



SELF - STUDY DESIGN STATEMENT

SUBMITTED TO MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

MARCH, 2015

INTRODUCTION

The assumption that change is the only constant is attributed to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Indeed, during the last eight years, American University of Puerto Rico (AUPR) has experienced a series of changes that our community prefers to see as opportunities for rethinking the Institution rather than viewing them as stumbling blocks. From that point of view, the self-study process to obtain our re-accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) provides the AUPR community with an opportunity to assess the impact of the changes that have taken place during the past decade and to define the Institution's priorities for the next ten years.

As is common in every higher education institution, the self-study process is not the only major task facing AUPR today. Concurrent with the self-study, we will be developing our new Strategic Plan. Undeniably, the AUPR community is joining multiple efforts to assess how the institution fulfills its goals and objectives and how we will renovate our commitment towards academic and administrative excellence, endorsed by more than 50 years of renowned service to Puerto Rico.

◆ The University

AUPR is a private non-profit institution of higher education. Established as American College in 1963 to serve the needs of students seeking post-secondary diplomas in the business fields, the institution eventually progressed to offer associate, bachelor, and master degrees. It received its initial accreditation by MSCHE in 1982. Another important milestone in our history occurred in 1988, when American College became American University of Puerto Rico.

This institution serves the communities adjacent to its 21-acre main campus in Bayamón and its 7-acre site in Manatí. Most students come from the north central part of Puerto Rico, from San Juan to Arecibo, where 25% of the total island population lives (US Census, 2010). The area served is primarily a suburban/rural mix of low-income communities. These demographics impact our services in several ways, such as free transportation to and from the university.

AUPR is an institution with an accessible and flexible admission process, as well as one with personalized services. As a private, non-profit, non-sectarian, co-educational college committed to excellence, we offer associate and bachelor degrees in Business Administration, Education, Communication, and Criminal Justice. AUPR also offers master degrees in Criminal

Justice and in Education (Curriculum and Instruction). The Institution is licensed to offer professional certificates in Business Administration and in Education.

◆ **Accreditation**

The last MSCHE re-accreditation took place in 2007 and was reaffirmed in 2012 upon positive evaluation of AUPR's five-year Periodic Review Report. Also, subsequent reports have been successfully accepted since 2007.

In addition, AUPR is licensed by the Puerto Rico Council of Education (PRCE). This agency is responsible for regulating the operations of higher education institutions in the Island. At the moment, while we are designing our self-study for MSCHE, we are also working on the PRCE license renewal application, scheduled for submission in May 2015.

◆ **Preliminary outcomes of the self-study process**

The development of this Self-Study Design has already produced the kind of outcomes that are expected from the self-study process. In the early discussion related to Standard 1 (Mission, Goals, and Objectives), the need to re-visit the institutional mission became evident. While it is true, AUPR prepares students based on a humanist and constructivist approach, the wording in our mission statement did not reflect our interest in preparing professionals who could be successful when joining the workforce. It means, also, that AUPR has to listen more carefully to what the community outside the campus needs from new professionals in a changing society and in a globalized world. The resulting statement will not change the primary content of our mission, but it will clarify this point with new wording.

Mission Statement (under review)

AUPR is committed to the development of its students in an integral manner and to their outstanding performance in all aspects of life. To fulfill this commitment, AUPR bases its actions on the philosophical principles of humanism and constructivism and the understanding of education as a personal and individualized process. Students are regarded as the center of all intellectual activity, and knowledge as the product of their reflective and critical thinking process, in order to respond to the challenges and new realities of the 21th. Century. From this perspective, learners are valued and visualized as active participants and knowledge-builders in the learning process, encouraging their successful inception to the workforce in Puerto Rico and abroad. Faculty, in turn, is considered to be facilitators of that knowledge-building and creation process. The university is regarded as a community of active learners.

Our mission is to provide higher education that promotes integral personal development and life-long learning by a humanistic approach, and produces well trained professionals to respond to the needs of a changing society. The following mission principles express our philosophical view.

1. Integrate a liberal and humanistic approach through the application of knowledge and skills to deal with the challenges of the real world beyond the campus, within a flexible, innovative, and high-quality academic environment.
2. Promote critical and leadership skills in respond to the changes and challenges of both the labor market and society.
3. Promote critical, scientific, and creative thinking within the framework of the university.
4. Foster equal opportunities through an open-door admission policy within an environment of intellectual and moral integrity, dignity, and respect.
5. Maintain a responsible and respectful environment within the university and surrounding communities.
6. Value and promote the commitment to community service, continuing education and activities that enhance the quality of life of the university community and the community at large.

The following strategic goals guide our actions:

1. Potential students seeking a college degree should select AUPR because its academic programs are responsive to their professional interests and needs as well as to those of the society in which they will become employed.
2. The curriculum of each program will provide the necessary skills for the academic development of the students, with emphasis on the knowledge and skills labor market and society requires.
3. Our support services will respond to the academic, psychological, economic, social, and cultural needs of our students.
4. Teaching and administrative personnel will provide services of excellence and will perform their duties satisfactory.
5. AUPR will continue servicing our communities as a private and academically rigorous institution that offers higher quality services and a responsive administration.

In the process of elaborating this Self-Study Design, another significant outcome has been the review of AUPR main actions since the last MSCHE re-accreditation visit in 2007. Over the course of the past eight years, AUPR has been very active dealing with the Commission's recommendations, especially those regarding institutional and learning assessment. Appendix A provides information regarding AUPR's development highlights in these areas, among others.

II. NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE SELF-STUDY

AUPR will conduct a collaborative review process using the Basic Comprehensive Model for its self-study. Through the self-study, AUPR will examine how it stands in relation the 14 standards defined by MSCHE as characteristics of excellence. These standards will be grouped into six areas of interest for the Institution. Although each area will examine its relationship with standard 1 (Mission and Goals), this first standard will be considered as an area of interest for itself. These six areas are:

- Institutional Mission and Goals (Standard 1)
- Planning, Resources, and Institutional Renewal (Standards 2 and 3)
- Leadership, Governance, Administration, and Integrity (Standards 4, 5, and 6)
- Student Admissions, Retention, and Support Services (Standards 8 and 9)
- Faculty, Academic Offerings, and Related Affairs (Standards 10, 11, 12 y 13)
- Institutional and Learning Assessment (Standards 7 and 14)

III. INTENDED OUTCOMES OF THE SELF-STUDY

As noted, AUPR is embarking simultaneously on two critical processes: the development of a new strategic development plan and the self-study for reaccreditation. The elaboration of a new strategic plan will be an opportunity to engage in extensive analyses of our external environment threats and opportunities. Both strategic planning and self-study will be strengthened by the ongoing assessment activities that provide academic departments the opportunity to revise their own mission, goals, and objectives in relation to students learning outcomes. It also provides the opportunity to implement assessment techniques to measure institutional outcomes (see Appendix B for a Summary of the AUPR Institutional Assessment Plan). The self-study has the following set of specific goals and objectives:

Goals

1. Engage the entire university community in an integrated review of AUPR's processes and procedures.
2. Produce an analytical document that may serve the institutional community as an ***internal*** mirror to assess our strengths and challenges, and as an action guide to meet our needs during the next years.
3. Provide MSCHE with a record of the self-examination process so that an ***external*** team of evaluation peers may validate the outcomes presented by AUPR.

