September 30, 2008

Dr. Luis G. Pedraja
Vicepresident
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680

Dear Dr. Pedraja:

As required by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education after submitting our Periodic Review Report in 2006, we are submitting this progress letter documenting "appropriate assessments of the attainment of learning goals at programs and course level."

As mentioned in our previous reports, during the past years the University of Puerto Rico moved toward direct learning assessment as opposed to indirect measures. The overall process has been guided by the Institutional Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee established on October 2003. The Committee includes 13 faculty members from different academic departments (one of which acts as Coordinator) and the Auxiliary Dean of Academic Affairs.

Also, in line with our commitment towards assessment and accreditation, on April, 2008 the position of Assistant to the Dean of Academic Affairs for Accreditation and Assessment was created. This person provides general oversight and guidance to all assessment and accreditation efforts, insures proper documentation of the processes, and helps maintain focus on student learning outcomes.

Two recent and major advances in the assessment agenda are directly related to the improvement of specific courses and overall program improvement.

Course Level Assessment

Just recently –starting with the 2008-2009 freshmen class–we administered a General Education Assessment Test to assess the incoming knowledge base of the new students in the subjects of Social Sciences, Humanities, Spanish and Natural Sciences. The instrument designed for this purpose was the diagnostic test *Prueba de Conocimiento Adquirido*. It consists of 100

PO BOX 6150, Aguadilla, PR 00604-6150
Tel: (787) 890-2681, ext. 201, 208 ó 285
Fax: (787) 891-3455, E-Mail: rectoria@uprag.edu
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multiple choice items that measure general knowledge in the above mentioned areas and one essay exercise to measure their writing skills in Spanish. In the third year of studies an equivalent test will be administered to this cohort to assess the value added as the result of their overall learning experience in the College.

Our general education goals are to enhance oral and written communication; mathematics and computing skills; critical thinking, management and application of technology; the ability to access, manage and use information; and the ability to engage in teamwork. Not all of these are to be tested in the General Education Assessment Test. These and other types of course learning objectives are assessed through individual class-based projects. Between 2005 and 2008 the Assessment Committee helped faculty members from all departments complete 55 course level assessment projects. They were also aligned to the institutional goals and program learning objectives.

Significant improvement in the scope and quality of the projects is observable as the faculty gains knowledge and improves its assessment skills. Nevertheless, some faculty members still face difficulties in defining and establishing evaluation and assessment activities, as well as writing measurable learning objectives. To address these difficulties, the Committee has held individual meetings to provide further assistance and feedback. The University assessment website (http://cetemhost.uprag.edu/prof/avaluo/) also provides easy access to supporting materials like the proposal guide, an example report of a completed proposal, a final classroom assessment report, a questionnaire template on student profile, and links to internet resources.

Program Assessment with Emphasis in Professional Accreditation
Professional accreditation of all programs for which such options are available is now a formal policy of the University of Puerto Rico system. Accordingly, since 2006 at the UPR-Aguadilla we have been actively involved in program assessment in pursuit of accreditation. As is well known, all accreditation agencies now emphasize learning assessment as a critical part of their standards. Hence, this policy has resulted in a significant rise of attention to assessment.

The following programs are in the professional accreditation pipeline:
- Elementary Education, Education in English with Multimedia, Education Certificate in Office Systems. They are in the intermediate stage and are being

evaluated against the National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) standards.

- Business Administration (all concentrations). They are in the intermediate stage and are being evaluated against the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) standards.

- Information Systems and Electronics Technology. They are in an initial assessment stage and are to be evaluated against the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) standards.

Two important student services are also seeking accreditation or professional recognition, both highly dependent on effective assessment: The Library and Professional Student Counseling. The Library recently completed a comprehensive self-study and was visited by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). It was found to be in compliance with most of its standards and is revising those areas requiring improvement. The Student Counseling Program is also undergoing major changes in order to meet the accreditation requirements of The International Association of Counseling Services.

