

May 5, 2017

Dr. Elizabeth H. Sibolski, President
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street,
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear doctor Sibolski:

The University of Puerto Rico at Arecibo (UPRA) submits this Supplemental Information Report in response to MSCHE's request on April 20, 2017 that the Institution document further progress in sustaining ongoing compliance with the Requirement of Affiliation # 3.



This document presents the actions taken and the progress achieved in each of the areas where concerns could be expressed. UPRA responds to the Requirement of Affiliation # 3 by informing how UPRA is working diligently to: 1) provide regular updates to the Department of Education and actions taken to ensure compliance with Title IV requirements; 2) present evidence of respect, civism, leadership, and transparency in the communication process to ensure the continuance of a collegial governance structure; 3) present information on how the Institution is prepared to make up for any missed days and ensure academic rigor and compliance with its mission of imparting a high quality education. Thus, students will be able to cover all scheduled days of classes missed and all their credit hours for the term.

This report demonstrates our commitment with complying with policies and regulations and we expect that the actions taken to achieve our endeavors to comply with MSCHE's Requirement of Affiliation will be well received by the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sylka V. Torres Navas'.

Prof. Sylka V. Torres Navas
Interim Chancellor

gts/jrr

Attachment

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION REPORT TO THE
MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION



FROM

UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO – ARECIBO CAMPUS

Submitted by

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Introduction

Overview

The University of Puerto Rico at Arecibo (UPRA), founded in 1967, is a state supported university system established by Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966, as amended. Since its beginnings UPRA has evolved to become a powerful educational agent for social change, cultural awareness, and technological progress. In its almost fifty years, it has graduated generations of dedicated students who in turn have become leading professionals in their field of expertise. Our mission is to serve our community and to contribute to Puerto Rican culture. We are committed to provide a high quality education and foster the creation of knowledge in the humanities, sciences, and technology.

Our college is the site of many cultural projects. It hosts a variety of academic activities, fairs, theater events, prospective student orientations, themed conferences and workshops, field trips, varsity and intramural sports events, art exhibitions, musical cantatas, competitions, and science-related projects. The number of community, educational or business-related organizations and special interest groups that choose our campus as their meeting place of choice belies the size of our campus and its midsize student enrollment.

Student enrollment for the fall semester of the 2016-2017 academic year is 3923 students. It offers 14 bachelor degrees, three associate degrees, and over 30 articulated transfer programs. Our faculty and students have transcended local demographics and made a noticeable impact in national student exchange programs and cultural, scientific and sports competitions in addition to higher education seminars and conferences.

In April 2016, the University of Puerto Rico at Arecibo successfully passed all 14 accreditation standards. We received five (5) significant accomplishments, seven (7) commendations, and four (4) suggestions, evidence of UPRA's commitment to its mission of providing high quality education to students. Due to Puerto Rico's budgetary cuts, the University of Puerto Rico has long been preparing and adjusting its budget to meet the cuts without affecting the academic offerings or any student services. The Institution has constantly and realistically been assessing its strengths and challenges for the purpose of complying with its standards. Therefore, the Institution ensures that it is in compliance with all the Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation.

Motivation of this Report

On April 20, 2017 MSCHE requested a Supplemental Information Report to evidence compliance with the Requirements of Affiliation, Standards, or Commission Policies. The letter requested for UPRA to address several important key issues regarding UPRA's current situation, calling into question Requirement of Affiliation # 3 that: "The institution is operational, with students actively pursuing its degree programs...". This Supplemental Information Report is in response to MSCHE's request for UPRA to evidence that the Institution has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with this Requirement of Affiliation.

Requirement of Affiliation # 3

The University of Puerto Rico at Arecibo submits this report to show that it is not in violation of Requirement of Affiliation # 3 by presenting the Commission evidence of: 1) compliance with the academic term through the development of an outline for the current term's academic calendar; 2) the impact of the strike on summer class offerings; 3) the students' vote for strike; 4) the transparency of the communication process; and 5) U.S. Department of Education eligibility.

State U.S. Department of Education Eligibility

UPRA is committed to comply with federal regulations as stated by Cert. 34-CFR 5.1, 5.1.2. Therefore, regular updates have been provided to the U.S. Department of Education regarding Title IV funds and our eligibility status.

On April 7, the Institution received a request from the Department of Education requesting information on how many scheduled classes have been missed and how the Institution was administering Title IV funds. The institution sent a letter to Sherry Blackman, Institutional Review Specialists, stating that: 1) every scheduled class day missed will be made up as soon as operations are resumed; 2) The institution's plan includes extending the academic calendar to make up for each affected day in an uninterrupted manner. Therefore, classes may meet on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, if needed, to make up for the days and comply with the 15 hours/ per credit established.