Objectives

1. Assess the level of congruence between the institutional mission and operational and learning outcomes.
2. Engender serious discussion among its constituency of contemporary issues and challenges facing AUPR now and in the future.
3. Maintain the commitment from the entire university community with AUPR's mission, goals, and objectives.
4. Incorporate findings from assessment studies in academic and administrative planning on a continuous basis.
5. Promote the continuous revision of the academic programs and support services taking into consideration the fulfillment of institutional mission, goals, and objectives.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND STUDY GROUPS

To develop a useful way to reach the self-study goals and objectives, this process is organized into five phases from 2015 to 2017, as seen in the schedule included in Appendix C. In the fall of 2014, dialogs about the self-study process took place among the three officers of the highest rank at AUPR: the President, Juan Carlos Nazario; the Vice-president of Academic and Students Affairs, José A. Ramírez; and the Vice-president of Administrative and Financial Affairs, Magda Cancel. Dr. Ramírez attended the Self-Study Institute in November 2014 in Philadelphia and received training and orientation on MSCHE's requisites and expectations.

The MSCHE publication of 2012, *Self-Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report*, establishes that “a broad cross-section of the campus community is expected to participate in the self-study process at each stage” (p. 4). In AUPR, the self-study itself contemplates ample participation of all members of the university community, including department heads, administrative employees, faculty and students. To that effect, our President designated Dr. Ramírez as chair of the process, and invited a group of members of the university community to join the Steering Committee and the study groups. These were the first steps in our self-study process **Phase 1**.

The Steering Committee will provide leadership to the self-study process and will be responsible for the evaluation of the 14 standards included in *Characteristics of Excellence* (MSCHE, 2006). Specific responsibilities of this committee include:

1. Establish a timetable for the major tasks to be performed
2. Define the charges to each study group
3. Create the self-study design
4. Provide feedback from the ensuing study groups reports
5. Clarify self-study objectives and facilitate communication between study groups and institutional units.
6. Write and edit the final self-study report.

The Steering Committee will also serve as the group analyzing the first standard [Mission and Goals]. This team consists of the leader of each study group and other AUPR members who will provide their experience, skills, and knowledge to achieve the objectives of the self-study. The Steering Committee members, the positions they hold, and the standard they are responsible for, is depicted in the following table:

Steering Committee	
Name and Position	Standards
José A. Ramírez - Figueroa, <i>Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs</i> <i>Chair of Steering Committee (Group A)</i> Mayra Salvá, <i>Professor</i> Miguel Santini, <i>Professor</i> Zahíra García, <i>Academic Advisor and Professor</i> Jaime González, <i>Vice President of Development and Public Relations</i>	1. Mission, Goals, and Objectives

Magda Cancel - Pérez*, <i>Vice President of Administrative and Financial Affairs</i> <i>Coordinator of Study Group B</i>	2. Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal 3. Institutional Resources
Milagros Rivera*, <i>Director, Manatí site</i> <i>Coordinator of Study Group C</i>	4. Leadership and Governance 5. Administration 6. Integrity
Dirza Alméstica*, <i>Director, Library System</i> <i>Coordinator of Study Group D</i>	8. Student Admissions 9. Student Support Services
María A. Rodríguez-Paz*, <i>Registrar</i> <i>Coordinator of Study Group E</i>	10. Institutional Assessment 11. Educational Offerings 12. General Education 13. Related Educational Activities
Bolívar Ramírez III Carlo, <i>Dean of Faculty</i> <i>Coordinator of Study Group F</i> Carmen T. Landrón*, <i>Assistant to Dean of Faculty</i> <i>Co-coordinator of Study Group F</i>	7. Institutional Assessment 14. Student Learning Assessment

¹

Study groups will range in size and will include faculty, staff, students, and administration employees and may invite some external members from diverse fields. They will conduct the research and collect the data needed to evaluate AUPR's fulfillment of each standard. With the collected data, each study group will prepare a report of up to 20 pages on the evaluation of the corresponding standard (see Appendix D for a description of reports editorial style and format).

During the initial phases of the self-study process, orientation and work meetings have taken place. The result of these collaborative sessions is this Self-Study Design, approved at a general assembly with the participation of different representatives of all the university community. The document will thus be submitted to our MSCHE's liaison, Dr. Tito Guerrero, for discussion and final approval. This is the end of Phase 1.

Phase 2 includes the entire research process by the study groups, supported by the Steering Committee. Each study group will use several research strategies to collect useful data to respond to their charge questions. If any finding is detected, the group must present recommendations to address it as soon as possible. The idea is that the self-study must be an action-driven process.

