Self-Study Report

Submitted to: Middle States Commission of Higher Education

2026

UPR CAYEY

MSCHE
MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AB	Administrative Board *(Junta Administrativa)*
ACBSP	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs
ACEI	Association for Childhood Education International
AIU	Annual Institutional Update
ALO	Accreditation Liason Officer
AO	Admissions Office
AP	Athletic Program
AS	Academic Senate *(Senado Académico)*
ASL	American Sign Language
BT	Board of Trustees *(Junta de Síndicos)*
CAEP	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
CEPR	Puerto Ricos Council of Education (*Consejo de Educación de Puerto Rico*)
CHE	Council on Higher Education (*Consejo de Educación Superior*)
COPA	Council of Post-Secondary Accreditation
DHSI	Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions
DAA	Dean of Academic Affairs (*Decanato de Asuntos Académicos*)
DCEPS	Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies (*División de Educación Continua y Estudios Profesionales*)
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
DHSI	Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions
DI	Damage Inventory
DSA	Office of the Dean of Student Affairs (*Decanato de Asuntos Estudiantiles*)
EC	Executive Committee
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAO	Financial Aid Office
FAP	Financial Aid Program (*Programa de Asistencia Económica*)
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FODA	Formative Observation Data Analysis
FOMB	Financial Oversight and Management Board (*Junta de Control Fiscal*)
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
FY	Fiscal Year
GASB	Governmental Accounting Standards Board
GB	Governing Board (*Junta de Gobierno*)
GE	General Education (*Educación General*)
GSC	General Student Council (*Consejo General de Estudiantes*)
HCM	Heightened Cash Monitoring
HRO	Human Resources Office (*Oficina de Recursos Humanos*)
ICSD	Interdisciplinary Center for Student Development *(Centro Interdisciplinario de Desarrollo Estudiantil)*
IIR	Institute of Interdisciplinary Research *(Instituto de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias)*

IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
ISO	Information Systems Office *(Oficina de Sistemas de Información)*
KPI's	Key Performance Indicators
MSCHE	Middle States Commission on Higher Education
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NASPE	National Association for Sport and Physical Education
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NIH	National Institutes of Health
NSF	National Science Foundation
NSTA	National Science Teaching Association
NSSE	National Survey of Student Engagement
OAIR	Office of Assessment and Institutional Research (*Oficina de Avalúo e Investigación Institucional*)
ODE	Office of Distance Education
OFA	Office of Financial Aid
OHR	Office of Human Resources (Oficina de Recursos Humanos)
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
OSSD	Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (*Oficina de Servicio a Estudiantes con Impedimentos*)
PESTEL	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal
PR-GEO	Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office (*Oficina de Ética Gubernamental de Puerto Rico*)
PRFAFAA	Puerto Rico Fiscal Agency and Financial Advisory Authority (*Autoridad de Asesoría Financiera y Agencia Fiscal de Puerto Rico*)
PROMESA	Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability Act (*Ley para el Manejo y Estabilidad Económica de Puerto Rico*)
PRSD-BPI	Puerto Rico State Department- Board of Postsecondary Institutions (*Junta de Instituciones Postsecundarias-JIP*)
PW	Project Worksheet
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
SIS	Student Information System
SLOs	Student Learning Outcomes
SRTK	Student Right to Know
SSIC	Student Success Innovation Center
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
UB	University Board *(Junta Universitaria)*
UPR Cayey	University of Puerto Rico at Cayey (*Universidad de Puerto Rico en Cayey*)
UPR	University of Puerto Rico System (*Universidad de Puerto Rico*)
UPRCA-AO	UPR Central Administration's Admissions Office
USDA-NIFA	National Institute of Food and Agriculture
USDE	US Department of Education
WGs	Working Groups

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Puerto Rico at Cayey (UPR Cayey) submits this Self-Study Report as the product of a shared institutional reflection, one that affirms who we are, what we value, and how we continue to advance our mission of excellence in public higher education. Through an inclusive and participatory process, more than 40 members of our campus community contributed to the work of the Self-Study Working Groups. Over an eighteen-month period, these groups engaged in broad evidence-based inquiry to demonstrate the university's alignment with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Standards. Developed collaboratively and informed by wide consultation with internal and external stakeholders, this Report captures the University's ongoing commitment to transparency, ethical practice, student learning, fiscal responsibility, and shared governance as foundations of continuous institutional improvement. The UPR Cayey remains deeply committed to offering an exceptional and accessible education to a diverse and deserving student body, lifting the southeastern part of the island, and advancing our institutional mission, values and priorities.

The Self Study Process

Early in 2024, an Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and seven Working Groups were convened with broad representation from faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Together, these groups engage in a transparent, inclusive process of inquiry, examining evidence, analyzing outcomes, and identifying opportunities for growth. The process strengthened our sense of shared purpose and reaffirmed our commitment to student learning, institutional effectiveness, and social responsibility.

The UPR Cayey identified three institutional priorities that frame its Self-Study and guide the institution's ongoing pursuit of excellence:

1. Fortify student retention and broaden enrollment
UPR Cayey seeks to strengthen student persistence toward graduation and expand enrollment through enhancements to academic programs, student support services, and institutional infrastructure. These efforts reflect the university's commitment to improving access, equity, and student success.

2. Revitalize planning and assessment
The institution aims to further integrate and systematize planning and assessment processes across all levels through administrative reengineering. This work promotes a more intentional culture of evidence-based decision-making that links assessment results directly to institutional improvement.

3. Strengthen fiscal sustainability
UPR Cayey is actively diversifying its funding portfolio by increasing external grants, partnerships, and revenue sources. These strategies are designed to ensure the long-term fiscal health and resilience of the institution.

Together, these priorities align closely with UPR Cayey's mission and goals and serve as the foundation for the Self-Study design. They also inform the institution's intended outcomes for the Self-Study process:

- Demonstrate compliance with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation, including the Evidence Expectations.
- Use assessment results to reinforce a campus-wide culture of continuous improvement across academic and administrative units.
- Engage the entire campus community in an inclusive, transparent, and participatory process.

- Strengthen institutional services and processes through the adoption of innovative, evidence-based practices that advance student learning, success, and institutional effectiveness.

These priorities underscore UPR Cayey's commitment not only to reaffirming accreditation but also to leveraging the Self-Study as an instrument for advancing its mission, vision, and long-term strategic objectives.

To oversee and coordinate the Self-Study process, the UPR Cayey established an Executive Committee (EC), a Steering Committee, and seven Working Groups (WGs) corresponding to the MSCHE Standards. The Executive Committee was charged with providing overall leadership for the reaccreditation process. Members participated in the MSCHE Self-Study Institute held in September and October 2024, gaining valuable insights into best practices and expectations for institutional self-studies.

Table 1

Executive Committee 2025–2026

Member	Committee Role	Title
Dr. Juan Caraballo Resto	Chair; ALO	Full Professor Department of Social Sciences
Ms. Olga I. Sierra Flores	Co-Chair	Director Office of Assessment & Institutional Research
Ms. Jessica Rosario Rivera	Assistant	Administrative Secretary Office of Assessment and Institutional Research

Note. Established since academic year 2024-2025 to present.

A Steering Committee was designated in January 2024, and it brings together faculty, administrators, staff, students, and researchers to ensure broad representation and shared ownership of the Self-Study process. Appointments were made by the Chancellor in consultation with campus leadership.

The Steering Committee provides direction, oversight, and quality assurance by:

- Coordinating the overall design, execution, and timeline of the Self-Study.
- Ensuring alignment with MSCHE Standards, Evidence Expectations, and institutional priorities.
- Guiding the Working Groups on methodology, evidence collection, and report development.
- Integrating findings and recommendations from all Working Groups into cohesive drafts.
- Facilitating feedback and communication across campus constituencies.
- Preparing the final Self-Study Report for submission to MSCHE.

Table 2

Steering Committee

Member	Committee Role	Title
Dr. Juan F. Caraballo Resto	Chair; ALO Coordinator Standard III	Full Professor Department of Social Sciences
Ms. Olga I. Sierra Flores	Co-Chair Coordinator Standard V	Director Office of Assessment & Institutional Research
Prof. Fernando Vázquez Calle	Member Coordinator Standard VI	Assistant Researcher Assessment & Institutional Research
Ms. Katherine Vélez Rivera	Member Coordinator Standard VII	Administrative Secretary Academic Senate and Administrative Board
Dr. Xiomara B. Santiago Rodríguez	Member	Full Professor Department of Business Administration
Prof. Vionex M. Marti González	Member Coordinator Standard I	Director Institute of Interdisciplinary Research
Ms. Jessica Rosario Rivera	Member Coordinator Standard II	Administrative Secretary Office of Human Resources
Mr. Adriann Torres Pedraza	Member Coordinator Standard IV	Student Department of Social Sciences

Note. Established since academic year 2024-2025 to present.

Seven Working Groups (WG) were established in February 2024, one for each MSCHE Standard, to carry out evidence-based analyses and develop findings and recommendations. Each group includes faculty, staff, and students, reflecting UPR Cayey's commitment to inclusion and shared governance.

The Working Groups were tasked with:

- Collecting, analyzing, and interpreting evidence aligned with their assigned Standard.
- Completing evidence of inventory worksheets consistent with MSCHE Evidence Expectations.
- Producing interim and final reports that identify strengths, challenges, and recommendations.
- Engaging the broader campus community to ensure transparency and participation.

To maintain consistency and coherence across reports, the Steering Committee provided the following guidelines:

- Annotated Outlines: Summaries of key evidence, findings, and preliminary recommendations.
- Evidence-Based Analysis: Claims substantiated by institutional data, documentation, and assessment of results.
- Evidence Inventory Integration: Cross-referencing analyses with the institutional Evidence Inventory to facilitate verification.
- Report Structure: Common format including compliance statements, strengths, challenges, and recommendations.
- Conciseness and Clarity: Reports designed to be comprehensive yet focused, avoiding redundancy.

- Adherence to Timeline: Submission of interim and final drafts in accordance with the Self-Study schedule to allow sufficient review and feedback.

These structures and procedures ensure that the Self-Study Report is cohesive, evidence-driven, and aligned with MSCHE expectations while also serving as a genuine instrument of institutional reflection and renewal.

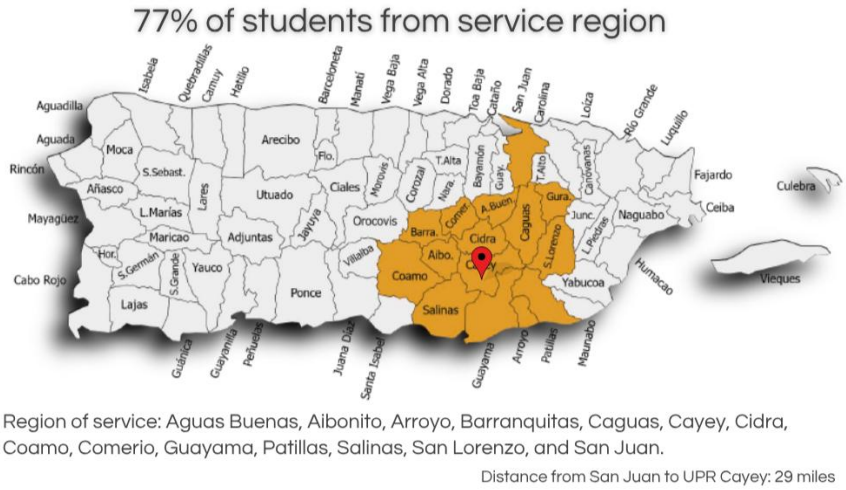
INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

At the UPR Cayey we take great pride in our tradition of interdisciplinary academic excellence, research and service. Since its foundation in 1967, our institution has shaped generations of professional researchers and leaders, who continue to make a lasting impact in Puerto Rico and beyond.

