Professional development initiatives were launched in 2005 under a program entitled “Distinguete.” Workshops foster development of a customer service culture, employee wellness, and enhanced information literacy skills. Among participants, 80% have evaluated the program as satisfactory or excellent. Orientation sessions are provided for new faculty and administrative employees at the beginning of each academic year.

Standard 6: Integrity:

MC uses a variety of formats for dissemination of policies and procedures, including the institutional and campus web pages. The institution indicates that it has a Faculty Handbook, catalogs at the graduate and undergraduate level, and a Student Regulations Handbook. Presumably there are regular reviews and updating of these, although the PRR does not spell out such processes. Initiatives during the past five years have focused on enhancing the quality and content of publications and promotional materials. Consistent with the focus on technology, attention has been given to audiovisual promotional activities and the webpage and producing catalogs in CD format. Consistent with the growth in international students, MC has committed itself to creating materials in English.

Standard 7: Institutional Effectiveness and Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The visiting team report noted that MC had established several objectives for itself in assessment in its self-study: establishing an infrastructure, including an assessment office, to foster assessment efforts, evaluate the General Education program, and develop procedures for the systematic collection and analysis of data, specifically information on student learning; and improving assessment of learning outcomes.

A Campus Assessment Committee, comprised of four faculty and the Dean of Studies, was established in 2004. The Committee has inaugurated a number of activities, including workshops for faculty, and developed an Assessment Implementation Action Plan, which the PRR says is attached as Appendix 7 (more likely Appendix 6). That plan says that for the years 2005-07 the focus was to be on programs (Nursing, Medical Technology, and Social Work) that had assessment plans in place, but that in 2007-08 assessment plans for all academic programs were to be initiated. The PRR says that 14 academic programs have been revised based upon outcomes assessment and that the goal is to implement assessment plans for all academic programs by 2008-09.

MC has appointed a coordinator of the assessment process, who serves as President of the Assessment Committee, although it does not appear as though a full office has emerged. It is not clear how or whether this individual
works with the Center for Institutional Research, which could be expected to be a source of data such as retention figures, etc. that would be useful in assessment.

As might be expected, assessment plans at MC are strongest in those programs that are professionally accredited, Nursing, Medical Technology, and Social Work. MC is using these as models.

Other assessment initiatives include administration of a student satisfaction survey, apparently by the Central Administration. (The wording is “IAUPR surveys three different populations….”). Presumably the results are broken out by campus so that the results reported are for MC, not the institution as a whole. The survey measures satisfaction not only with faculty and academic offerings but with academic support services, registration, and physical facilities.

The PRR indicates that, in instances where satisfaction has been low, steps have been taken to improve service. This institutional improvement is precisely the purpose of institutional assessment.

The PRR mentions that an alumni survey was administered to the class of 2003, but it does not say who administered the survey or whether the instrument is administered on a regular basis.

MC has made significant strides in assessment. Without additional information, it is difficult to determine how well coordinated these efforts are. Alumni surveys can, for example, provide useful information for academic program assessment and review, but it is unclear as to the input that the assessment committee has into the design of this instrument and whether it has access to the results. Participation in the HERI faculty survey, the NSSE survey, and surveys of the first year experience would enable MC to compare itself to other institutions and may well yield valuable insights on student learning as the profile of students becomes increasingly diverse and global. A regular schedule for assessment activities to measure both institutional effectiveness and learning outcomes needs to be established. The PRR notes, for example, that programs have been revised as a result of assessment but fails to note whether the process by which this was accomplished will be undertaken on a regular cycle.

**Standard8: Student Admissions; Standard 9: Student support services**

The Office of Promotion and Recruitment was reorganized in 2005 under the direction of the Chancellor. New goals and marketing strategies were identified as follows:

- To achieve 5000 applications per year
- To increase outreach to high schools to 154 per year
- To update promotional material
- To implement a School Contract Collaborations Project
• To redesign the campus web page
• To highlight campus strengths and advantages
• To provide creative support services to increase access.

Enrollments have remained stable.
A three stage recruitment plan has been developed to outreach to and coordinate services to applicants which includes:
• Coordinating efforts of the Guidance and Counseling Program, Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar, and Market offices.
• Promotion in shopping malls and school fairs with special attention to graduate program.
• Maintain continuous contact with potential students by phone, mail and, and email.

A Ten Step Retention Plan (TFS) including counseling and academic advising have been implemented. The University has used the Noel- Levitz College Student Inventory/ Retention Management System (CSI/RMS) questionnaire to gauge students’ perception of the University. A range of faculty development activities and workshops aimed at strengthening student advisement have been held. Workshops for students on “how to succeed in college” have also been held.