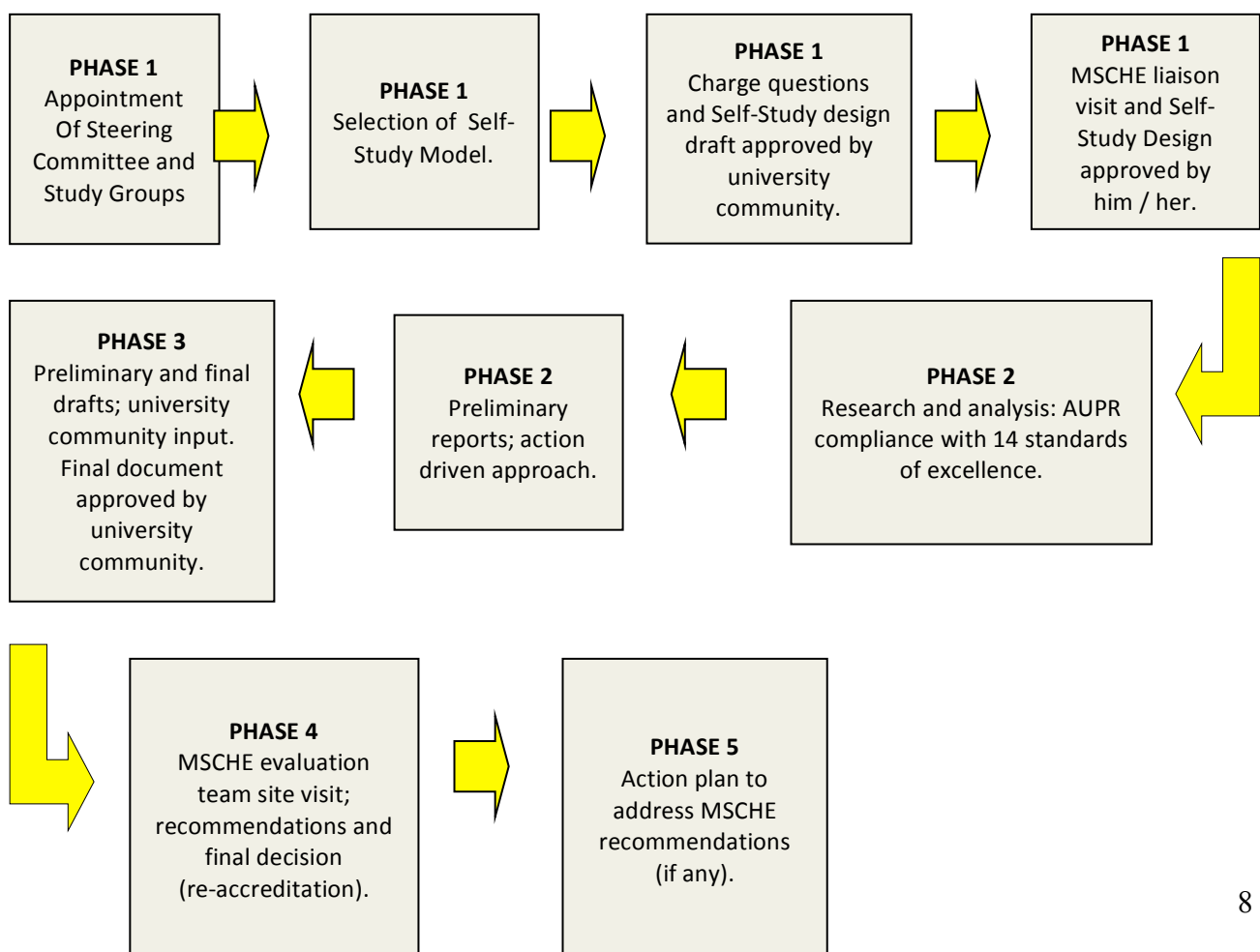
¹ As chairs of study groups, asterisk means they are also members of Group A: Mission, Goals, and Objectives.

In **Phase 3**, the Steering Committee will be responsible for integrating study groups reports for each standard in order to analyze the six areas in which standards have been grouped. They will also analyze the relationship of each area to Standard 1. The resulting draft, in the format described in Appendix E, will be submitted to the university community to receive their feedback and recommendations. A final document, integrating such recommendations, will be discussed again with university community to receive its approval. Thereafter, the self-study will be submitted to MSCHE evaluation team.

Phase 4 consists of the site visit by the MSCHE evaluation team, a process we see as a peer discussion about our strengths and challenges, analyzed in the self-study and validated by the visitors. The self-study process also contemplates developing an action plan to address the recommendations developed by the AUPR community and those offered by the visiting team. **(Phase 5).**

Diagram 1 shows the proposed structure of the self-study process and each working team's responsibility and their products.

Diagram 1



Following MSCHE's recommendations, the following documents will be available to all study groups: (1) *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Standards for Accreditation* (MSCHE, 2006); (2) *Self Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report* (MSCHE, 2012); (3) the Periodic Report Review prepared in 2012; (4) the Monitoring Report submitted in to MSCHE 2013; (5) the Self-Study design; (6) any MSCHE publication that is relevant for their analysis; and (7) the inventory of supporting documents (Appendix G).

V. CHARGES TO THE STUDY GROUPS AND GUIDELINES FOR THEIR REPORTS

Study groups, with the support of the Institutional Research Office, will conduct the research and collect the data needed, according to the standards assigned to each one. They will use questionnaires, surveys, and other research instruments and techniques such as focal groups' sessions. Outcomes assessment data from each area studied will be included in each group report. These reports will be based on the model presented in Appendix F.

To facilitate the research process, there is a sample of charge questions written by each study group to guide the self-study. These are grouped into the six areas previously identified.

A. Institutional Mission and Goals (Standard 1)

- How does AUPR assure that its institutional mission is clearly defined to guide faculty, administration, staff and governing bodies in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, academic programs and curriculum development? How do AUPR's institutional goals reflect the major issues of its mission?
- How does AUPR support scholarly and creative activities at the different operations levels and of the nature appropriate to the Institution's purposes and character?
- How does AUPR assure that its institutional mission and goals are developed through collaborative participation by those who facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional improvement and developments? What is the manner of participation?
- What process is employed to develop, create, approve, and evaluate AUPR's mission and goals, and how is it related to external and internal constituencies?

- In what way does AUPR demonstrate that its operations are consistent with its mission and goals and that these are focused on student learning, institutional improvement, and additional outcomes?

B. Planning, Resources and Institutional Renewal (Standards 2 and 3)

- What processes are applied by the institution in order to assess its success in meeting strategic goals and objectives?
- What methods are used to integrate AUPR's strategic planning process with resource allocation, and how are these methods and decisions conveyed to all units?
- How does AUPR evaluate and approve each unit's strategic plan in order to assure their consonance with the institution's mission, goals, and its alignment with the institutional strategic plan?
- What is the process to assure that the Institution's strategic plan responds to today's challenges and how are its goals and objectives measured in order to identify achievements and establish any necessary amendments?
- What are the methods used to evaluate and approve resource allocation and how inclusive are these?
- How does AUPR's existing budget allocation process respond to the instructional/academic endeavor by the faculty, other staff, and administrative operations; and how inclusive is the existing process?
- What are the most significant challenges facing AUPR regarding its human, fiscal, technological, and physical facility resources and how are these challenges identified, prioritized, and addressed?
- In light of today's challenges, how effectively does AUPR manage institutional resources to achieve its mission success?
- In support of its strategic plan, how will AUPR assure that sufficient resources are allocated to foster education, economic development, and service?

- How are the human, technological, and physical resources updated to support academic and administrative services, and is the Institution's community able to fulfill their duties and responsibilities with the resources assigned and to what degree of satisfaction?
- How does the institution evidence that it sustains adequate institutional controls and financial responsibility, and what initiatives and strategies has AUPR implemented to assure its continued operations?
- What are the results of annual independent audits, and how does the institution respond to any findings, if any?