UPR Cayey is located in the central region of Puerto Rico and serves primarily the municipalities of Aguas Buenas, Aibonito, Arroyo, Barranquitas, Caguas, Cayey, Cidra, Coamo, Comerío, Guayama, Gurabo, Patillas, Salinas, San Lorenzo, and San Juan. Since 1975, UPR Cayey is licensed by Puerto Rico's Postsecondary Institutional Board, and has been accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Its accreditation was most recently reaffirmed in 2019.

Figure 1

Region of Service



Note. Source: External Environment Analysis, from Strategic Plan 2025-2030 UPR Cayey.

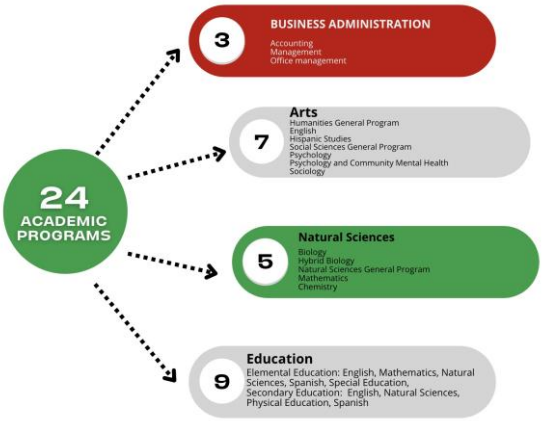
One of our most distinctive traits being designated by the Carnegie Classification (2021) as a baccalaureate college with an Arts and Sciences focus, the only within the UPR System possessing this classification. This underscores our university's commitment to undergraduate liberal education that prepares students for lifelong learning, civic responsibility, and diverse career pathways.

Programs of Study

At present, the UPR Cayey offers twenty-four (24) bachelor's degree programs in Sciences, Arts and Professional areas of expertise, as well as twenty-nine (29) minors.

Figure 2

Distribution of Academic Programs



Note. Distribution of Academic Programs by the Department.

In response to changing demographic, technological, and labor market dynamics, the university has implemented several strategic academic initiatives, including the development of a hybrid Biology program since 2022, the establishment of collaborative agreements with governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the creation of three new articulated transfer programs with other UPR campuses, as well as a revitalization of our Arts and Sciences curriculum.

These initiatives reflect UPR Cayey's commitment to academic innovation, access, and community engagement consistent with its institutional mission and the values of the University of Puerto Rico System (UPR).

Faculty Profile

As of August 2025, the UPR Cayey is served by a dedicated community of 148 faculty members and 227 non-faculty staff who collectively sustain the institution's academic and operational excellence. The student-to-faculty ratio of 24:1 reflects UPR Cayey's commitment to maintaining small class sizes and fostering meaningful student–faculty interaction as a cornerstone of the undergraduate experience.

Table 3

Distribution of Faculty Teaching for Grade Rank, Academic Rank, and Appointment Type for Academic Year 2024-2025

Grade Rank	Academic Rank	Appointment Type		
		Tenure	Tenure Track	Not Tenure Track
Doctorate	Professor	34	0	0
	Associate Professor	18	2	0
	Auxiliary Professor	3	14	33
Master	Professor	2	0	0
	Associate Professor	5	0	0
	Auxiliary Professor	2	0	0
	Instructor	0	0	17

Note. Source: jasper.upr.edu Master Report.

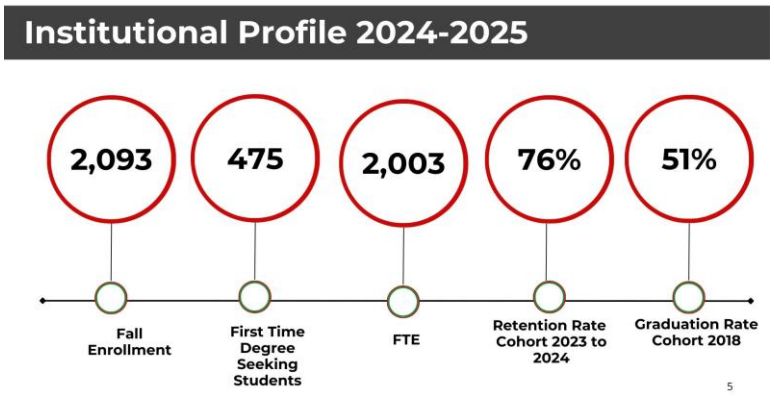
Faculty at UPR Cayey play an active role in shared governance and institutional decision-making. They contribute substantively to deliberative bodies such as the Academic Senate (AS), Administrative Board (AB), University Board (UB), and Governing Board (GB), ensuring that academic perspectives are central to institutional planning and policy. This level of engagement exemplifies UPR Cayey's enduring commitment to participatory governance, academic rigor, and a collaborative campus culture that prioritizes student learning and institutional integrity.

Student Population

During Academic Year 2024–2025, total headcount enrollment was 2,093, including 475 first-time, degree-seeking students. Approximately 88% of students are enrolled full-time, and 76% of first-time, degree-seeking students persist to their second year. The graduation rate for the 2018 cohort stands at 51%, among the highest within the UPR system.

Figure 3

UPR Cayey Institutional Profile 2024-2025



Note. IPEDS Fall Enrollment and Graduation Rate.

Student Achievement

The UPR Cayey has a distinguished record of academic excellence and student achievement. For more than 50 years, over 50,000 students have graduated. In 2022, the institution was honored with the *Excelencia in Education Award*, recognizing its success in advancing Latino student achievement and institutional effectiveness. UPR Cayey's science programs continue to demonstrate exceptional outcomes, with consistently high rates of graduate and professional school admission, particularly in medicine, the health sciences, and related fields.

The most highly subscribed academic programs include Biology, Natural Sciences, Business Administration, Psychology, and Psychology and Community Mental Health. Reflecting the university's mission as a primarily undergraduate institution, these programs are designed to prepare students with the knowledge, skills, and ethical foundations necessary to contribute meaningfully to their communities and professions.

The Institute of Interdisciplinary Research (IIR) serves as the central catalyst for scholarly and creative activity at the UPR Cayey. For more than two decades, the IIR has advanced the institution's mission by fostering a vibrant culture of research, collaboration, and mentorship across disciplines. During this period, the IIR has secured over $23 million in external funding, primarily from the National Institutes of

Health (NIH), to support faculty and student research initiatives. These efforts have enabled more than 245 faculty-led projects involving national and international partners, expanding the university's academic visibility and impact.

Among its most notable initiatives are METAS+, RISE/U-RISE, Mellon Foundation-funded projects, and the Antonia Pantojas Program, which connects Puerto Rican scholars in the diaspora with UPR Cayey students to promote academic exchange and mentorship. Through these programs, the IIR exemplifies UPR Cayey's commitment to undergraduate research, interdisciplinary inquiry, and global engagement hallmarks of the institution's academic identity and its enduring contribution to public higher education in Puerto Rico.

Undergraduate research is further enhanced at UPR Cayey by the Honors Studies Program, which has served as a site of rigorous academic formation and intellectual development for more than three decades. A central component of its curriculum lies in the public presentation and evaluation of undergraduate research projects anchored in research-intensive coursework, a practice that demonstrates both the depth of student learning and the Program's academic impact. These experiences extend beyond co-curricular engagement and are directly aligned with the educational mission of our institution. According to its last report, submitted in 2025, the Honors Studies Program has 40 actively enrolled students, and a total of 56 projects were publicly presented and approved in a seven-year cycle (between 2018 and 2025). The Program also includes an Honors Studies Program Student Association, which operates as a recognized student organization and sponsors complementary co-curricular activities in support of the Program's academic objectives.

These indicators collectively demonstrate the institution's strength in supporting student success, promoting degree completion, and sustaining its vital role in expanding educational opportunity for Puerto Rico's southern region.

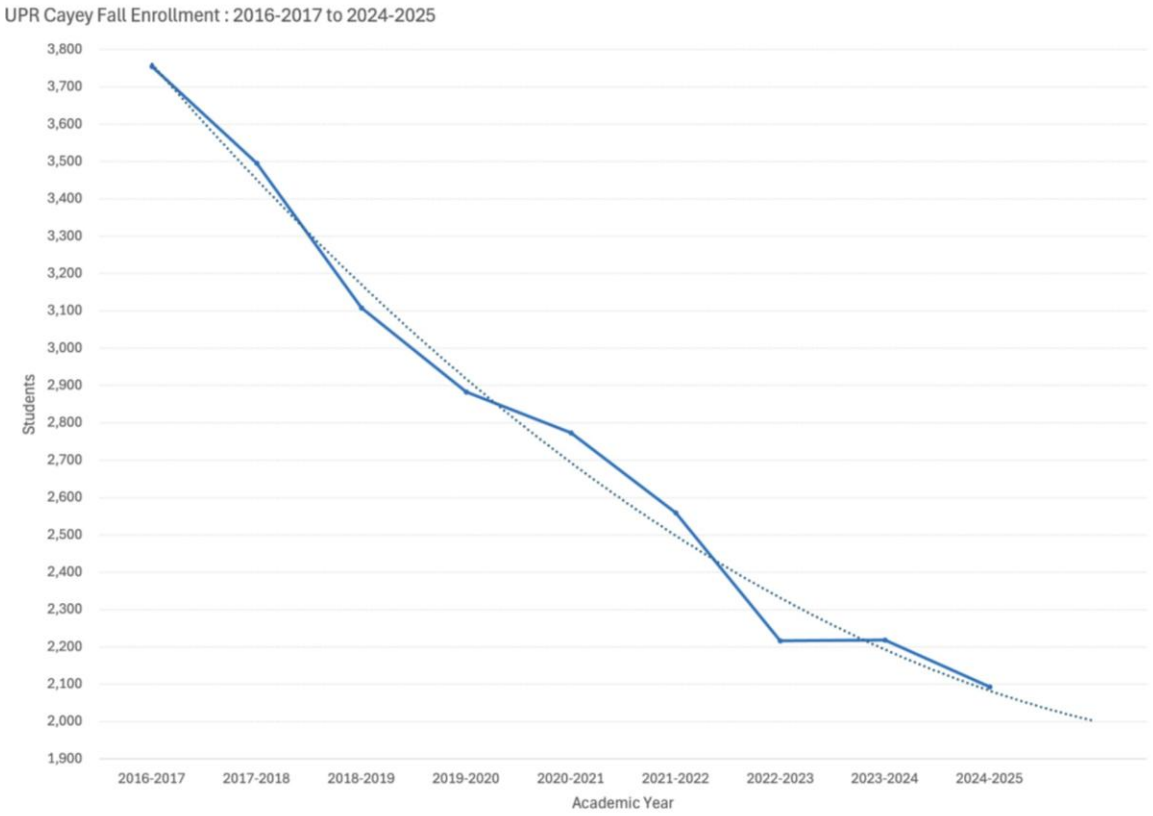
Economic Mobility and Student Success

Situated in an economically underdeveloped area, UPR Cayey plays a pivotal role in advancing the social and economic vitality of Puerto Rico's southern region. Through its diverse academic offerings, the institution prepares highly competent professionals equipped to meet the evolving needs of local and regional stakeholders.

Student demographics reflect UPR Cayey's commitment to access and equity: approximately 77% of students receive Pell Grants or other forms of financial aid, and 68% of the student body are female.

Figure 4

Projection of Enrollment for the Next Five Years



According to the Federal Reserve, public universities provide relief to students' debt because they are more affordable and accessible than private ones. As part of the public system, UPR offers an additional benefit to the population since its tuition is under the National Public System costs. In addition, the UPR Cayey default rate for FY 2020 and 2021 is 0%, which is lower than the average in Puerto Rico (10.0%).