Regarding the administration of Title IV funds, on March 27, 2017, UPRA reached 60% of the payment period according to the calendar for the second semester of the academic year 2016-17. Since April 6, the beginning of the strike, the institution has: 1) worked with the Federal Work Study payroll that covers the working period of March and which payment date is April 17, 2017; 2) the PELL, FSEOG, Direct Loan payroll processes, including the request for funds in G5, had been completed prior to the commencement of the class interruption; and 3) Any other pending payroll, such as Pell grant, will be processed as soon as classes are resumed.

On April 27, 2017, UPRA was notified that it is ineligible for Title IV student aid programs. We serve students from the northern region of Puerto Rico whose income per capita is low; 80% of our students receive financial aid from Title IV funds and other Federal grants. These funds are awarded to UPRA to benefit students with low-income backgrounds, who are usually first-generation college students. Therefore, not having access to said funds would have a detrimental effect. The moment classes resume, UPRA will file for the reinstatement of its eligibility to receive Federal funds. Documents sent to the Department of Education include: [The academic calendar](#), [the revised academic calendar](#), [response on April 6](#), [response on April 7](#), [response on April 18](#), [response on April 25](#).

Governance

[The University of Puerto Rico Law](#) has clearly established a collegial governance structure or shared governance. The university governing bodies promote the higher values of democracy and their decisions are ruled out by the majority of their membership. Each governing body in

its bylaws has established how they conduct their work sessions and how they use parliamentary procedures to facilitate discussions and ensure equal time for members to express their points of view.

Students' Strike

The university community has always been steadfast in making sure that its actions are in accordance with the [General Regulatory Handbook of the University of Puerto Rico](#) and the norms stated by its deliberative bodies. The present administration is committed to continuing the culture of respect and the strengthening of university life principles. Therefore, it wholeheartedly promotes the participation of the university community and the transparency of the processes. Importantly, UPRA's Interim Chancellor possesses the professional characteristics suitable to the mission of our institution.

UPRA conducts its affairs in a transparent and truthful manner. As a result, when the Student Body Council approached the Chancellor and asked for a space to hold an assembly and discuss the recent situation, the Interim Chancellor conceded the space and time for said assembly. However, this process did not affect the academic calendar.

Before and after the general assembly meetings, the Interim Chancellor at UPRA and the members of the Student Council met on several occasions to maintain an open line of communication. A climate of respect and integrity prevailed during those meetings.

On April 5, 2017, all student government bodies from the 11 units of the UPR system called for a general assembly to discuss the UPR system's situation, their plan of action, resolutions and future outcomes. UPRA's students met their 10% minimum quorum, as stated in the [Students Bylaws](#), to vote during the assembly. Attendance was validated through an attendance sheet and student IDs were presented to the Student Body Council Representatives. At around 8:00 p.m. the vote in favor of an indefinite strike was decided, the count being 196 to 145 votes.

On April 6, 2017 the students' strike began at UPRA. Immediately, the Interim Chancellor met with the Student Body Council members to discuss access to the campus for non-teaching staff, students, and faculty who were conducting research, doing maintenance jobs, or other tasks that required immediate attention. The members of the Student Council agreed to grant access to this personnel.

Despite having limited access to campus, UPRA's non-teaching staff and faculty continue their work and have met outside the institution in order to meet deadlines and continue their work with accreditations, federal reports, course programming, admissions, online registration for the fall of 2017-2018, medical services, and online withdrawals, among others.

Furthermore, the Interim Chancellor, the Interim Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Student Affairs, and the Interim Dean of Administrative Affairs held several meetings with their staff to delineate a plan of action to deal with the current events that were unveiling so that student services or academic offerings would not be affected.

As of today, the amount of classes missed from April 6 to May 6 is 24. However, the registration process is running as expected for all UPRA students. Furthermore, the new admissions letters were sent and 789 of the 801 students accepted have begun their matriculation process, with only 12 students yet to confirm their acceptance. The course registration process for these first

year students will take place within the next few weeks.

Moreover, the Intercollegiate Sports event (Justas Interuniversitarias) took place from April 21-24 without interruption and in a climate of respect and collegiality. UPRA's choir has been able to rehearse for their choral presentation called Choral Explosion with guest director Dr. Kevin Fenton from the Florida State University College of Music. This performance will take place on May 11, 12, and 13, 2017.

Transparency of the Communication Process

UPRA has a well-defined system of collegial governance, including policies that describe the governance responsibilities of administration and faculty. Historically the University of Puerto Rico is an institution that caters to students, faculty, and non-teaching staff with diverse ideas, all of which are respected. Although an interruption of services is not the ideal scenario for any administration, the Institution respects all democratic exercises which are part of the university culture. However, the Institution has always been able to maintain the integrity of the instruction and academic credit granted for the term as established by Federal Regulations in Cert. 34-CFR 5.1, 5.1.2.