C. Leadership, Governance, Administration, and Integrity (Standards 4, 5, and 6):

- How does the Institution's governing body promote the fulfillment of its mission, goals, and objectives?
- How does the University community participate in the governance processes?
- How do administrators incorporate into their planning, activities geared towards the improvement of the institutional mission, goals, and objectives?
- How does the Institution face any issue of a possible conflict of interest in the governing body?
- How does the administration ensure that the staff evidence the education and experience necessary to conduct their required tasks?
- What are the processes employed to assign responsibilities and duties to administrative officials?
- How does the decision-making process evidence that the organizational structure complies with the institution's mission?
- How is the efficiency and duties of the administrative structure assessed?
- How does the Institution respond to variations in the academic and administrative personnel in a manner that services to the community are not affected?

- How does the University guarantee the fundamental principles of ethics, respect to others, and the rights of all constituents in its administrative and academic processes?
- How does the University guarantee the confidentiality of information regarding the students and administrative personnel?
- What are the Institution's processes and resources to disseminate its institutional policies and other documents to its constituents?
- What is the process to apply the institutional policy regarding conflict of interest?
- To what degree of objectivity and impartiality is the recruitment of personnel, its evaluation, and contract termination conducted?

D. Student Admissions, Retention and Support Services (Standards 8 and 9)

- How does AUPR's admissions policy support our mission, goals, and objectives? How do these policies constitute an explicit guide for potential students? Does the University community have an understanding of such policies?
- How do services offered meet the diverse needs of the admitted student body? How do these services make possible that students persist in their studies, complete their degrees and graduate from the Institution in order to achieve their professional and personal goals?
- How effective has been the promotion activities on AUPR's academic offer? How often are these strategies evaluated?
- How is institutional assessment data incorporated in the admissions, promotion, retention, and academic counseling processes?
- How does AUPR establish admission policy and criteria that is well defined, consistent, and coherent that allow potential students to make informed decisions on how to request and register at the University?
- How does the Promotion Office make use of students' profiles to develop new promotion trends that result in an increase in the recruitment and admission of new students. Is the students' profile congruent with our mission, goals, objectives, and programs?

- How do our student support services respond to the Institution's mission, goals, and objectives?
- How do administrative practices in the area of student services impact student performance?
- How do AUPR's students evaluate the quality of our services?
- How does the Institution assure that its student services respond to their academic, psychological, financial, social, and cultural needs? How are these needs identified?
- How are complaint procedures processed? What strategies are employed to respond on time, objectively? What documentation is maintained?
- How effective is the notification process of an emergency situation to students, administrative staff and faculty? How are these policies and procedures evaluated?
- What policies, procedures, and strategies has AUPR developed and implemented to maintain student files secure? What measures are taken to guarantee confidentiality of information in the management of students' records?
- How is data collected through the Institutional Assessment Plan and incorporated into the plans of the Student Services Office?
- How do services provided meet the diverse needs of the students including: talented, special needs, bilingual, or disadvantaged?
- How do technological information services meet student's needs (Library Information System)?

E. Faculty, Academic Offerings, and Related Affairs (Standards 10, 11, 12, and 13)

- How are faculty duties and responsibilities defined?
- How does AUPR evidence its support to faculty improvement and development?
- How is faculty informed of the standards and processes regarding appointments, complaints, termination of contract or destitutions? How are these policies put into practice?

- How is the faculty selection process conducted? How is faculty evaluation conducted?
- How are part-time faculty appointed and evaluated? How does the criteria to evaluate full time and part time faculty compare?
- What processes are available to confirm faculty productivity in research within its area of specialization?
- How is the relationship between faculty efficiency and student learning outcomes analyzed?
- How are results from standards and procedures established for faculty appointments, tenure and promotions revised?
- How does AUPR evidence that undergraduate and graduate study programs promote a learning experience that is coherent and supports critical thinking?
- How does the Institution assure that programmatic goals are geared to student learning?
- How do learning resources, library services, and technology support academic programs at the Institution?
- How do library personnel work in partnership with the faculty to support teaching and make accessible technological information pertinent to the curriculum?
- How is transfer of credits policy and process publicized and instituted?
- How do course syllabi respond to academic program profiles?
- How are assessment results used to improve student learning, curriculum, and undergraduate and graduate program efficiency?
- How do academic offerings respond to the Institutional mission, student's interests, and their aspirations?
- How do academic programs promote collaborative learning and provide opportunities for knowledge and skills praxis?

- How are institutional general education competencies developed and refined, including oral and written communication, critical thinking, social and ethical responsibilities, quantitative skills, technological competence, and information management? How is student performance confirmed?
- How do students apply general education competencies in their professional courses?
- What evidence do the institutional promotional materials indicate for the mandatory general education requisite?
- How does the total amount and the proportion of required credits to complete a degree, (according to different levels, as well as the curriculum requirement), comply with higher education practices, discipline, or any other classification model as identified by the Institution?
- Does AUPR have well defined policies and procedures, so that students may complete their degrees, according to the curricular sequence available, and as long as there is satisfactory academic progress?
- How are students with academic limitations that impede their readiness for university level courses identified?
- What services are available for students with academic limitations?
- How is professional learning identified and convert into university credits? According to present institutional policy, what constitutes this conversion process?
- How do academic offerings and other institutional services compare between both sites: Bayamón and Manatí?

F. Institutional and Learning Assessment (Standards 7 and 14)

- Based on the 2007 Self-Study recommendations, what have been the levels of institutional assessment outcomes attained? What needs to be accomplished?
- How do the institutional mission, goals, and objectives respond to and impact present societal needs?

- How effective has the Institution been in the systematic assessment and evaluation of its student services and its use in the decision-making process for planning and distribution of present resources?
- How do institutional assessment results guide the renewal and renovation of the student support services, and to what degree do they provide for their integral development?
- How are assessment results incorporated into course syllabi to improve and diversify the curriculum?
- What institutional changes have been conducted based on assessment results? Have these changes been assessed, and what results have been obtained? What has been done with these results? What decisions have been taken? What have been the results, and to what degree have these decisions publicized?
- How is student learning assessment related to the goals, objectives and academic programs' results?
- How are periodic evaluations results used, including: curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences? To what measure are these evaluations considered to improve those experiences and the integral development of the students?
- How are the results of institutional assessment integrated into course syllabi?
- How are institutional assessment results used to improve student learning, the use of bibliographical resources, and the effectiveness of academic programs?
- How does AUPR ensure that its alumni have acquired the skills and competencies required for their professional endeavor?
- What permanence is given to the systematic student learning assessment process? How is this continuity evidenced? Has it been effective? To what measure?