Regardless of program accreditation requirements, to develop comprehensive assessment plans and assist the different departments in assessing and revising their academic programs, on August 2007 the Office of Academic Affairs published the *Plan de Avalúo del Aprendizaje Estudiantil (Guidelines for Student Learning Assessment).* The process requires that each department constitute a Department Program Assessment Committee. In addition, each department is to select at least one general education goal included in the institution mission and one knowledge, skills and attitude objective within their program to monitor learning progress through several stages in the program. An example of the plan of the Education Program is included in Appendix A. The table in Appendix B highlights the nature of the projects involved.

Using Results

A major part of the assessment process is assuring the dissemination of results to induce improvement. To ensure that appropriate discussions take place and improvement occurs, a yearly Assessment Conference is conducted with faculty presentations and discussions from all departments. These Conferences allow faculty and administrators to reflect on the status of their programs in relation to program goals, learning objectives, learning outcomes, and future actions.

In 2008 we celebrated the Second Annual Assessment Conference with a 68% faculty participation rate.

Conclusion

Without a doubt, assessment is now engrained in the way the University of Aguadilla conducts its academic affairs. It is essential to its accreditation process by the Middle States Association and by the professional accreditation bodies that overlook specific programs. But most importantly, it is a means to continuous improvement and enhancing student learning.

Sincerely,

José L. Arbona
Chancellor

Appendix A

Department of Education Learning Assessment Plan

Skills in the institutional mission Knowledge, skills and attitudes of the academic program	Course or experience	Timeline	Techniques and assessment instruments	Outcomes indicator	Responsible
General education skill: Oral and written communication Program objective: To communicate appropriately in oral and written form	Essay: pedagogical situation and dispositions EDFU 3001	1st year in the Program (one time)	Essay	Rubric score	College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) Professor
	EDFI 3465	2nd year	Essay Questions and Oral report Writing report	75% in rubric Excellent or satisfactory in all rubric criteria	Professor
	EDFU 4019	3rd or 4th year (at the end of the program)		90% in rubric	
Program objective: Knowledge Design teaching process applying appropriate methods and techniques in accordance to situation	EDPE 3001 EDPE 4210 EDPE 3095	2nd year	Demonstrative lesson	Excellent or satisfactory in all rubric criteria	Professor
	EDPE 4115	3rd year	Instructional module	Excellent or satisfactory in all rubric criteria	Professor
	EDPE 3006	3rd year	Oral and writing report	Excellent or satisfactory in all rubric criteria	Professor
	PCMAS	End of the program	Licensure test	80% or more	CEEB
Program objective: Skill Developing and maintaining effective means of communication with the learning community to satisfy educational field	EDFU 3002	Beginning of the program	Reports	Satisfactory in rubric criteria	Professor
	EDES 4006	3rd year	Pre and post-test, questionnaire, Checklist, Observation reports	Excellent in all rubric criteria	Professor
	EDFU 3007	2nd year	Oral and writing report	Excellent in all rubric criteria	Professor
	EDPE 4335	End of the program	Reports, Observation reports, Demonstrative lesson	Excellent in all rubric criteria	Professor
	EDPE 4340	End of the program	Classroom evaluation	Excellent in all rubric criteria	Professor
Program objective: Aptitude Demonstrate positive attitude toward educational problems and change in professional field	EDPE 4335	End of the program	Pedagogical situation	Excellent or satisfactory in all rubric criteria	Professor
	EDPE 4340	End of the program	Classroom evaluation	Excellent in all rubric criteria	Professor

Appendix B

Implementation of Program Level Assessment

Department	General education skill	Skills acquire	Skills not acquire
Business Administration	Team Working	X	
Office Systems	Oral and written communication	X	
Natural Science (Biology)	Oral and written communication	X	
Natural Science (Chemistry)	Oral and written communication Mathematics and computational skills		X X
Education	Oral and written communication	X	
Electronic Technology	Oral and written communication	X	
Education in English with Multimedia	Oral and written communication		
Social Sciences	General knowledge in social sciences	X	
Humanities	Access, management and use of information	X	
Spanish	Oral and written communication	X	
Library	Access, management and use of information	X	