As outlined in the academic calendars on [page 7](#), the Institution is prepared to comply with its class time. The calendar will be implemented as soon as classes resume. These projected calendars were drafted to guarantee that there will be no danger to the academic term.

The University of Puerto Rico at Arecibo operates under a Non-Confrontational Policy ([Certification 2001-02-29 AS](#)) and a Policy of Peaceful Coexistence ([Certification 38 2015-2016 GB](#)), which is why a Negotiations Committee was established to ensure transparency and an open dialogue in the negotiation and exchange of information process. The Institution selected five faculty and two non-teaching staff members and the Student Body Council selected five students to undertake the negotiation process.

On April 19, 2017, during an extraordinary faculty meeting, a motion was presented to have the Negotiations Committee inform the community of the negotiations process. Attached you will find said progress reports. (See notification http://cartero.upra.edu/images/pdf/eras_reuniones_comite_dialogo_abril_2017.pdf)

Chronology of Events

On April 5, 2017, the Interim Chancellor met with her staff to begin what would be a series of meetings to develop and implement precautionary measures to sustain open communication with students, ensure their security, and to delineate a contingency plan to guarantee the completion of the academic term.

On April 6, 2017, the Interim Chancellor met with the Student Body Council representative to negotiate the entrance of students and faculty who were participating in research and federal and/or local grants. Moreover, practicums, internships, maintenance of the facilities, and Learning Commons Center construction work have continued as scheduled.

Since April 6, 2017, several meetings have taken place between the Interim Dean of Academic Affairs and the Registrar to prepare several possible scenarios to ensure compliance with class

time. The possible scenarios include offering classes Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Moreover, the Interim Chancellor has had several meetings with her staff. These meetings took place on April 6, 12, 24, and 28.

Because the Interim Chancellor has been transparent in her communication with the faculty, students, and non-teaching staff, she has been able to maintain a climate of professionalism and respect among all groups. She has diligently kept her staff informed of the advances in negotiations and outcomes from the meeting with the university president, and her staff has done the same with their personnel. Facebook, [Cartero_El_Lobo](#) (e-mail service at UPRA), UPRA's Webpage, among others, have been used to keep the community informed of developments.

On April 19, 27, and May 2, 2017, the Interim Chancellor had extraordinary meetings with the Academic Senate.

On April 19, 2017 an extraordinary faculty meeting was held during which meeting the chancellor informed the faculty of the latest developments and reports from the President.

On April 28, 2017, the Chancellor met with the non-teaching staff to discuss important matters related to the University's budgetary situation and to discuss the administrative plan to adjust the academic calendar.

Furthermore, on May 2 the Administrative Board and the Academic Senate met to continue their work.

Academic Offering

UPRA's faculty is committed with the mission of imparting quality education that promotes the formation of students as citizens and professionals. Our goal is to ensure the efficient and effective use of the available human, fiscal, and physical resources for the optimal development of the academic offering. The institution is guided by a Strategic Plan: Horizon 2020, which is aligned to the Systemic Strategic Plan. From the Strategic Plan, the institution establishes its annual priorities to guarantee the continuation of academic offering and student services. Therefore, the institution guarantees continuance of academic rigor and ensures the completion of the academic semester and continuation of student services once classes are reinstated.

Outline for the Academic Calendar

UPRA is committed to providing high-quality education to its students. In order to guarantee continuance of the academic term, the Interim Dean of Academic Affairs along with the Registrar prepared several calendars, approved by the Administrative Board, projecting several different scenarios to maintain the integrity of instruction and academic credit granted for the term. The institution ensures that students will be able to cover all scheduled days of classes missed and all their credit hours for the term. Here you will find the links to the original calendar ([Certification 2015-2016-77](#)) and the projected calendars with several scenarios. ([Calendar 1](#), [Calendar 2](#), [Calendar 3](#), [Calendar 4](#), [Calendar 5](#))

From April 6, 2017, limited access was granted to the institution. Despite the limitations, research, internships, practicum, health-related clinics and other community-related projects have been continuously maintained due to the existence of collaborative agreements through contracts

with start and finish dates. On this matter, a formal statement was issued to instruct the faculty about precautionary measures, the access to researchers and other personnel, and remind them of the non-confrontation policy.

http://cartero.upra.edu/images/pdf/carta_personal_docente_abril_2017.pdf

Although the access to the institution has been limited to specific administrative personnel, it is important to note that all courses (face-to-face, online, and hybrid) will be made up as stipulated in the academic calendar to comply with contact hours. Similarly, a uniform mechanism will be designed to record such make-ups.