Tutoring services have been expanded to include two full time and two part time technicians who are assisted by 16 to 18 tutors under supervision of faculty members. As a result of a Title V project, student retention has increased by 10% and course failure rates have dropped by 5%. In 2006-07 an Academic Advising and Assessment Pilot Project (PEG/PEM) was implemented in the General Education and Teacher Preparation Programs with the goal of improvising students’ performance. The specific goals of this program are to:
• Develop classroom action research as a way to determine needs of students
• Identify areas that need to be revised in the teacher Education Program
• Identify areas that should be addressed in faculty training
• Develop educational materials including online resources
• Track students success in the Teacher Preparation Program

Student support services for those who prefer to receive their education in English, through The English Trimester/ International Student Support Services Office which is now under the supervision of the Dean of Students, have increased.

An Honors Program Director and professional guidance counselor have been hired. The number of students enrolled the Honors Program has increased from the 58 in 2004 to 184 in 2007.
The Site Visit Report identified four suggested areas for development relating to student services. No recommendations were made. The following initiatives have been implemented to strengthen recruitment, retention, advising and the academic experience of students:

- An automated Academic Advising and Class Scheduling (PSCA) system has been installed to enhance both academic advising and registration.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular campus life have been expanded through increased student organized and operated organizations. These organizations are expected to include community service opportunities as part of their work plans.
- A diverse set of guest speakers visit campus annually to complement formal course learning.

Standard 10: Faculty

The Site Visit Team identified three suggestions for faculty development. No recommendations were made.

Since the last Site Visit there has been a substantial increase in faculty development opportunities each year. Two online journals have been developed: one is transdisciplinary and the other in business administration. A new faculty rank (professor-researcher) has been added to the listing of faculty titles over the last five years, and fifty nine (59) faculty members have been granted released time for research activities. Limited support has also been provided to faculty publications.

A new online faculty evaluation form has been designed for use by distance learning students. Workshops on distance learning, teaching skills and instructional design have been offered. The Center for Information Technology provides training in computer usage and software applications. A faculty lounge has opened which provides a place where intellectual dialogue can take place and the campus guest house has been renovated.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The Metropolitan Campus offers 45 bachelors, 34 masters, 12 doctoral programs, 8 postsecondary technical certificates, 6 associate degrees and 5 professional certificates. Since the Site Visit, 14 academic programs have been revised, 7 have been discontinued, and 24 new programs were created. Four online programs have been developed and 109 online courses have been designed. During 2007-08, 295 online course sections were offered, almost doubling the number offered in 2004-05. Registered students totaled 6,718.
Standard 12: General Education

The General Education Program (PEG) requires completion of 47 credits for a bachelors’ degree and 23 for an associate degree. Since the last Site Visit, increased emphasis had been placed on strengthening students’ communication and math skills. Laboratories have been updated with new computers. Two communication skills laboratories, one English and one Spanish have been integrated into the Language and Writing Center. Tutoring services are available and virtual modules to support reading, writing and math skills have been developed.

A standardized evaluation system for assessment of the General Education Program has been developed in collaboration with the College Board. Standardized tests are utilized in Spanish, English, Computer literacy and mathematics (2). A sixth exam measures core knowledge competencies in: Christian Faith, Philosophy, History, Science and Technology, and Wellness.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

IAUPR has moved forward over the past five years to develop its distance education offerings in line with its Vision 2012. During 2006-07 Forty two (42) online courses were certified by committees comprised of a faculty member from the specific discipline, the program chairperson, a specialist in distance learning and the director of CADDT. Thirty five (35) additional courses are in the process of development. As indicated previously, a total of 6,718 students registered for 295 online sections. All of the PEG (General Education Program) general education courses are available online.

A new director has been appointed for the Higher Education Program for Adults (AVANCE). New promotional materials have been targeted for this population. A Small Business Administration grant was received to support a business development center on campus, faculty research, and students entrepreneurial activities. An Off-Campus Extension Center has been established in Caguas and the School of Education began an early childhood education program in 2006 and is developing a laboratory school. The Psychological Services Clinic, which serves as a practice site for graduate students, provides services to both the university and external communities. Given the dramatic increase in demand for Psychological Services, additional faculty and interns have been assigned to respond to the demand.

Strategic planning efforts, Vision 2012 has attempted to project enrollment targets which includes a rebalancing of graduate and undergraduate enrollment. Annually, priorities are established based on the previous year’s achievement of campus strategic Plan goals and objectives which are linked to budget objectives. The heavy reliance on tuition (97%) creates a narrow margin for error.
As indicated at the outset of this report, the MSA team that visited Metropolitan Campus in 2003 commended the institution for the quality of its self-study, noted the responsiveness of the campus community to change, and endorsed the ambitious agenda for further change that the campus had set for itself as a result of the self-study. Now, five years later, MC has produced a full and exemplary PRR, completed almost all of the changes it committed itself to, and set forth plans that will further strengthen the institution. Particularly worthy of commendation is the expanded involvement and participation of members of the campus community in decision making. As the population served by the campus becomes more global and diverse, largely through distance learning, it is suggested that MC look beyond itself, particularly in the use of national assessment instruments, to measure its effectiveness against that of other institutions to which its students have access.