Recent Developments

In October 2020, the UPR Cayey was awarded a $2,905,779 grant through the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (DHSI) Program, launching a transformative five-year initiative that concluded in September 2025. This institutional effort catalyzed a series of strategic interventions designed to elevate student success, strengthen academic infrastructure, and foster a culture of innovation across the campus. As part of its DHSI-funded initiative, the UPR Cayey implemented a proactive academic tracking system to identify and support at-risk students, with a strategic focus on first year and second-year cohorts. These students benefited from a comprehensive support network that included peer mentoring and tutoring, fostering resilience, and sustained engagement. Concurrently, the institution advanced a faculty-student innovation agenda, integrating progressive pedagogical practices and interdisciplinary collaboration. This cultural shift was reinforced by a bold reconfiguration of library spaces, transforming them into dynamic environments that promote research, creativity, and experiential learning. A flagship outcome of this transformation was the creation of the Student Success Innovation Center (SSIC). Developed at a cost of $375,000, the SSIC is strategically located on the fourth floor of the Víctor M. Pons Gil Library (VMPGL) and serves as a dynamic educational ecosystem designed to foster innovation,

creativity, and entrepreneurship among students and faculty. Guided by global trends that are redefining the role of academic libraries in the 21st century, the SSIC integrates artificial intelligence tools, makerspaces, digital literacy programming, and lifelong learning opportunities, positioning the library as a central hub for educational transformation and institutional renewal. The center comprises four Collaborative Stations, each designed to support group work, project development, and experiential learning.

Also, in the years comprising this self-study, our Academic Programs within the Liberal Arts have met at a crossroads. Declining enrollment and shifting student demand, pressure to demonstrate career relevance, rapid technological change and digital literacy expectations, as well as resource constraints and faculty sustainability amount to a stressed need for curricular transformation and interdisciplinarity. In this regard, two substantial grants from The Mellon Foundation are allowing us to allocate part of the awarded funds toward the revitalizing transformation of our programs in the Liberal Arts, as well as to generate the data needed to apply for future grants supporting our curricular transformation.

STANDARD I: MISSION AND GOALS

The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

At the UPR Cayey, our mission serves as the ethical and strategic compass that anchors institutional identity, guides decision-making, and affirms the University's public value. As a baccalaureate liberal arts campus within the UPR System, UPR Cayey advances a shared commitment to interdisciplinary education, academic excellence, equity, and service to Puerto Rico and beyond. This Standard examines how the institution's mission and goals are collaboratively developed, consistently embedded in practice, and continuously assessed to ensure coherence between purpose, planning, resource allocation, and student learning outcomes.

Grounded in a culture of shared governance and evidence-based reflection, UPR Cayey regularly evaluates and refines its mission and strategic priorities in response to evolving educational, social, and economic contexts. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators engage collectively in this process, ensuring that institutional goals remain both aspirational and actionable. The analysis that follows demonstrates how the mission informs curriculum design, budgeting, assessment practices, and institutional effectiveness, while also acknowledging the challenges inherent to a dynamic public higher education environment. Through this intentional alignment of mission, goals, and outcomes, UPR Cayey reaffirms its enduring responsibility to cultivate ethical, critically engaged citizens and to contribute meaningfully to our shared good.

Criterion 1 (a–c): Mission is Clear, Collaboratively Developed, and Embedded in Practice

UPR Cayey approaches the evaluation of its mission and goals as a hallmark of institutional integrity and reflective practice. Periodic review is built into our culture of shared governance and continuous improvement. UPR Cayey's mission affirms our identity as a baccalaureate liberal arts campus that cultivates ethical, autonomous, critical, and socially responsible citizens through interdisciplinary education in the arts, social sciences, natural sciences, and professional fields. We celebrate a culture in which research, community service, and artistic creation serve as signature strengths (I.1.1).

Since 2005-2006 (I.1.2), the mission of the UPR Cayey was revised during academic year 2018-2019 (I.1.3). This revision was developed in a collaborative manner with community members who contribute to institutional development and renewal. The university community and constituents participate, collaborate, and express themselves in the governing bodies through faculty and staff meetings, the AS, AB, and the General Student Council (GSC) (I.1.4).

During the current self-study period, our institution reaffirmed its core purpose while updating its mission and vision to reflect evolving educational and societal contexts, maintaining the long-standing institutional objectives. Our official mission was approved by the UPR Cayey AS through certification 15, 2018-2019, (I.1.3), and the community was informed through official email (I.1.5). The mission statement is in accordance with the systemic UPR's mission and vision. The AS considered the university community recommendations submitted in both public hearings and written communications and devised the following mission statement:

> The University of Puerto Rico at Cayey is committed to providing an interdisciplinary education that integrates the Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Professional Schools. It promotes the development of ethical, autonomous, critical, and socially responsible citizens.

We affirm our commitment to academic excellence through research, community service, and artistic creation.

In accordance to UPR System-wide norms (I.1.6), our mission and vision are informed by regional socio-demographic and economic analyses, and are consequently reviewed and reaffirmed through AS deliberation, faculty assemblies, student participation, and administrative leadership, resulting in the Strategic Plan 2020–2023 (I.1.7) and recently approved Strategic Plan 2025–2030 (I.1.8). These plans operationalize our campus priorities, timelines, and measures, ensuring a continuous loop from mission to assessment to improvement.

Criterion 1 (d–f): Mission Guides Planning, Resources, Curriculum, and Outcomes

Annual Chancellor's Reports, the Student Recruitment Plan 2024–2026, the Faculty Recruitment Plan 2023–2024, and unit annual reports explicitly reference our mission priorities. Senate agendas, minutes, and certifications also show sustained attention to keeping the mission current, coherent, and central to resource allocation (I.1.9).

Our academic programs and administrative offices approve their mission and goals based on the institutional ones. The Academic, Student, and Administrative Affairs Deans collaborate with faculty and staff in this endeavor.

The UPR Operational Budget 2023-2024 derives from FY2023-UPR: Budget Compliance Certification and Resolution, emitted by the FOMB (I.1.10), guides budgeting to reflect institutional priorities; the Chancellor's Budget Advisory Committee prepares petitions to the Administrative Board under UPR Regulations. Faculty hiring follows mission-driven curricular needs (I.1.11). Periodic program evaluation (I.1.12) and enrollment programming (I.1.13) ensure coherence from planning to outcomes. Evidence appears in Chancellor's annual reports, departmental needs assessments (e.g., Biology), and risk/budget projections.

Our institution's annual budgeting cycle links the mission, planning, budgeting, and allocation of resource processes. The UPR Cayey current Strategic Plan, and Operational Plan (I.1.14) provide the necessary guidelines to allow the ongoing processes. All these processes are mission centered and are used to develop and update programs and practices, and to evaluate institutional effectiveness.

The budgeting process starts with engaging annual strategic priorities, as specified in the year's Operational Plan. New prioritized budget initiatives derive from the assessment of institutional effectiveness during the previous year. Then, all Deanships and Chancellor's Office submit to the Budget Office their fiscal needs for the following year. To justify allocation of funds, Deans and the Chancellor must align their requests to operational plans, assessment results, and the strategic goals of both UPR Cayey and the UPR System for strategic plans. A budget proposal is finally made to the University Board in the Spring of each fiscal cycle.

In the years comprising this self-study, our administrative body has tacked fiscal pressures head on. To safeguard the implementation of our mission, our campus is tightening the linkage between resource allocations and mission priorities and recording those linkages in budget narratives and planning artifacts, thereby promoting transparency and resilience across planning cycles. Three times a year, the budget chairperson assesses institutional resources and submits reports, including current expenditures and account balances, to the Central Administration. This official works with the Office of Assessment, and Institutional Research (OAIR), which coordinates and foresees the assessment processes of all

institutional units. Subsequently, these assessment results are used by the UPR Cayey administration to determine policies and budget allocations that ensure both the fulfillment of the institutional mission and continuous improvement of academic and administrative operations. Operational plans and budget requests are supplemented with assessment data compared against previous results and performance indicators to set up continuous improvement practices. The Institutional Assessment Committee coordinates and foresees the assessment processes of all institutional units.

It can be attested that the budget supports UPR Cayey's mission and goals considering five main categories as shown in Table 4. This division ensures that all areas are funded with the existing budget.

Table 4

Budget Categories that Support UPR Cayey's Mission and Goals

Category	Services Provided
Administrative areas	Administrative, operational, maintenance expenses, institutional expenses, and fringe benefits
Academic programs	Baccalaureate, Summer sessions, UNEX, Division of Continuing Education, strengthening research and Honor Studies Program
Student services	Registrar's office, extracurricular activities, the athletic program, and the Office for Students with Disabilities
Institutional research	Institutional studies, research, and academic activities
Academic support programs	Library, Academic Support Center for Students and Faculty, and the Academic Affairs Deanship

Research, community service, and artistic creation stand at the heart of UPR Cayey's mission and identity. These pillars are not ancillary but defining features of our institutional character, reflected in policy, practice, and outcome. The Strategic Plan (I.1.8) establishes these dimensions as enduring priorities, while long-standing Senate policies, such as the undergraduate research, creative, and service requirements (I.1.15, I.1.16) and faculty evaluation criteria (I.1.17) ensure that scholarship and creation are embedded in the fabric of faculty and student achievement.

Supported by incentives for external funding (I.1.18) and by dedicated offices for Sponsored Programs and Academic Affairs, the institution sustains a thriving ecosystem of inquiry and innovation. Also, each year, the IIR coordinates more than thirty faculty-led projects, engaging undergraduate students in meaningful research experiences that culminate in peer-reviewed publications and the Student Symposium on Research, Creative Activity, and Community Service. This collective effort, recognized nationally through the *2022 Excelencia Award*, exemplifies the transformative power of a liberal arts education rooted in integrity, collaboration, and service to the public good.

The UPR Cayey mission is intentionally visible and consistently reinforced across multiple platforms. It is featured prominently on the institutional website, embedded in official communications from the Chancellor and Deans, and displayed throughout the campus environment, reflecting our commitment to transparency and shared purpose. This visibility aligns with the requirements of Puerto Rico's

Postsecondary Institutions Board and the UPR electronic communications policy (I.1.19), underscoring the institution's dedication to accessibility and public trust. The OAIR has begun measuring awareness of the mission among employees and is expanding this effort to include cyclical student surveys, ensuring that understanding of the mission is broad, inclusive, and evidence-based across all campus constituencies.

Evidence of the mission of integration appears throughout institutional operations. Annual Chancellor's Reports, departmental needs assessments, risk analyses, and budget projections consistently demonstrate how academic and administrative priorities are guided by the mission. Governance bodies collaborate to maintain this alignment, translating the mission into policies and decisions that advance student learning, scholarly inquiry, and community service. This collective stewardship exemplifies UPR Cayey's confidence in its direction and its commitment to ethical, data-informed governance that unites the campus in pursuit of the common good.

Criterion 2: Goals Appropriate to Higher Education and Consistent with Mission

The goals of UPR Cayey are rooted in the conviction that a transformative liberal arts education must be both interdisciplinary and socially engaged. Integrating the Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Professional Programs, we prepare students to think critically, act ethically, and contribute responsibly to their communities and the wider world. Guided by a tradition of academic excellence, we advance knowledge through research, community partnership, and artistic creation—endeavors that affirm our public purpose and our shared commitment to equity, integrity, and the common good.

To achieve its mission, UPR Cayey has issued Strategic Plan 2025-2030 (I.1.8), which sets the following goals, as indicated in Table 5. Our Institutional Goals are focused on four strategic areas: I. Student Success; II. Academic Offerings; III. Institutional Ethos; IV. Institutional and Fiscal Sustainability.

Table 5

UPR Cayey's Strategic Areas and Goals

Strategic Areas	Goals
I. Student Success	1. Promote student success by strengthening recruitment and admissions. 2. Strengthen institutional support that fosters retention and the completion of academic degrees. 3. Highlight interdisciplinarity, research, creativity, and the impact of community service as institutional pillars. 4. Restructure administrative and institutional service processes to place students at the center of the university's management.
II. Academic Offering	5. Improve and diversify academic offerings through the revision of existing programs, new certifications, diverse modalities, and stronger links with the labor market.