VI. PROFILE OF THE EVALUATION TEAM

AUPR will benefit by a visiting team of peers from small to mid-sized private, nonprofit institutions with a professional development focus in fields similar to those available by AUPR.

For that reason, the team experience and background should reflect expertise and accomplishment in the 14 areas included in the *Characteristics of Excellence*, including both administrative and academic personnel. A bilingual team (Spanish / English) will be greatly appreciated.

VII. APPENDIXES

- A. AUPR's Development Highlights since the Last Re-accreditation in 2007
- B. Summary of AUPR Institutional Assessment Plan
- C. Timetable
- D. Editorial Style and Format
- E. Format of the Self-Study Report
- F. Guides for Study Groups Reports
- G. Preliminary Inventory of Supporting Documents

Appendix A

AUPR's Development Highlights since the Last Re-accreditation in 2007

Since the last accreditation in 2007, AUPR has taken numerous forward steps in order to improve our academic and institutional services. This eight year period is of most importance because it marks the Institution's 50th anniversary, a period of major changes in business, technology, and society. A time for commemoration and a time for mourning since our Founding President, Juan B. Nazario-Negrón, passed away. Nevertheless, our Institution has continued to offer renowned services to the Puerto Rican community.

Appendix A presents AUPR's development highlights since 2007. It is organized in two main areas: 1) academic offerings and related services: and 2) institutional renewal, leadership, governance, and administration. Learning assessment and institutional assessment are inherent elements in both areas.

I. ACADEMIC OFFERINGS AND RELATED SERVICES

Since 2007, every academic department at AUPR has been involved in a curricular revision process. It has resulted in some important modifications in course content or adjustments in the focus of some programs. Also, there have been substitutions, consolidations and development of new courses. For example, the Criminal Justice Program, in the Department of Arts and Sciences, received a total transformation at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels. A similar process took place in the Accounting Program in the Department of Business Administration; while in the Department of Education and Technology changes and transformations were required for the Special Education Program in order comply with the Special Education Teacher Certification Regulation.

As an institution that responds to societal needs, AUPR initiated the Master's Degree Program in Curriculum and Instruction in 2007 (a fact not contemplated in our last self-study). This program included six majors, initially: General Science, Elementary Education (K-3), Elementary Education (4-6), Special Education / Transition to the Adult Life (the only one in Puerto Rico), and History of the Art (this last major is no longer offered since 2010 due a very low demand). The most successful major in registered students has been Special Education / Transition.

In 2012, AUPR expanded its curricular offerings through the approval of several professional certificates in the Department of Education and Technology (Early Childhood

Special Education and Transition to Adult Life in Special Education) and the Department of Business Administration (Forensic Accounting, Human Resources, Computers Network, and Internal Audit).

Another important academic stride since 2007 is the institutionalization of pre and post tests in Basic English, Spanish and Mathematical basic courses. The results of these tests are analyzed each term by the Department of Arts and Sciences. These scores are employed to determine curricular outcomes and guide decision-making.

During 2013, and in response to a recommendation by MSCHE, a new Learning Assessment Plan was developed and implemented. In its initial stage, the plan contemplates the assessment of the core competencies identified by the Institution, to eventually move on to assess the professional competencies in all the academic programs. AUPR has instituted this process and it is a core element of the Institution's agenda.

Deanship of Student Development (DSD):

The responsibilities and tasks of the personnel assigned to this unit have been reexamined to ensure the maximization of the services offered to our students in both sites of AUPR. The DSD oversees the functioning of the Tutoring Center, the Office of Guidance and Counseling, and the Office of Assistive Technology for Students with Disabilities.

The Tutoring Center (Bayamón and Manatí) has experienced an increase in the number of students served and in the diversity of its services. This increase is the result of a new process designed for the referral of students in need of tutoring services. It constitutes part of the new Students Retention Plan. It is important to emphasize is that, since 2008, the DSD conducts a program to train and grant a certificate to the tutors. The training program includes instructional strategies workshops based on the learning-with-pairs approach.

Guidance and Counseling Office has refocused its efforts to guide the students in their fulfillment with the new Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy (SAPP), in response to federal regulations. The establishment of study plans for the students who do not fulfill the SAPP has been effective, mainly in the evening session when compared to the day program.

In addition, due to an increasing problem of student absenteeism identified by the faculty, the Guidance and Counseling Office established a protocol to contact them through telephone calls, letters, and messages by electronic mail. The intention of this protocol is to explain to those students the negative impact of the absenteeism in their academic progress and the risk of losing their eligibility for financial aids.

A successful service during these last eight years has been the establishment of the Assistive Technology Office for Students with Disabilities. This unit, assigned to the DSD, serves the needs of young people and adults who require special services, equipment, or reasonable accommodations to reach their academic goals.

Lastly, during the last two years, the DSD has reviewed the roles of students' organizations. As a result, there is an increase in the number of these groups, as well as a better participation in activities of professional development for its members. Their presence in the university campus is also noted. Their Chairs constitute the Council of Student Leaders, organism that connects the university administration with the student body.

Academic Advising Office:

At the time of the previous self-study in 2007, the Academic Advising Office had been recently created. It employs the Ellucian Colleague platform (before, Datatel) used by advisors to maximize their services to the students with respect to the enrollment in the courses that will allow them to advance in their academic program. These customized services, person to person but with technology support, consider the academic interests, personal affairs, and financial needs of the students. The assessment of these services has resulted in changes in the work procedures, evidencing in some cases with an increase of 60% in the productivity. In addition, satisfaction studies evidence that Academic Advising Office contributes to the success of enrollment processes, from its planning, organization and implementation, and improves student retention.

Libraries System:

During the last few years, our System of Libraries has attained important goals in its service to the university community. There has been an increase in the automated services through on line products: virtual reference (bibliotecariovirtual@aupr.edu), electronic reserve (<http://moodle2.aupr.ed/moodle/>), a blog (<http://bibliotecaaupr.wordpress.com>) and an application of the virtual library for smart phones and tablets. A constant increase of resources the virtual collections through our participation in the Partnership of Metropolitan Libraries (COBIMET, in Spanish) has been constant all these years. Also, it has increased the variety of technological tools available for students with disabilities.

Athletic Department:

This department has refocused its objectives to take care of not solely the population of student-athletes, but all the university community members. During the past few years it has increased the intramural recreational activities, promoting good coexistence and healthy life styles. The Athletic Department also impacts the external community with sport clinics in schools, neighborhoods, and nonprofit organizations.

Since 2008, the Athletic Department is responsible for AUPR Summer Camp for kids from 4 to 16 years old. The summer camp, in addition to serve as a source of income for the Institution, offers the parents of the external community the opportunity to bring their children to a safe place where they can enjoy sport, recreational, and cultural activities. The summer camp is also a project that allows our students, especially to those from the Department of Education and Technology, the development of instructional and leadership skills, essential to their academic field.

II. INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL, LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, AND ADMINISTRATION

Since 2012, AUPR has a new President, Juan Carlos Nazario-Torres, JD. This event marked the beginning of a new era in our institution. These three years have been characterized by the development of new projects to face the current social and economic challenges, but framed in the legacy of service to the community of our late President and founder.

AUPR has made the necessary adjustments needed as a result of the economic crisis impacting Puerto Rico and the reduction in enrollment facing Puerto Rican higher education. These difficult circumstances are seen as opportunities to be creative and to look for options to administrative reengineering, without lowering the standards of service quality that have always characterized AUPR. Since its re-accreditation in 2007, the Institution has been involved in a continuous analysis of academic and administrative initiatives, focused on increasing AUPR's revenues and establishing necessary measures to reduce its operational expenses. After an extensive analysis of our actual students population's needs, we established a plan in order to obtain better efficiency in our administrative and academic structure, without affecting student services and the fulfillment of our Institutional goals. Results of these efforts show a significant reduction in our operational costs in comparison with previous years.

Admissions Office:

During the past few years, this unit has directed its efforts to maximize the use of technology in the accomplishment of its main tasks, including a redefinition of its personnel's tasks and implementation of new procedures such as the use of the Web to contact candidates and applicants, digitalization of hard copy documents and the pursuit of students with incomplete files, among others.

In 2014, there was a merge of the Admissions Office and the Promotion and Marketing Office, to combine mutual efforts within the strategic goal to increase the institutional income by enrollment and fees. Some positive results are: a new commercial slogan, the redesign of informative and promotional materials, new tele-marketing campaigns, a greater contact with the high schools, state and municipal governmental agencies of the Central-North region of Puerto Rico and the participation of the student's organizations in promotional activities.

The Office of Admissions / Promotion and Marketing has been key element in the development of the University / Schools Collaborative Alliance, a project the Presidency initiated in 2011 to promote an effective approach to interact with the high schools from the area served by AUPR. The schools that comprise this Alliance have benefitted from workshops for the teachers and personnel, providing support to teaching, as well as other services for their students.

It is important to emphasize the participation of this office in the promotion and recruitment of teachers interested in earning a master degree at AUPR and benefitting from an institutional scholarship as an addition to federal funds provided by the No Child Left Behind Act, Title II. Also, this office has worked intensely with new students in projects like "Verano Tecnológico" [Technological Summers] for students just graduated from high schools and "Articulación Universitaria" (University Articulation) courses for students in its last year of high school.

Finally, another significant issue in the promotional area during the last few years has been the hiring of an external company to be in charge of the design of our web site, as well as an effective and constant presence of AUPR in social networks like Facebook and a channel of institutional videos in YouTube.

Financial Aid Office:

During the past three years, this unit has reached significant gains recognized by the federal and state authorities with "no-findings" reports. Other objectives reached by this unit are: a reduction of the rate of default of student loans in 7.3% (due, in part, to the hiring of the

company Wright International Student Services); an increase to more than 50% in the students who complete their file of economic aid by May 30 of every year. A significant achievement is the placement of 40% or more of the participants in the Work and Study Program in units related to their academic program, thus providing significant labor experience while they study.

During the last years, as a means to encourage enrollment, AUPR has created several institutional financial aid programs for new and readmitted students for undergraduate degrees, those affected by Pell Grant limitations, and teachers from public and private schools for the master degree.

Information Systems Office:

The renovation of the technological infrastructure, the replacement and acquisition of new equipment and the renovation of productivity software has been the focus of this department, in order to guarantee that the tasks in the different units flow suitably with respect to the Information system.

In February 2010, AUPR acquired two systems of “blade centers” with three “blade servers” each one, and VMware Program to virtualize the physical servants who already were obsolete. Both “Blade Centers” were located in the Bayamón campus. During that year, we virtualized more than 23 servers. This decision resulted in less cost of energy and a more efficient operation. In August 2012, one of the “Blade Centers” was moved to the Manatí site and two additional servers were acquired, resulting in a more efficient operation there, since many resources that depended on Bayamón were moved to the new servers.

On September 2012, an agreement with Optivon Company was signed to change our telephone and Internet supplier. In October of that year, we acquired 40 terminals and the program VMware View for the two libraries, in replacement of the system of terminals of “Ncomputing” that were obsolete at that time. In July 2013, we created two virtual servers of “terminal services” in Windows 2012, so students and professors, using the computers of the existing laboratories, can use Windows 8 and all applications that are used in the courses from any laboratory. Also, the capacity of Internet on each site was increased 25mbps, and 20mbps among both sites. Previously, that capacity was only 10mbps in Bayamón, and Manatí used just 5mbps from Bayamón.

Another important point to emphasize is that AUPR officially became a Microsoft IT Academy in 2011. Finally, to move on the “on line elsewhere wave”, AUPR also developed several WIFI zones in both sites.

General Services and Facilities:

As part of our Master Plan 2010-2015, the most significant improvements to our facilities can be abridged this way:

- Remodeling of auditoriums. This includes purchase of projection and sound equipment, conference tables and chairs, and wiring for telecommunications.
- Nets Installation for the control of birds in the Eugenio Guerra Sport Complex, in Bayamón, and aluminum plates replacement in the basketball court in Manatí.
- Waterproofing of several ceilings in both localities.
- Improvements to the accesses of the buildings, in fulfillment with federal law “American with Disabilities Act”.
- Improvements in the lighting system in Bayamón campus. Improvements in the pluvial system, asphalt and paint in various parking lots.
- Installation of two scaffolds for promotion announcements (canvases) and installation of an illuminated signboard in the University main entrance.
- New library in Manatí site (inaugurated in 2010). It’s a modern structure of two floors, with several study rooms and a virtual hall. The Audiovisual Center is also located in this building. Old library facilities were remodeled to locate the Deanship of Student Development there, including their offices, study area, the Center of Orientation and Counseling, a games hall and an area for movies projection (“America Cinema”).
- Other improvements in Manatí site included the construction of a new facade, security control area, and a new tower from the University to a cost of \$1.4 million, illumination and asphalt in several parking lots.
- In year 2013, two new concessionaires were contracted in both cafeterias. Also, we signed a contract with Capitol Security for security guards at the entrance and in the parking lots, and another one with Valley Crest to the maintenance of green areas.

Finance Department:

As mentioned before, one of the major accomplishments of AUPR’s Finance Department is achieving an annual audit result of “zero findings” in both our Federal and State Audits for three consecutive fiscal years (2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14), demonstrating our continuous efforts in maintaining effective and efficient accounting procedures and internal controls.