Furthermore, all Department Chairs prepared the course programming for the 2017-2018 first semester calendar which allowed the registration process to begin on April 24, 2017 as scheduled on the academic calendar. Any problems with registration have been dealt with online. Moreover, key Admissions, Student Aid and Medical Services personnel are working at the municipal library in the town of Hatillo, Puerto Rico.

Impact on Summer Class Offerings

UPRA traditionally offers its summer classes in June only. However, under this new scenario, UPRA is currently working on the schedule to offer its summer classes for July in order to use June as leeway to make up any classes missed.

Administrative Work

All administrative work has continued despite the limited access to the institution. For instance, the Human Resources department has been able to continue its operations of meeting teaching and non-teaching staff needs of certifications for retirement, health insurance, and other related business. Furthermore, the Information Technology Center (CTI) staff has had access to campus to continue their work on upgrading and maintaining the technological equipment. General Services personnel has also been working on the maintenance of the facilities of the institution. Moreover, the personnel from Admissions, Registration, Medical Services, Financial Aid, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research, and the Division of Continuing Education, among others, have been working diligently to meet all deadlines.

Research and other Endeavors

The Interim Chancellor is committed with the university community to foster the continuity of various processes and institutional tasks underway at the institution. Without delay, UPRA continues to work on the various processes and institutional tasks without adversely affecting any of them.

When it was determined that access to the institution might be limited in any way, the Center for Research and Creative Endeavors aided by the academic departments compiled a list of active sensitive research, together with student researchers and the faculty who is in charge of these projects ([link to list 1 of researchers](#) from Physics and Chemistry and [list 2 of researchers](#) from Biology). During this period the list has been used to provide access to researchers (both faculty and students) to their work so that research is not affected. Additionally, previously scheduled field research works such as visits to the Jagüey Laboratory and the Caño Tiburones Natural Reserve continue.

For all sponsored projects, directors and coordinators have adjusted operational calendars to guarantee that project objectives and goals are achieved. Some project workshops and conferences that were already scheduled during this period have been offered/attended off-campus. Our current construction project sponsored by a Title-V grant hasn't been affected and is currently on schedule. Both construction workers and project personnel are allowed access to the institution to guarantee its completion.

Moreover, continuity and stability has been accomplished in the following activities and processes, many of which were completed or are underway:

- Closing of the IPEDS Spring Collection
- Single Audit
- MSCHE Institutional Profile
- Clearinghouse Enrollment Status
- Statistics for accreditation agencies
- Wintergreen Survey
- Open Doors 2017 Survey
- First year student admissions and registration process
- 2017-2018 course enrollment process
- Net Price Calculator 2015-16
- All academic departments practicums and internships

We are committed to the evaluation culture of academic programs and services through its respective professional accreditation agencies, thus, all efforts to ensure compliance with these agencies are being made. Moreover, the limited access to the institution has not affected any research or administrative work which needed to be completed in a timely manner.

Conclusions

UPRA is complying with the Requirement of Affiliation #3 as required by MCHE of all accredited institutions:

- UPRA's Interim chancellor is directing efforts to ensure transparency in the communication process between students, faculty, and non-teaching staff. Students, faculty, and non-teaching staff have been given ample opportunity to provide their input regarding decisions that affect them.
- UPRA is complying with its mission and institutional values of Integrity, civism, respect, excellence, and knowledge.
- UPRA guarantees compliance with its mission by ensuring that once classes are reinstated it will continue with its academic rigor and quality of instruction.
- The Interim Dean of Academic Affairs and the Registrar have assessed the situation and have prepared various calendars to ensure continuance of the academic schedule to comply with instruction and academic credit granted for the term.
- All research and administrative work have continued as scheduled.
- Efforts are being made to ensure compliance with professional accreditation agencies by providing accreditation liaisons all information needed to develop said reports.
- As soon as classes are reinstated, UPRA will ensure compliance with the academic credit granted for the term, and the reinstatement of Title IV funds.

Additional Documents

- [Call for a meeting with non-teaching personnel](#)
- [Letter about UPRA's situation](#)
- [Call for an extraordinary meeting with faculty](#)
- [Implementation of Measures for the Continuity of Federal Projects during the Student Strike](#)
- [Letter to UPRA's Faculty](#)
- [Emails sent to Department Chairs](#)
- Academic Senate
 - [Call for a meeting April 19](#)
 - [Call for a meeting April 27](#)
 - [Call for a meeting May 2](#)
- [Administrative Board call for a meeting](#)
- Presidency
 - [Notification about communication and strategies](#)
 - [Notification to the President about UPRA's strategies and measures](#)
- Negotiations Committee
 - [Letter to the President of the Student Body Council](#)
 - [First meetings with the Committee](#)
 - [Letter of appointment for the committee](#)