Strategic Areas	Goals
III. Institutional Ethos	6. Foster institutional ethos based on university identity, ethical commitment, social responsibility, and appreciation of culture.
IV. Institutional and Fiscal Sustainability	7. Manage resources responsibly by promoting fiscal responsibility, energy efficiency, and environmental stewardship. 8. Manage infrastructure and green areas responsibly.

Note. Source: Strategic Plan 2025-2030 of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey.

Our mission and strategic goals are aligned, and both respond to the institutional context and constituencies. Such alignment enables the UPR Cayey's governing bodies to use these goals as guidelines to develop new programs, to update their current ones and practices, and to evaluate institutional effectiveness, while maintaining focus on student success, academic excellence, research, and community engagement. This can be evidenced by the diverse learning experiences that provide the students with the knowledge, skills, and commitment to contribute to the island's development as well-prepared professionals.

Criterion 3 (a): Student Learning Outcomes and Achievement

UPR Cayey's strategic goals place student learning and achievement at the center of its mission. Institutional priorities encompass retention, graduation, transfer, and post-graduate placement, reflecting a holistic commitment to student success. Furthermore, UPR Cayey is committed to providing a diverse range of academic programs that cater to the varied interests and career aspirations of its students. For academic year 2024-25, the University awarded 337 bachelor's degrees. The pass rate for standardized examinations among UPR Cayey students enrolled in the Teaching Preparation Program is 100%, reflecting the high level of academic preparation and support provided to students to ensure their success (I.3.1).

The Strategic Plan's *Academic Environment* priority reaffirms this focus, pledging to attract, support, and retain a diverse student body while equipping graduates for advanced study, meaningful employment, and entrepreneurial innovation. The *General Education Skills and Contents* (I.3.2) framework ensures that every program is intentionally designed around measurable learning outcomes and rigorous assessment. Collaboration across units, including the Deanship of Academic and Student Affairs, the Registrar's Office, the IIR, and academic departments, creates a coordinated network of support that accompanies students from their first-year experience through degree completion. Regular program reviews, external accreditations, and systematic course evaluations provide additional layers of reflection and accountability, ensuring that institutional improvement remains evidence-based, inclusive, and aligned with the University's mission of integrity, equity, and service to the broader community.

Table 6

Fall-Enrollment, Transfer, Student-Faculty Ratio, Graduation and Retention Rate

	Academic Year						
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Total Enrollment	3,107	2,885	2,984	2,559	2,216	2,218	2,093
Transfer-in Enrollment	48	48	37	33	25	34	21
Student-to-faculty-ratio	25 to 1	21 to 1	23 to 1	19 to 1	19 to 1	19 to 1	24 to 1
Cohort	Cohort 2012	Cohort 2013	Cohort 2014	Cohort 2015	Cohort 2016	Cohort 2017	Cohort 2018
Graduation Rate	48%	52%	52%	47%	47%	49%	52%
Retention Rate	81%	82%	84%	77%	74%	79%	76%

Note. Data source from IPEDS Fall Enrollment, and Graduation Rates 2018-2019 to 2024-2025.

Criterion 3 (c–d): Resources, Support, and Use of Results

UPR Cayey demonstrates its commitment to student learning and achievement through strategic investment and evidence-based stewardship. Budgetary support and targeted programming are intentionally aligned with institutional priorities, ensuring that resources advance learning outcomes and promote equity in student success. Multi-year expense analyses, together with unit implementation plans, provide the data foundation for continuous improvement and accountability. This coordinated approach reflects a shared institutional ethos, one that views fiscal responsibility not as constraint, but as an ethical commitment to sustain quality, foster opportunity, and fulfill the University's public mission with integrity and purpose (I.1.9).

Criterion 4: Ongoing Assessment of Mission and Goals

Our campus reviews and modifies its mission and vision within successive planning cycles aligned to UPR system plans (I.1.7, I.4.1). The newly approved 2025–2030 plan (I.1.8) ties campus goals to mission-related priorities, emblematic projects, assessment focal areas, and strategies outlined in the Institutional Assessment Roadmap. Planning tools (SWOT/FODA, PESTEL, regional analyses, and trend reviews for enrollment, persistence, and graduation) inform goal setting. Broad input from deans, faculty, students, and external partners supports relevance and feasibility.

Our most recent analysis revealed that the UPR Cayey faces a challenging environment marked by persistent fiscal pressures, adverse demographic shifts, and a political and legal context that constrains financial autonomy. The historical reduction in government appropriations, combined with the stagnation of Puerto Rico's economy, places UPR Cayey in a vulnerable position. Factors such as tuition increases and federal restrictions on access to Pell Grants pose immediate and urgent threats, as they negatively affect student recruitment capacity and heighten the risk of attrition and non-completion. Moreover, the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board's control over the finances of both Puerto Rico and the UPR System limits the institution's ability to engage in stable long-term planning.

From a demographic standpoint, the sharp decline in the population aged 15 to 19 and the sustained rate of emigration represent the most critical threats to maintaining future enrollment stability. However, the expansion of UPR Cayey's service region from 11 to 15 municipalities—effectively doubling

its target population, along with innovative outreach strategies and flexible academic modalities, can substantially mitigate the impact of these adverse trends (1.4.2).

Technologically, advances in artificial intelligence, online tools, and the experience gained during the pandemic provide important opportunities for innovation in teaching, as well as for optimizing institutional processes and resources. Finally, the campus's geographic location exposes its infrastructure to recurrent risks from extreme weather events, underscoring the need to strengthen contingency and resilience planning. The PESTEL matrix summarizes the main opportunities, threats, and uncertain factors that will shape the campus's development in the coming years.

In view of this analysis, our university has identified the following FODA Analysis, shows in the following Figure:

Figure 5

UPR Cayey FODA Analysis

Strengths	Opportunities
• Campus location • Extensive inventory of physical facilities • Faculty excellence • Accredited academic programs • Strong mentoring and tutoring programs • Enriching experiences in research, artistic creation, and community service • Attractive minor concentrations • High retention and graduation rates • Efficiency of student services • Diversity of student organizations • Professional development opportunities for staff • Institutional incentives for faculty (FIDI)	• Designation of UPR Cayey as a historic heritage site • Access to external funding • Access to renewable energy funding • Increased demand for continuing education certifications • Availability of academic program accreditations • Revision of the classification and compensation plan for support staff • Shared services initiatives • Alliances with industry, pharmaceutical companies, and universities with graduate programs • Innovation in academic programs • Use of emerging technologies in the teaching–learning process • Staff training through UPR Avanza • Enhanced visibility through marketing and social media presence
Weakness	**Threads**
• Budgetary limitations • Low faculty participation in institutional activities • Reduction in support staff • Decrease in full-time faculty • Limited recruitment of employees • Loss of highly qualified talent • Insufficient dissemination of external funding opportunities • Deferred infrastructure maintenance • Slow automation of administrative processes	• Budgetary decision-making by external entities • Retirement of faculty and non-faculty personnel • Demographic decline in potential new student populations • Rising tuition costs • Competition among higher education institutions • Instability of the electrical power system • Vulnerability to natural disasters due to geographic location • Increases in sewer and electricity costs

This FODA ANALYSIS is a cornerstone of the ongoing assessment of our mission and goals and thus used to elaborate on our most recent Strategic and Operational Plans.

STANDARD II: ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

The UPR Cayey upholds its mission of integrity and ethical leadership through clearly articulated policies and well-established practices that guide every dimension of campus life. From ensuring academic honesty and responsible research to promoting equitable treatment of students and employees and the transparent use of institutional resources, ethical accountability is woven into our governance and daily operations. These commitments affirm the University's identity as a community grounded in fairness, intellectual rigor, and public responsibility.

Criterion 1: Fostering Intellectual and Academic Freedom; Protecting Intellectual Property and Freedom of Expression

UPR Cayey affirms its unwavering commitment to academic and intellectual freedom as essential to the pursuit of knowledge and the fulfillment of our public mission. The University's longstanding regulatory framework ensures the protection of academic freedom, freedom of inquiry and expression, and respect for intellectual property, which serve as cornerstones to our vibrant academic community. The *General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico* (I.1.6) enshrine academic and research freedom for faculty and investigators, while the *General Student Regulations* (II.1.1) and the *UPR Cayey Student Regulations* (II.1.2) safeguard students' rights of expression and authorship. Intellectual property is further protected through the *Institutional Policy on Intellectual Property* (II.1.3), supported by complementary policies on patents, authorship, and the commercialization of educational materials (II.1.4). These commitments are enacted through shared governance structures: the Chancellor's Office, AS, Deanships, and specialized committees ensuring that ethical principles are practiced, not merely proclaimed.

Evidence of compliance is visible in faculty service contracts, student participation in the annual *Research and Creative Activity Symposium*, and the scholarly output of the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research, collectively demonstrating that freedom of thought and responsible authorship is lived values at UPR Cayey. Looking ahead, the institution will continue to expand training and awareness initiatives on intellectual property and authorship ethics, reinforcing a culture where creativity, transparency, and academic integrity thrive in concert with its mission of public service and social responsibility.

Criterion 2: Fostering a Climate for Engagement and Success for All

Since its creation, UPR Cayey fosters a campus culture grounded in respect, equity, and open dialogue, affirming its mission to cultivate ethical and socially responsible citizens. The *Institutional Policy on Coexistence* (II.2.1) articulates this commitment, emphasizing dialogue, mutual trust, and peaceful conflict resolution as essential values of academic and civic life. These principles are reinforced through the *Student Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey* 2023–2024 (II.1.2), which ensures that community standards of respect are embedded in student conduct and campus engagement. The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) plays vital roles in sustaining this ethos, offering tailored support, advocacy, and continuous monitoring of campus climate for both students and employees.

Evidence from evaluations of student and employee services, as well as institutional data reported to the *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System* (II.2.2, II.2.3, II.2.4), demonstrates that UPR Cayey provides a safe and inclusive environment that values diversity of thought and background. At the same time, periodic reviews have identified opportunities to strengthen the dissemination of coexistence policies and expand training in conflict resolution and intercultural understanding. In response, the

campus is implementing enhanced educational initiatives and communication strategies that reaffirm its commitment to dialogue, dignity, and a respectful academic community—hallmarks of its mission and public trust.

Criterion 3: Fair and Equitable Grievance and Complaint Practices

UPR Cayey upholds a comprehensive and transparent framework for addressing grievances, ensuring that all concerns raised by students, faculty, and staff are managed promptly, fairly, and with respect to due process. Our regulatory foundation, comprising the *Protocol for Submitting Academic and Administrative Grievances* (II.3.1), the *Institutional Policy against Workplace Harassment* (II.3.2), the *Institutional Policy against Sexual Harassment* (II.3.3), and the *Policy against Discrimination based on Sex or Gender* (II.3.4), reflects UPR Cayey's unwavering commitment to equity, safety, and ethical accountability. Oversight is exercised collaboratively by the Student Ombudsperson, the Title IX Coordinator, OSSD and the Office of Human Resources (OHR), each playing a vital role in ensuring that institutional values of fairness and dignity are upheld in practice.

Transparency and trust are strengthened through clear communication, published procedures, and accessible reporting mechanisms. The *Student Right to Know* webpage and official institutional portals provide direct access to grievance policies and guidance for filing complaints, while recourse to licensing and accrediting agencies remains available when warranted. Together, these structures embody a culture of ethical responsibility and institutional responsiveness, one in which our commitment to integrity, inclusion, and the collective good is evident not only in policy but in daily practice. Looking ahead, our institution will continue to enhance awareness and professional development related to grievance procedures, reinforcing community confidence in processes that protect rights, ensure fairness, and uphold the ethical foundations of the UPR Cayey's mission.

Criterion 4: Conflict of Interest Policy

UPR Cayey upholds institutional integrity through a robust framework of ethical oversight and transparent practices that align with the highest standards of public accountability. The institution adheres to the principles of the Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office (PR-GEO) and enforces non-conflict-of-interest clauses within all faculty and staff contracts (II.4.1). Institutional ethics committees provide ongoing oversight to ensure that potential conflicts of interest are disclosed and appropriately addressed, safeguarding against any appearance of undue influence. In tandem, the OHR plays a central role in maintaining compliance by requiring faculty and staff to formally disclose any external employment or professional activities, whether for profit or non-profit, conducted outside regular working hours. Together, these mechanisms reflect UPR Cayey's ethical commitment to transparency, fairness, and responsible stewardship of public trust.