Also, the Bursar's Office has established an additional payment method for students by offering an online option so they may avoid having to come to AUPR and be able to make tuition & fees payments in the comfort of their home, job or on the go.

Finally, but not least important, in order to demonstrate our support in protecting the environment, we are implementing various ways of reducing the excessive use of paper in the following departments:

- In our Accounting Department, we are substituting our "Monthly Closing Binder" with what we refer to as an "Electronic Monthly Binder" in which we reconcile and maintain a detail of our Balance Sheet accounts for our monthly closing procedures on a computer file.
- In our Bursar's office, we are maintaining digital copies of our student's transactions.

External Resources:

AUPR has established an agreement with the Consulting Firm Ramona Munsell and Associates to develop federal grant applications. At present, they are working with our Title V grant application and based on previous experience, we believe there is a high probability of obtaining these funds. In addition, we have also submitted proposals to: Transportation Security Agency (TSA), No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and various State Programs.

Appendix B

Summary of AUPR Institutional Assessment Plan

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are experiencing transformations of great magnitude and they are facing important and drastic changes within a global context that demands more operational agility, responsibility, and transparency. These transformations imply new challenges and opportunities to propel the institutional renovation and demonstrate with evidence the fulfillment of the mission, vision and strategic goals.

To demonstrate its effectiveness in the achievement of the mission, vision and institutional strategic goals, AUPR employs an assessment process divided in two major components: student learning assessment and institutional assessment. Student learning assessment aims to measure what is the core of the higher education effort, the result of the teaching-learning process and its impact on the students. Institutional assessment is more comprehensive and includes all of the institutional performance areas.

Therefore, AUPR assessment plan is designed in order to identify the Institution's challenges and opportunities. Overall, assessment is the formal tool to honestly assess the impact on the effectiveness of the institution regarding all academic and administrative activities. To this end, we reviewed our institutional assessment plan, getting a working paper that incorporates processes and assessment activities, training and improvement, which allows AUPR to examine and increase its overall effectiveness and meet the following goals:

- Monitor the teaching-learning process to enhance the academic success of our students.
- Design, plan, implement and improve courses, academic programs and activities based on the results of the assessment process.
- Design, plan, implement and improve targeted support services for our students, our human resources and community.
- Systematically assess institutional effectiveness, considering our mission, vision, values, our core functions and our context.

Needs assessment studies are also conducted among university personnel for planning and implementing professional development workshops. These studies are also conducted among faculty, administrative, clerical and support services personnel in order to examine their needs and expectations, and the skills needed to improve their job performance.

Institutional effectiveness is assessed through tools such as surveys and focus group studies, conducted with community members such as active students, graduating seniors and

graduates. Respondents are encouraged to provide a formative evaluation of the institution's mission, goals, objectives and academic programs and services; and how well they are prepared for carrying out their professional performance. Exit interviews are conducted among senior class students for the assessment of the institution's effectiveness as well as their experience in college.

Student learning is assessed through their performance in class as measured with classroom assessment strategies, such as: course-embedded quizzes and exams, rubrics, portfolios, journals, computer simulations, demonstrative classes, students' satisfaction with their daily classes and attainments, among other assessment techniques and activities.

Faculty performance is also assessed through surveys conducted among students and departmental committees. Professional development workshops and activities are accordingly planned, implemented and evaluated with formative and summative assessment procedures.

Student learning and the context and / or elements that support it, are the main indicators of institutional effectiveness. For this reason it is necessary that the Institution and all its operating units understand this dynamic and be able to show evidence from the added value perspective of the degree completion for students. Thus, the assessment process should provide the information to improve teaching, academic programs and administrative and support services. To this end, it is essential to observe the process of assessment of institutional effectiveness from the student's perspective. Through the assessment exercise the institution, its departments, offices, and other operational units, seek to have functional control of the operations, results, and impact achieved.

Appendix C

Timetable

<i>Pre-Starting Self-Study Process</i>	
<i>Self-study Institute</i> in Philadelphia Select of the self-study model	November 10-11, 2004
<i>PHASE 1: Self-Study Design</i>	
Select and appoint the Steering Committee and Study Groups members	January 30, 2015
VPASA and staff begin brainstorming for a preliminary draft of the self-study design	February 2, 2015
Orientation meeting of the self-study process to the Steering Committee and Study Group members	February 6, 2015
Study groups meetings to write charge questions for each standard	February 9 - 18, 2015
Steering Committee meeting to evaluate and select charge questions	February 18, 2015
VPASA and writing staff end first draft of the Self-Study Design and send it via e-mail to Steering Committee for feedback and recommendations.	March 5, 2015
Self-Study draft is discussed and approved by university community in a meeting.	March 9, 2015
Recommendations and corrections are added.	March 9-11, 2015
Document is sent to MSCHE liaison, Dr. Tito Guerrero	March 12, 2015
Dr. Guerrero site visit.	March 19, 2015
<i>PHASE 2: Self-Study Research and Analysis Process</i>	
Study Groups begin to collect and analyze data and advance their research tasks	March – June, 2015
Steering Committee special meeting to evaluate results up to that time	June 18, 2015
Study Groups continue to collect and analyze data and advance their research tasks	August – December, 2015
Steering Committee special meeting to evaluate results up to that time	October 22, 2015
Steering Committee special meeting to evaluate results up to that time; Preliminary findings lead to implementation of initial recommendations	December 17, 2015
Selection of Self-Study Evaluation Team Chair	January – March, 2016
Study Groups continue to collect and analyze data and advance their research tasks	January – May, 2016
Steering Committee special meeting to evaluate results up to that time	March 10, 2016

Steering Committee special meeting to evaluate results up to that time; Preliminary findings lead to implementation of recommendations	May 19, 2016
Study groups work with findings; action driven process is ongoing	June – September, 2016
Steering Committee special meeting to evaluate results up to that time	August 18, 2016
Study Groups submit their reports for each standard	September 8, 2016
Steering Committee special meeting to evaluate results up to that time	September 14, 2016
Phase 3: Self-Study Document	
VPASA and writing staff work in preliminary draft of Self-Study	September – October, 2016
Self-Study draft submitted to university community via e-mail. Hardcopy available in library and faculty room in each site.	October 13, 2016
Days for receive recommendations and corrections	October 13 – 28, 2016
Evaluation Team Chair's visit to AUPR	October – Nov., 2016
Days for incorporate recommendations and corrections	November, 2016
Steering Committee special meeting to evaluate results up to that time	November 17, 2016
Self-Study ready to submit to university community via email. Hardcopy available in library and faculty room, in both sites.	December 9, 2016
University Community assembly to discuss and approve last version of Self-Study	December 14, 2016
Self-Study translation	January, 2017
AUPR makes last arrangements for the visit	January – March, 2017
AUPR sends Self-Study to MSCHE Evaluation Team	February 3, 2017
Phase 4: MSCHE Evaluation Team Site Visit	
Site visit	March – April, 2017
Recommendations from Evaluation Team	---
Final decision from MSCHE (Re-accreditation)	---
Phase 5: Action Plan	
Development of an action plan to address MSCHE recommendations (if any)	---