At least once annually, our OHR reinforces these expectations through a campus-wide memorandum distributed to all personnel, ensuring consistent awareness and compliance. The memorandum includes two annexes: (1) *Regulations Regarding Other Employment and/or Participation in For-Profit or Non-Profit Activities Outside Regular Working Hours*, and (2) the *Employment Notification Form for Engagement in Profit or Nonprofit Activities Outside Regular Work Hours.* These resources, also available through the OHR website, provide clear procedures for disclosure and institutional review. This proactive approach exemplifies UPR Cayey's culture of integrity; one that values openness, ethical conduct, and collective responsibility as essential to fulfilling its academic mission and serving the public good.

Through *Policy and Guidelines for Financial Conflicts of Interest and Commitments in Research and Sponsored Programs* (II.4.2), our institution adopted a comprehensive systemwide Policy and Guidelines

for Financial Conflicts of Interest and Commitments in Research and Sponsored Programs, reinforcing the institution's commitment to ethical conduct, transparency, and public accountability. The policy aligns with federal regulatory standards and establishes clear requirements for disclosure, review, management, and reporting of potential conflicts to safeguard the integrity of research and sponsored activities. Oversight is implemented at the campus level through designated Conflict of Interest Officers and Committees, ensuring timely evaluation and consistent enforcement. For UPR Cayey, this framework strengthens institutional credibility, protects academic independence, and affirms the University's responsibility to uphold integrity, equity, and trust in all scholarly and administrative practices.

Through *Institutional Policy for the Solicitation, Acceptance, and Administration of Private Donations* (II.4.3), UPR Cayey formally adopted a comprehensive Institutional Policy for the Solicitation, Acceptance, and Administration of Private Donations, reinforcing systemwide standards for transparency, ethical stewardship, and avoidance of real or perceived conflicts of interest. The policy establishes clear authorization protocols for individuals and units seeking donations on behalf of the University, mandates centralized coordination to prevent duplication and donor conflicts and affirms that all fundraising activities must protect the institution's reputation and public trust. Importantly, the policy explicitly prohibits the acceptance of donations conditioned on the promotion of specific products or services or any arrangement that could compromise institutional independence or create a conflict of interest.

The policy further requires that all donations be evaluated for alignment with the University's mission, academic merit, legal compliance, and long-term financial implications prior to acceptance. It safeguards academic freedom by prohibiting donor conditions that could influence curricular, research, or administrative decisions. Formal authority for acceptance resides with campus leadership, with additional presidential approval required for high-value or strategically significant gifts. Robust tracking, reporting, and donor accountability mechanisms ensure responsible administration, transparency, and systemwide oversight. For UPR Cayey, this framework provides a clear ethical infrastructure that supports philanthropic engagement while protecting institutional integrity, equity, and the University's enduring public mission.

Through *Regulation for the Acquisition of Equipment, Materials, and Non-Personal Services* (II.4.4), our institution approved a comprehensive Regulation for the Acquisition of Equipment, Materials, and Non-Personal Services, strengthening institutional safeguards for transparency, accountability, and ethical procurement practices. The regulation modernizes purchasing processes, establishes clear competitive procedures, mandates documentation and public records standards, and explicitly requires vendor certifications attesting to the absence of conflicts of interest prior to contract award. It further reinforces compliance with federal and Commonwealth regulations, prohibits procurement practices that could distort fair competition, and defines sanctions for noncompliance. For UPR Cayey, this framework provides a robust control environment that protects institutional integrity, mitigates financial and ethical risk, and ensures that all acquisitions support the University's academic mission and public trust with professionalism and equity.

Through *Policy for the Solicitation, Acceptance, and Administration of Donations 2020-2021* (II.4.5), UPR Cayey adopted a comprehensive Policy for the Solicitation, Acceptance, and Administration of Donations, establishing a uniform, systemwide framework to ensure transparency, ethical stewardship, and the prevention of real or perceived conflicts of interest in philanthropic activities. The policy explicitly prohibits donations conditioned on the promotion of specific products or services, any arrangements that could compromise academic freedom, or circumstances that may create conflicts of interest or the

appearance thereof. It defines clear authorization protocols, centralized coordination of fundraising activities, and rigorous evaluation criteria to ensure that all donations align with the University's mission, legal requirements, and public responsibility. For UPR Cayey, this policy reinforces institutional integrity by safeguarding independence in academic and administrative decision-making while strengthening donor accountability, transparency, and trust in the responsible management of external resources.

Through *Policy for the Solicitation, Acceptance, and Administration of Donations 2021-2022* (II.4.6), our institution formally adopted a comprehensive Policy for the Solicitation, Acceptance, and Administration of Donations, establishing a uniform systemwide framework that safeguards transparency, ethical stewardship, and the prevention of real or perceived conflicts of interest in philanthropic activity. The policy explicitly prohibits donations that are conditioned on the promotion of products or services, that compromise academic freedom, or that create conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof. It defines clear authorization protocols, centralized coordination of fundraising efforts, rigorous evaluation criteria for acceptance, and strict accountability mechanisms for the administration and reporting of donations. The policy also reinforces confidentiality protections, disclosure standards, and oversight responsibilities across all institutional units, ensuring consistency and public trust. For UPR Cayey, this certification strengthens institutional integrity by protecting independence in academic and administrative decision-making while promoting responsible engagement with external partners in support of the University's public mission and ethical obligations.

Criterion 5: Employment Fairness and Equity

Employment practices at UPR Cayey exemplify the institution's commitment to fairness, transparency, and equity in all aspects of personnel management. Guided by the *UPR General Regulations* (Chapter V: Personnel Regulations) and implemented through the OHR, recruitment, evaluation, and promotion processes are designed to uphold impartiality and compliance with applicable federal and state laws. Transparency in hiring and promotion, supported by clear documentation of appointments and evaluations, reflects UPR Cayey's dedication to merit-based advancement and professional integrity. Employee separations through voluntary resignations are governed by *General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico* (I.1.6), *Article 36 (Resignations)*, and operationalized through the *Letter to Personnel – Employee Resignations within the University System* (May 2022), which delineates the formal procedures for implementation. The OHR ensures proper documentation, approval, and record-keeping, reinforcing institutional accountability, and the ethical administration of human resources.

Consistent with a culture of reflection and improvement, our institution recognizes the opportunity to enhance data analytics in employment and promotion trends, particularly through the disaggregation of information by relevant demographic and role-based categories. Expanding this analytical capacity will strengthen evidence-based decision-making and advance one of the institution's strategic priorities (administrative reengineering) to improve efficiency, representation, and transparency across all employment processes. By deepening its use of data and reinforcing equitable practices, UPR Cayey continues to model a campus culture where integrity, professionalism, and inclusion guide every dimension of institutional life. Looking ahead, the institution will expand professional development opportunities and digital tracking systems to strengthen accountability and further ensure that hiring and promotion practices reflect the University's mission of equity, service, and public trust.

Criterion 6: Accuracy and Honesty in Marketing

UPR Cayey demonstrates its commitment to transparency and public accountability by ensuring that all external communications, including admissions materials, accreditation disclosures, and institutional announcements, are accurate, consistent, and aligned with the University's mission. The *Institutional*

Policies webpage serves as a centralized platform for access to regulations and official information, while annual reports, statistical data, and accreditation updates are shared openly with the campus community and external stakeholders. This intentional transparency reinforces institutional credibility and strengthens public confidence in the institution's role as a trusted educational and civic institution.

Clear and inclusive communication also defines UPR Cayey's internal culture. Through digital bulletins, open house events, faculty book presentations, academic workshops, and employment announcements for faculty and staff, the campus maintains active dialogue that reflects its collegial spirit and commitment to shared governance (II.6.1). The institution continuously assesses the effectiveness of these communication strategies through stakeholder feedback, social media analytics, and periodic reviews of content accuracy and accessibility. Looking ahead, UPR Cayey will continue to refine its communication practices, expanding digital and multimedia outreach, integrating new assessment tools, and reinforcing a culture of openness and integrity that honors its mission of educational excellence, equity, and service to the broader community.

Criterion 7: UPR Cayey is a Diverse and Inclusive Best Value Unit

UPR Cayey remains steadfast in its commitment to educational access and equity by ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have the financial and structural support available and that is needed to thrive. Approximately seventy percent (70%) of our student body benefits from federal and institutional aid programs, including Pell Grants, the Mellon Foundation (II.7.1), Federal Work-Study, and Title V initiatives. This substantial level of support reflects the institution's public mission and its success in leveraging external partnerships to expand opportunities. The Office of Financial Aid (OFA) provides comprehensive guidance to eligible students on the processes of application, disbursement, repayment, and refund, reinforcing transparency and accountability in the management of federal and institutional resources.

Accessibility and inclusion extend beyond financial support to encompass the physical and digital environments of the campus. Records of institutional accommodations, along with ongoing improvements to facilities and online platforms, demonstrate UPR Cayey's continued effort to ensure that all students, particularly those with disabilities, can participate fully in academic life. These commitments align with federal compliance expectations and form part of the institution's V*erification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations* (Documentation including URL where students and the public can find information on the cost of attendance and student financial aid data, such as: Net price Calculator (II.7.2); Cohort default rate (3 year); (%) students with loans (Institution); Average student loan indebtedness (Institution)).

Institutional policies further codify fairness and ethical stewardship in the allocation of financial resources. Institutional *Policy for the Award of Financial Aid to Students with Academic Distinctions* (II.7.3, II.7.4) govern the granting of financial aid to students with academic distinctions, ensuring merit-based equity and consistency across the UPR system. Likewise, *the Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Union of Non-Teaching Exempt Employees* 2021–2024 (II.7.5) outlines the Academic Development Program, providing professional growth opportunities for university personnel. Student withdrawal and refund processes are clearly articulated in *Institutional Policy for the Authorization of Extended Absences Applicable to Students of the University of Puerto Rico* (II.7.6) and in the *UPR Cayey Academic Catalog* 2025–2026, (II.7.7) which details tuition refund procedures and related academic regulations.

The campus also honors its commitment to those who serve through dedicated Military and Veterans Resources, providing guidance on enrollment, financial benefits, and academic accommodations for active and veteran students. Together, these practices embody UPR Cayey's mission of integrity, equity,

and service; ensuring that educational opportunity is both accessible and sustainable, and that every student has the support needed to succeed and serve society. Looking ahead, the institution will continue to strengthen data-driven assessment of aid programs and accessibility initiatives to further enhance transparency, equity, and student success.

Criterion 8: Transparency and Accountability

UPR Cayey affirms its commitment to integrity, transparency, and regulatory compliance through rigorous adherence to federal and state laws, as well as the policies of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). The institution maintains accurate and timely reporting through the *IPEDS Student Financial Aid* (II.8.1), providing verified data on student retention, graduation, and enrollment trends that inform institutional planning and public accountability. Procedures are in place to verify student identity in online education and to ensure the authenticity of academic engagement across all modalities. Substantive changes that affect the mission, programs, or operations of our institution are reviewed through the UPR System's established governance structures and reported to the Commission in full compliance with accreditation requirements.

Equally important, UPR Cayey ensures that its accreditation status and institutional achievements are communicated accurately and consistently across all official platforms, including the University website, catalogs, and public documents. These practices reflect our institution's culture of ethical governance and transparency; one that values evidence, accountability, and trust as essential expressions of our mission to serve the people of Puerto Rico through academic excellence and public responsibility.

Criterion 9: Periodic Assessment of Ongoing Processes

Ethics and integrity at UPR Cayey are not static principles but continuously assessed dimensions of institutional life. Regular evaluations of student and employee services, periodic reviews by the OSSD, and campus-wide surveys, including student climate assessments, generate valuable data on the effectiveness of policies and practices that sustain an ethical and respectful learning environment. These assessments highlight notable institutional strengths, such as a comprehensive grievance framework and updated regulatory policies that reinforce fairness and accountability. They also identify areas for ongoing enhancement, including the need to expand awareness and training on coexistence and community standards. Importantly, assessment findings are systematically integrated into strategic planning and continuous improvement processes, ensuring that ethics and integrity remain dynamic; evidence-informed commitments embedded in decision-making across all units.

UPR Cayey meets this criterion through a well-established framework of policies and supporting evidence. Compliance is documented in the *General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico*, specifically Sections 11.1 and 11.2 (Academic Freedom and Freedom of Research), and Section 32.1 (Freedom of Expression, Association, and Institutional Order) (I.1.6), and the *General Student Regulations*, which include Sections 2.14 and 2.15 (Recognition for Academic Work and Authorship; Student Rights of Expression) (II.1.1). Additional documentation appears in the *Student Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey*, Chapter 3, Article 3.3 (Extracurricular Activities at UPR Cayey) (II.1.2) and in the *CHE Institutional Policy Regarding Intellectual Property* (p. 2) (II.1.3).

Collectively, these policies and structures ensure that ethics and integrity are not only codified but actively practiced. UPR Cayey's ongoing assessments and culture of shared accountability affirm its identity as a transparent, mission-driven institution. Looking ahead, the campus will continue to strengthen training and assessment cycles that cultivate awareness, inclusion, and ethical leadership across all sectors of our institutional community.

STANDARD III: DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all programs, certificates, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences are consistent with higher education expectations.

The UPR Cayey provides rigorous, coherent, and meaningful learning experiences across all programs and instructional modalities. Its broad range of academic offerings reflects the highest standards of higher education and fosters intellectual depth, creativity, and engagement. These programs are strengthened by systemwide initiatives that promote curricular alignment and transferability, as well as by abundant opportunities for undergraduate research that immerse students in inquiry, discovery, and scholarly excellence.

Criterion 1: Program Design (a-b)

The UPR Cayey offers a rich portfolio of programs awarding bachelor and professional degrees and certificates that lead to recognized academic credentials and embody the institution's commitment to rigorous, coherent, and mission-driven learning experiences. Each program is intentionally designed to foster intellectual creativity, disciplinary depth, and integrative learning outcomes that prepare students to serve their communities and engage in an increasingly complex world.

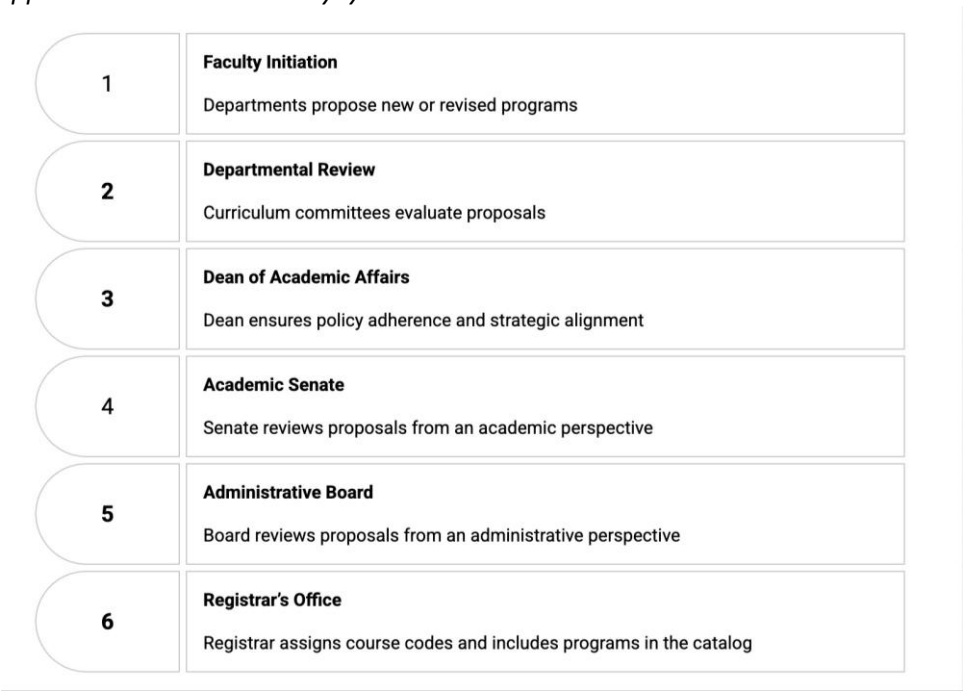
To guarantee academic quality and integrity, UPR Cayey adheres to a *Credit Hour Policy and Procedures* framework that ensures alignment with federal standards under 34 CFR 600.2 and 668.8(k)–(l) (III.1.1). This policy, harmonized with the UPR system regulations, is anchored in a series of Governing Board certifications that codify consistent academic expectations across the system (III.1.2).

Our institution maintains a robust and integrated framework of academic policies that affirms UPR Cayey's culture of evidence-based decision-making and ensures that program design, coherence, and curricular content align with institutional objectives and accreditation standards (III.1.3, III.1.4, III.1.5). This framework is supported by *Guide for the Creation, Uniform Coding, and Registration of Courses* (III.1.3, III.1.4), which provides comprehensive, systemwide guidance to ensure consistency and integrity in course development and coding. This policy also establishes standardized procedures for the review, approval, and documentation of courses, including the articulation of learning outcomes and the development of course syllabi. Furthermore, *Regulations for the Periodic Evaluation of Academic Programs at the UPR* (III.1.5), mandates the cyclical evaluation of all academic programs.

The development and approval of new courses and programs exemplify our collegial governance and its collective pursuit of academic excellence. This transparent and evidence-based process engages faculty, academic leadership, and governing bodies in ensuring that every new offering advances the institution's mission, aligns with strategic priorities, and upholds the highest standards of quality, as illustrated in the Figure below:

Figure 6

Curriculum Approval Process at UPR Cayey

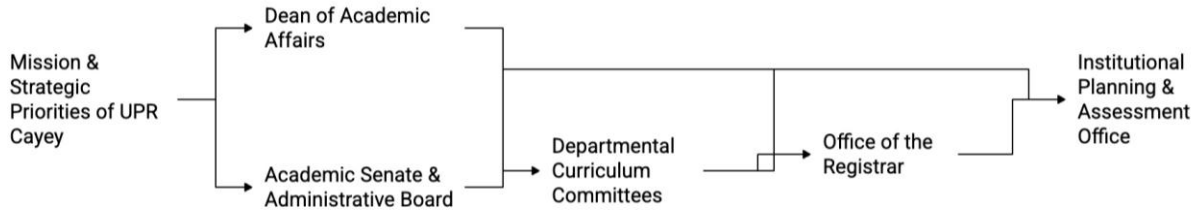


Our quality assurance also extends beyond program creation. Every five years, academic departments conduct self-evaluation reports, reviewed by the AB and AS, to confirm the appropriateness of program length, the integrity of learning outcomes, and the synthesis of student learning.

The administrative structure that sustains these processes embodies UPR Cayey's commitment to shared governance and institutional transparency through our *Guide for Academic Program Evaluation at the University of Puerto Rico* (III.1.6). Through clearly defined roles, collaborative decision-making, and accountability across academic and administrative units, the framework ensures that planning, evaluation, and innovation proceed in concert with the institution's mission and strategic priorities, as illustrated in the following Figure:

Figure 7

Academic Governance Framework Supporting Curriculum, Assessment, and Institutional Planning at UPR Cayey



In uniting mission, governance, and evidence, UPR Cayey affirms its role as a leader in higher education; one that continuously designs and refines programs to meet the highest standards of academic quality, equity, and public trust.

Criterion 2: Qualifications, Development, and Evaluation of Faculty

Mission-Aligned Faculty Excellence

At the UPR Cayey, student learning experiences are conceived, delivered, and assessed by a distinguished community of educators whose teaching, scholarship, and service exemplify the institution's mission of intellectual rigor, equity, and social responsibility. Faculty excellence lies at the heart of our shared public purpose: to cultivate reflective, ethical, and innovative learners capable of contributing to Puerto Rico and beyond.

In alignment with the institution's goals, faculty are expected to demonstrate rigor and effectiveness in instruction, assessment, and research; hold appropriate academic qualifications; and engage in ongoing professional development. They also participate actively in shared governance and institutional improvement, ensuring coherence, continuity, and vitality across all programs and modalities.

Rigorous and Transparent Appointment Processes

Faculty hiring and promotion follow transparent, systemwide procedures grounded in fairness and professional merit. Recruitment is governed by *Policies and Procedures for Faculty Recruitment at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey* (III.2.1) and system-level policies that mandate open searches and multi-level review processes. Departmental committees initiate candidate evaluations, followed by review by the Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA) and formal action by the AB.

Faculty credentials, academic preparation, and teaching loads are systematically documented in the *Faculty Profile* 2015–2024 (III.2.2) and verified through IPEDS and Human Resources reports. These data confirm that the vast majority of full-time faculty possess terminal degrees or the highest credential appropriate to their field. For new hires, UPR Cayey continues to prioritize doctoral qualifications in alignment with institutional goals for academic excellence and accreditation standards.

Teaching Effectiveness and Assessment of Student Learning

Our institution ensures teaching excellence through systematic evaluation and a culture of continuous improvement. Standardized course evaluation instruments, established under *Principles, Norms, Procedures, and Instruments for the Evaluations of Teaching Staff* (III.2.3, III.2.4), provide meaningful student feedback on instructional quality across all departments, and all faculty ranks. Complemented by peer review and faculty evaluations conducted through the Faculty Personnel Committee and AS, this process reflects a balanced and transparent approach to assessing teaching effectiveness. Data compiled by the OAIR, which includes student-faculty ratios, instructional workloads, and evaluation trends, inform evidence-based decisions that strengthen pedagogy, optimize resources, and advance student learning.

Professional Growth and Innovation

UPR Cayey fosters a vibrant culture of professional growth, pedagogical innovation, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Faculty development is supported through our IIR, the Office of Distance Education (ODE), and the Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies (DCEPS), which together offer workshops and seminars on topics such as artificial intelligence, research design, assessment, and course development.

These initiatives are reinforced by the *Professional Development Policy* (III.2.5), which formalizes opportunities for sustained learning and faculty advancement. Through these structures, faculty continually renew their teaching practices, integrate emerging technologies, and enhance their capacity to mentor students in diverse learning environments.

Equitable Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Faculty evaluation at UPR Cayey is guided by equitable and transparent processes grounded in clearly defined policies and criteria. Evaluation practices are inclusive of all faculty members, regardless of rank or tenure, affirming the belief that excellence is pursued at every stage of a professor's career. Within this culture of continuous improvement, systematic assessment is viewed not as mere oversight but as an opportunity for growth.

Guidance by the DAA, together with the active participation of departmental committees and the AS, ensures that recruitment, peer review, and promotion practices reflect shared governance and academic integrity. The OHR supports these processes by maintaining personnel records and monitoring adherence to established timelines. Evidence from faculty profiles, peer evaluations, and institutional surveys confirms that UPR Cayey's faculty consistently demonstrate excellence in teaching, research, and service. The self-study process also presented us with opportunities to strengthen documentation of professional development and streamline access to evaluation data, initiatives that now guide the institution's ongoing improvement efforts.

Sufficiency and Future Planning

Our institution sustains a robust and balanced faculty body that ensures the continuity and coherence of its academic programs. Currently, we have a total of 126 instructional staff, supporting a student-to-faculty ratio of 24:1 consistent with institutional goals and comparable to peer institutions (III.2.6). Although recent retirements and fiscal constraints present ongoing challenges, the institution has responded with strategic foresight. Through collaborative planning led by the DAA and the OAIR, UPR Cayey is implementing data-informed hiring and workload strategies to safeguard teaching quality, preserve academic integrity, and advance student success.