Appendix D

Editorial Style and Format

The following writing criteria have been chosen for draft documents and final reports:

Software: Microsoft Word 2010

Font: Arial 11 pt

Space: 1.5

Margins: 1 inch on each side

Extent of narrative: Up to 20 pages for Study Group reports; up to 150 pages for final report

Pagination: All pages in narrative must be numbered

Printing: Preferably in both sides of paper

APA format (6th. Edition) should be used for all citations.

Institutional acronyms are attached in a separate document.

Reports should be handed in hard copy and an usb-drive.

Appendix E

Format of the Self-Study Report

AUPR Self-Study will be conducted as a collaborative process using the Basic Comprehensive Model in the context of the Characteristics of Excellence. The Self-Study will be organized according to the six areas defined in the document, including all 14 standards.

I. Executive Summary

Certification Statement

II. Introduction

A. Overview of the University

1. Mission

B. The Self-Study Process

III. Institutional Analysis:

- Institutional Mission and Goals (Standard 1)
 - Relevant strengths and Challenges
 - Recommendations for improvement
- Planning, Resources, and Institutional Renewal (Standards 2 and 3)
 - Relevant strengths and Challenges
 - Recommendations for improvement
- Leadership, Governance, Administration, and Integrity (Standards 4, 5, and 6)
 - Relevant strengths and Challenges
 - Recommendations for improvement
- Student Admissions and Support Services (Standards 8 and 9)
 - Relevant strengths and Challenges
 - Recommendations for improvement
- Faculty and academic offerings (Standards 10, 11, 12 y 13)
 - Relevant strengths and Challenges
 - Recommendations for improvement
- Institutional and learning assessment (Standards 7 and 14)
 - Relevant strengths and Challenges
 - Recommendations for improvement

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

V. Appendixes

Appendix F

Guide Format for Study Group Reports

- I. Introduction
 - a. An overview of the standard assigned and the charge questions
 - b. Methodology used to address the process
- II. Discussion
 - a. Analysis of the data collected and findings, including strengths and challenges
 - b. Description of how these findings relate to the standards assigned
 - c. Relationship between the group's topics and the institutional mission, goals and objectives
 - d. Connection with other topics or standards
- III. Recommendations for improvement

Appendix G

Preliminary Inventory of Supporting Documents

AISO	Academic Information Systems Office	OIPI	Institutional Research and Planning Office
AO	Admissions Office	PO	President Office
AVPGA	Assistant Vice-Presidency of General Affairs	PMO	Promotion and Marketing Office
CO	Comptroller Office	REG	Registrar Office
COO	Counseling and Orientation Office	SAO	Students Affairs Office
FAO	Financial Aid Office	VPAS	Vice-Presidency of Academic and Students Affairs
HRO	Human Resources Office	A	
LIB	Library	VPAF	Vice-Presidency of Administrative and Financial Affairs
OAA	Office of Academic Advising	A	

Document	Location
GENERAL	
AUPR Catalog	REG
IPEDS Institutional Characteristics Survey	VPASA
AUPR Web Page	AISO
Units' work plans	VPASA
ACCREDITATION	
2007 Self-Study Design	
2007 Self-Study	
MSA Re-accreditation Letter	VPASA
MSA Re-affirmation Letter	VPASA
MSA Institutional Profile	VPASA
AUPR Strategic Plan	VPASA
Units' Strategic Plans	VPASA
Institutional Assessment Plan (2013)	
ACADEMICS	
Curricular Revision Plan	VPASA
First-year Student Profile Survey	OIPI
Institutional Surveys	OIPI
IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey	VPASA
IPEDS Graduation Rates	VPASA
IPEDS Completion Rates	VPASA
IPEDS Post-Graduation Studies	VPASA
FACULTY AND STAFF	
IPEDS Fall Staff Survey	VPASA
Organizational Chart	PO
Faculty Handbook	VPASA
Staff Handbook	HRO

Document	Location
Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Free Campus Policy	HRO
IPEDS Fall Enrollment in Occupational Specific Programs	VPASA
IPEDS Salaries, Tenure, and Fringe Benefits Full Time	VPASA
IPEDS Employees by Assigned Position	VPASA
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES	
IPEDS Academic Library Surveys	LIB
Association of College and Research Libraries Annual Survey	LIB
Library Information Skills Program	LIB
Annual Reports (1997-1998 to 2013-2014)	LIB
Annual Budget Requests (1996-1997 to 2013-2014)	LIB
National Center for Education Statistics	LIB
COBIMET Agreement	LIB
OIPI library services satisfaction surveys	LIB, OIPI
STUDENT LIFE	
Student Handbook	SAO
Students' Satisfaction Surveys	SAO
Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Free Campus Policy	COO
Students' Information Guide	SAO
Sexual Harassment Policy	SAO
CRUSADA/CORE Study on University Students' Quality Life Styles	LIB, OIPI
Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act Report	VPAFA
Academic Advising Proposal	OAA
PHYSICAL FACILITIES	
Sanitation and Fire Certifications	VPAFA
Physical Facilities Plans	VPAFA
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	
Interim Financial Statements	CO
Operating Budget and Supporting Documents	CO
Actual vs Budget Reports	CO
Annual Audited Financial Statements	CO
Account Reconciliations	CO
Enrollment Studies	AO
Internal Control and Procedures Manual	CO
Quarterly and Annual Returns	CO
Insurance Policies	CO
IPEDS Finance Survey	CO
Government Agencies Permits	AVPGA
Campus Crime Statistics Report	AVPGA
US Department of Education Program Participation Agreement	CO
Emergency Manuals	AVPGA
ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID	
Admissions Statistics	AO
Admission Application	AO
Admission Trends	AO
Marketing Materials	PMO

Document	Location
First-year Student Profiles	OIPI
Undergraduate Financial Assistance	FAO
Sites Maps	AISO
UNIVERSITY RELATIONS	
Voluntary Support of Education	PO
Cooperative Agreements	PO
BOARD OF TRUSTEES	
Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees	PO
Annual Meetings Minutes	PO
By-laws	PO
Semiannual Meetings Minutes	PO

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