Criterion 3: Official Publication of Academic Programs

Mission-Anchored Transparency

As a proud member of the UPR System, we uphold system-wide standards that ensure the accurate and timely publication of all programs through official channels, affirming both the integrity of its curricula and the coherence of the UPR academic experience (II.7.7).

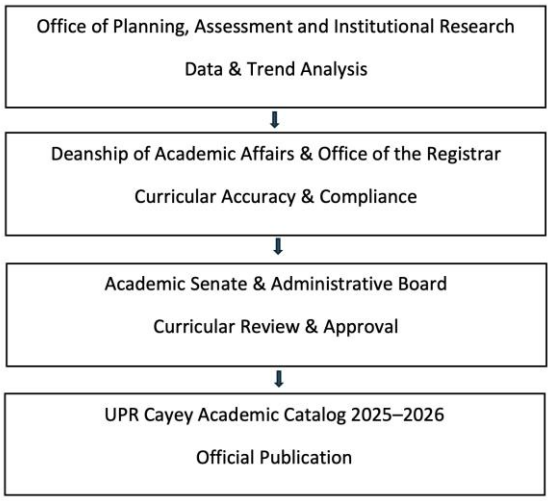
Our academic programs are consistently presented with clarity, precision, and purpose, ensuring that every student can understand degree pathways, graduation requirements, and the expected time to completion. This commitment to transparency reflects the institution's mission to provide equitable access to quality education and to empower our students to make informed academic choices.

Official Publications and Governance Oversight

UPR Cayey fulfills its publication responsibilities through a coordinated and transparent process that engages multiple offices and governing bodies in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of all academic information, as illustrated in the Figure below:

Figure 8

Coordinated Process for the Publication and Validation of Academic Information at UPR Cayey



Together, these entities uphold institutional integrity, guaranteeing that published information remains current, accessible, and aligned with UPR standards.

Multiple Avenues of Student Access

Multiple avenues of student access ensure that program information is communicated through coordinated, student-centered resources that promote transparency and informed decision-making, as illustrated in the Table below:

Table 7

Student-Centered Access to Academic Program Information at UPR Cayey

Resource	Description
UPR Cayey Academic Catalog 2025–2026	The official and regularly updated publication detailing all degree programs, curricular structures, credit requirements, and graduation policies. This catalog serves as the primary reference for students and advisors (pp. 62–100).
Academic Advising Resources	Student-centered advising tools, suggested studies plan, official curriculum maps, and course rotation schedules, which support efficient course sequencing and informed graduation planning.

Resource	Description
Institutional Data Reports (OAIR)	Reports produced by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research that track enrollment, retention, completion rates, and average credits at graduation, informing advising practices and institutional planning.
Program Listings and Enrollment Data	Verified institutional records documenting program offerings and enrollment trends, reported to external agencies such as MSCHE and IPEDS to ensure consistency, transparency, and accountability.
Supplementary Tools	Visual tables and graphical analyses of enrollment trends and student academic progress that enhance transparency and support student and institutional decision-making.
English as a Second Language (ESL) Initiatives	Catalog-based resources designed to facilitate access and academic success for non-native English speakers, reflecting the institution's commitment to inclusion and linguistic diversity.

Continuous Improvement and Foresight

UPR Cayey continues to refine its catalog and advising materials to include the expected time to degree for every program, enhancing the tools students and advisors use to track progress and plan effectively. Led by the DAA and the OAIR, these updates reflect a broader institutional commitment to data-informed decision-making and holistic student support. This initiative exemplifies how UPR Cayey transforms evidence into action, advancing academic transparency in service of integrity, equity, and student success.

Criterion 4: Student-Focused Resources and Opportunities

The UPR Cayey provides equitable learning experiences that ensure the success of all students across its academic programs and modalities. Rooted in the institution's mission of intellectual growth, social responsibility, and equity, our institution sustains ample learning resources, such as academic advising, library services, information literacy instruction, and distance education. All these resources are structured to meet the evolving needs of its diverse student population.

Complementing this framework, the definitions and modalities for online, hybrid, and multimodal courses, as outlined in the *Institutional Policy on Distance Education at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey* (III.1.3, III.4.1), provide a systemwide structure that standardizes digital learning environments and reinforces quality assurance across instructional modalities, thereby ensuring coherence and alignment between institutional practices and UPR system standards.

Their effective delivery is supported by a coordinated and integrated network of academic, technological, and student support units that work collaboratively to ensure seamless access and high-quality services. The DAA provides oversight of academic advising tools, curricular sequencing, and program information, ensuring coherence and alignment across academic offerings. In support of these academic functions, the Víctor M. Pons Gil Library and Learning Resources Unit manages physical and digital collections, interlibrary loan agreements, and information literacy initiatives that directly reinforce curricular goals and develop students' critical research skills. To ensure that these academic and learning resources are effectively accessible and supported, the Office of Systems and Information

(OSI) deliver technical assistance and training for faculty and students across face-to-face, hybrid, and distance learning modalities. Complementing these operational and academic supports, the OAIR oversees institutional data collection, IPEDS reporting, and the evaluation of student progress, library usage, and the effectiveness of learning resources. Additionally, and in alignment with institutional policies, our ODE ensures compliance with distance education standards while coordinating faculty training and student support services for virtual and hybrid courses. Collectively, these offices form an integrated support framework that sustains academic quality, accessibility, and student success.

Library and Information Literacy Resources

The Víctor M. Pons Gil Library stands as a cornerstone of intellectual engagement at UPR Cayey; one that unites the legacy of a longstanding academic institution (III.4.2) with the vitality of state-of-the-art facilities that respond to contemporary learning needs. In the years encompassed by this Self-Study, our library has evolved into a dynamic hub for scholarship and collaboration, constructing a modern Learning Commons that integrates technology, research support, and student engagement. Following Hurricane María, it also restored and redesigned its principal public gathering area, reaffirming its role as a space for community and renewal. Most recently, the inauguration of the Student Success Innovation Center reflects UPR Cayey's forward-looking vision, transforming tradition and resilience into a living framework for discovery, creativity, and student success.

Our Library holdings are strengthened by the *UPR Interlibrary Loan Agreement* (III.4.3), which provides access to collections across the UPR system and partner institutions. The Library's digital platforms and instructional workshops promote information literacy, aligning with institutional learning outcomes related to research, critical inquiry, and ethical information use.

Faculty integrate library-based resources and information literacy components into their master syllabi and course designs, ensuring that students engage with credible sources and academic research from their earliest coursework. The Library's active presence, both on campus and online, embodies the University's dedication to scholarly rigor and equitable access to knowledge.

Advising and Student Progress Support

Academic advising at UPR Cayey is both systematic and deeply student-centered. Program advising sheets, curricular sequences, and course rotation plans provide clear pathways to degree completion, while digital advising platforms offer real-time access to academic information and guidance. The Deanship of Academic Affairs, in partnership with the AS, ensures that all materials are regularly reviewed and approved through formal governance processes. Longitudinal data compiled by the OAIR including retention, time-to-degree, and completion of metrics, inform continuous refinement of advising practices. This evidence-based approach allows UPR Cayey to align academic support with student needs, ensuring that every advising interaction advance persistence, achievement, and success.

Equitable Access Across Modalities

UPR Cayey's learning resource framework guarantees that students in all instructional modalities (ie. face-to-face, hybrid, and distance education) receive consistent academic support. As we have continued to expand our multimodal offerings in the years comprising this self-study, our institution continues to align its infrastructure, faculty training, and student resources with MSCHE expectations for online and hybrid learning environments. The Distance Education Office works closely with departmental

coordinators to provide training in digital pedagogy and ensures equitable access to technology, course materials, and academic services.

Criterion 5: General Education: Scope, Skills, and Values

Mission-Driven Foundations of General Education

At the UPR Cayey, general education forms the intellectual and ethical foundation of every undergraduate degree. Grounded in the institution's mission to cultivate critical, socially engaged, and globally aware citizens, the General Education Program invites students into new areas of inquiry and human experience, thus broadening their perspectives, refining their reasoning skills, and nurturing the values that guide thoughtful participation in society.

Our general education curriculum exemplifies the institution's belief that undergraduate learning should be both integrative and transformative. By bridging the arts, sciences, and humanities, it expands students' capacity for reflection, communication, and innovation while reinforcing the principles of equity, service, and academic integrity.

Scope and Intellectual Breadth

UPR Cayey's General Education Program is intentionally designed to expose students to diverse domains of knowledge and modes of reasoning. It encourages exploration beyond disciplinary boundaries and fosters intellectual curiosity, cultural understanding, and ethical reflection.

Through its interdisciplinary courses and co-curricular opportunities, our program develops competencies that enable students to:

- Engage with cultural and global perspectives;
- Analyze and interpret complex social, scientific, and aesthetic phenomena; and
- Make well-reasoned judgments within and beyond their chosen fields of study.

This comprehensive framework ensures that students graduate not only with disciplinary expertise but also with the intellectual breadth necessary for civic and professional leadership.

Essential Skills and Integrative Learning

Our General Education curriculum ensures that all students acquire and demonstrate the essential skills of an educated citizenry:

- Oral and written communication across contexts;
- Scientific and quantitative reasoning for informed problem solving;
- Critical analysis and reasoning to evaluate evidence and construct arguments;
- Technological competency and information literacy for lifelong learning.

These competencies are embedded across disciplines and reinforced through assessment at the course, program, and institutional levels. The Dean of Academic Affairs oversees curricular coherence and integration, while the General Education Committee of the AS reviews course proposals, approves new offerings, and ensures alignment with core competencies.

Departments integrate general education outcomes into their own curricula and assessment plans, supported by the OAIR, which coordinates the evaluation of learning outcomes and maintains longitudinal data for institutional effectiveness reports.

Values, Ethics, and Diverse Perspectives

Consistent with UPR Cayey's mission and the broader purpose of higher education, the General Education Program embeds on the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives into the undergraduate experience. Through courses in the social sciences, humanities, and interdisciplinary seminars, students explore the ethical dimensions of knowledge, the responsibilities of citizenship, and the social relevance of their academic pursuits.

This commitment is codified in a set of key institutional policies and guiding documents that collectively define the philosophy, structure, and implementation of general education at UPR Cayey. A *New General Education Model* (I.3.2), establishes the foundational curricular philosophy and structural framework for general education across the institution. Building upon this model, the *Assessment Report of the General Education Model at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey* (III.5.1) reinforces the integration of general education competencies throughout all academic programs, ensuring coherence and alignment between general education and disciplinary learning outcomes. These principles are operationalized in the *UPR Cayey Academic Catalog* (II.7.7), which details the 39-credit General Education curriculum, including the required 3-credit First-Year Interdisciplinary Seminar designed to introduce students to critical thinking, ethical reflection, and interdisciplinary learning. Further reinforcing this institutional approach, the *UPR Cayey Strategic Plans 2020-2023* and *2025-2030* (I.1.7, I.1.8) underscore interdisciplinarity, the integration of research and information literacy, and the promotion of cultural and global awareness as core elements of student development and academic excellence.

Criterion 6: Graduate Professional Education

UPR Cayey does not offer graduate professional education.

Criterion 7: Review and Approval of Third-Party Providers

The UPR Cayey ensures that all student learning opportunities designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers undergo rigorous institutional review and approval. Guided by the principles of academic integrity, transparency, and accountability, these review processes safeguard alignment with the University's mission, uphold federal compliance, and protect the quality of student learning experiences.

In recent years, UPR Cayey has experienced an increase in students with special hearing needs, prompting a deliberate institutional response to ensure equitable access to all learning opportunities. The University has engaged certified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters to support students across academic and extracurricular settings, reinforcing its commitment to inclusion and student success. These third-party professionals are evaluated by the Interdisciplinary Center for Student Development (ICSD), which monitors their performance to ensure quality, professionalism, and alignment with institutional standards. This initiative exemplifies UPR Cayey's proactive approach to accessibility, transforming emerging needs into opportunities to strengthen its culture of care, equity, and educational excellence.

UPR Cayey's approach reflects both the ethical stewardship and the professional rigor that characterizes its governance culture. The institution's policies and practices meet the expectations of MSCHE Standard

III, Criterion 7, affirming that every external partnership supports UPR Cayey's educational purpose and public value.

Third-party involvement in the institution's educational and research activities is governed by an integrated framework of institutional and system-wide policies designed to ensure clarity, regulatory compliance, and continuous oversight. At the operational level, the *UPR Handbook of Policies and Procedures for Sponsored Programs (2024)* (III.7.1) establishes standardized requirements for proposal submission, internal review and routing, and post-award management of externally funded or third party-supported activities. Complementing these procedures, *Institutional Policy for the Acquisition, Use, and Oversight of External Funds Received by the University of Puerto Rico for Educational, Research, and Public Service Programs* (III.7.2) formally delegates authority to the Chancellor as the institutional representative responsible for approving proposals, agreements, and contractual arrangements involving external entities. To ensure alignment with federal accreditation and regulatory expectations, the UPR substantive change policy and procedures (III.7.1) provides guidance for institutional compliance with 34 CFR § 602.22(a)(3)(J) in cases involving substantive changes related to third-party providers. Additionally, and in support of institutional transparency and student protection, the *Public Disclosures Policy* (III.7.3) (34 CFR § 668.43(a)(12) (i–iv)) mandates timely and accurate disclosure to students and the public whenever educational programs include third-party participation. Collectively, these policies form a cohesive oversight structure that safeguards institutional integrity, accountability, and academic quality.

UPR Cayey follows a clearly defined, multi-stage protocol for the review, approval, documentation, and management of all third-party engagements, ensuring academic merit, fiscal responsibility, and compliance with applicable institutional and regulatory requirements (III.7.1). The implementation of this protocol is coordinated through a transparent and collegial governance structure that delineates responsibilities while fostering shared accountability. Within this framework, the Chancellor serves as the institutional representative and final approving authority for all third-party agreements; the External Resources Office oversees proposal development, contract administration, and compliance monitoring; Department Chairs and Deans provide academic oversight by reviewing scholarly merit and confirming resource adequacy; and the Budget Office ensures fiscal compliance and institutional sustainability. Together, this integrated process and governance framework ensures that external partnerships are managed in a manner consistent with institutional priorities, ethical standards, and the University's commitment to transparency, accountability, and service to the public good.

Criterion 8: Assessment of Student Learning Experiences

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

At the UPR Cayey, the assessment of student learning is a cornerstone of institutional effectiveness and academic integrity. Rooted in the University's mission to cultivate critical, creative, and socially engaged thinkers, assessment is understood not as a compliance exercise but as an ongoing process of reflection, renewal, and evidence-based improvement.

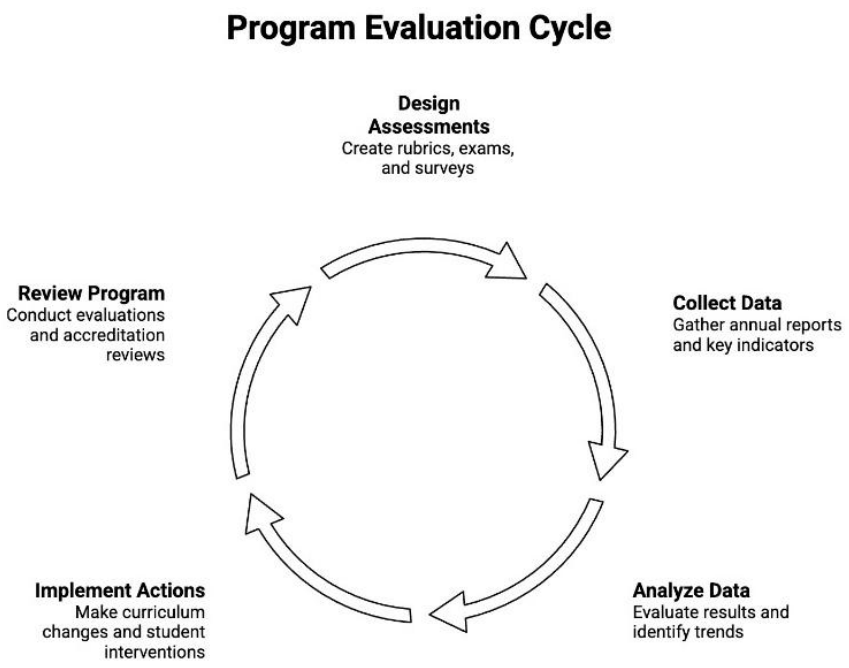
The institution's periodic and systematic evaluation of student learning experiences ensures that academic programs remain coherent, rigorous, and responsive to the evolving needs of students and society. Findings are not only documented but acted upon, reinforcing a culture where evidence informs decision-making at every level of the academic enterprise.

UPR Cayey's commitment to systematic assessment is grounded in a comprehensive and well-established policy framework that promotes transparency, consistency, and alignment with MSCHE

expectations. This framework is anchored by *Institutional Retention Rates* (III.8.1), which institutionalizes the monitoring and reporting of student retention and suspension indices, thereby formalizing the practice of tracking student outcomes over time. Complementing this policy, UPR Cayey's *Grade Reporting Policy* (III.8.2) regulates grade reporting processes to ensure accurate, consistent, and timely documentation of student academic performance across all courses. In support of assessment of integrity and data transparency, the UPR Handbook of Policies and Procedures for Sponsored Programs (2024) reinforces institutional requirements related to assessment, reporting, and compliance in externally supported activities. Additionally, the *UPR Cayey Academic Catalog* (2025–2026) (II.7.7) explicitly defines assessment as a formal component of academic program requirements and accreditation obligations, further embedding systematic assessment within the institution's academic and quality assurance processes.

Figure 9

Cyclical Process for the Assessment of Student Learning at UPR Cayey



Assessment at UPR Cayey is sustained by a collegial and integrated governance structure that ensures coherence across programs and levels shows in the following Table:

Table 8

Roles and Responsibilities in the Student Learning Assessment Process at UPR Cayey

Unit	Primary Responsibilities
Office of Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research	Coordinates the design, data collection, analysis, and campus-wide dissemination of assessment results, ensuring consistency, transparency, and evidence-based decision-making.
Dean of Academic Affairs	Oversees compliance with academic program standards and ensures that assessment results are systematically incorporated into academic planning and institutional strategic initiatives.
Academic Senate and Standing Committees	Review assessment findings, enact policy adjustments as needed, and monitor institutional compliance with assessment and accreditation expectations.
Departments and Faculty	Implement assessment of instruments at the course and program levels, interpret results, and enact curricular or pedagogical modifications to improve student learning outcomes.
Accreditation and Program Evaluation Units	Align internal assessment cycles with external accreditation requirements, ensuring continuous quality enhancement and accountability.

This collaborative model exemplifies a culture of shared responsibility and institutional pride, where assessment is viewed as a collective endeavor that strengthens both academic excellence and student achievement.

STANDARD IV: SUPPORT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

UPR Cayey fulfills its commitment to student success by recruiting and admitting students whose diverse backgrounds and aspirations align with its mission and academic programs. Our institution is committed to student success as evidenced by a comprehensive and effective support system staffed by qualified professionals, fostering a high-quality learning environment that promotes student retention, persistence, and the overall student experience.

Criterion 1: Recruitment, Admissions, Enrollment, and Retention

Recruitment and Admissions Overview

UPR Cayey approaches recruitment and admissions with confidence, purpose, and a deep commitment to equitable access, core values that shape its public mission as part of the UPR. Guided by the centralized structure established by the UPR Central Administration's Admissions Office (UPRCA-AO), the admissions process reflects a coordinated, student-centered model that ensures clarity, transparency, and consistent standards across the University's eleven campuses. UPRCA-AO maintains accurate and comprehensive information on all academic offerings, available both in print and online, and anchored in the institutional requirements defined in *Supplementary Policies and Regulations for Undergraduate Admission to the University of Puerto Rico* (IV.1.1) and the *UPR Cayey Academic Catalog* (II.7.7).

At UPR Cayey, recruitment is an intentional extension of our institution's mission to broaden educational opportunities. The Admissions Office (AO) provides prospective students and families with accessible, evidence-based guidance on admissions requirements and financial aid processes. Through campus-based orientations, individualized support, and the publication of updated program information, the institution ensures that applicants understand the steps necessary to enter the institution and secure financial support, an effort that reinforces our shared commitment to student success from the very first point of contact.

Recognizing its responsibility to the region it serves, UPR Cayey deploys its admissions officers to high schools across its geographical service area. These visits are designed to provide students with clear, accurate, and empowering information about Cayey's academic programs and the broad range of financial aid options available. While priority is given to schools within the campus's primary region, our institution remains responsive to any school (public or private) that requests orientation, reflecting an ethic of inclusion and a belief that access to higher education should never be limited by geography.

In addition to school visits, UPR Cayey hosts conferences, on-site sessions, and webinars for high school counselors. These professional development opportunities create a collegial network of educators who are informed about admissions updates and are well-equipped to guide students as they navigate their options. This collaborative approach exemplifies UPR Cayey's commitment to partnership, transparency, and service to its broader community.

The application period runs from October to January, allowing students to select up to three program alternatives in order of preference. Admission decisions are communicated in early February, giving students and families ample time to prepare for enrollment and financial planning.

In alignment with broader efforts across higher education to support diverse learners, the UPR has implemented a comprehensive and evolving admissions framework grounded in systemwide policies and continuous improvement. The adoption of the *UPR Regulations for Admission to the University of Puerto Rico* for Students from High School (IV.1.2) establishes consistent, transparent criteria for undergraduate admissions, including adjustments to admission index scales (AIS) to ensure equity and fairness.

Building upon this foundation, the UPR system has advanced flexible and innovative admission pathways through the *UPR Admissions Pilot Plan* (IV.1.3, IV.1.4), and extended this plan, and the adoption of a *New Admission Policy for Non-Traditional Students* (IV.1.5). These initiatives expand access by incorporating alternative evaluation methods such as placement tests, portfolios, interviews, essays, and letters of recommendation, recognizing multiple forms of academic potential and non-linear educational trajectories across all undergraduate programs.

Complementing these systemwide policies, targeted recruitment and special admission provisions further reinforce the institution's mission to promote access and inclusion. These include recruitment initiatives to increase new student enrollment *Student Recruitment Plan 2024-2025 and 2025-2026* (IV.1.6) and established policies for students with functional diversity, gifted students, homeschoolers, early admissions, and extended admission pathways *Admission Process for Gifted Students* (IV.1.7, IV.1.8, IV.1.9).

Through these coordinated, mission-driven recruitment and admission practices, the UPR system and UPR Cayey affirm their longstanding commitment to equity, opportunity, and academic excellence in service to the people of Puerto Rico.

At UPR Cayey, this implementation of these policies and procedures is primarily fulfilled through the following structured and multi-layered framework:

Table 9

Key Units and Responsibilities in the Admissions Process

Unit	Primary Responsibilities
Admissions Office (AO)	Oversees student recruitment, admissions processing, and the evaluation of special admissions categories, ensuring compliance with institutional policies and equity standards.
Dean of Academic Affairs	Coordinates institutional capacity planning for admissions and ensures alignment between enrollment targets, academic offerings, and available resources.
Academic Departments	Evaluate program-level needs, capacity, and demand, and collaborate in admissions projections and enrollment planning.
Academic Senate	Certifies admissions policies, enrollment quotas, and procedural guidelines in accordance with shared governance principles.
Division of Continuing Education	Supports recruitment pipelines, outreach initiatives, and access pathways for diverse student populations.

Financing a UPR Cayey Education (1a)

The GB of the UPR establishes registration fees for the UPR Cayey. Every academic year the estimated annual study fees may vary; these fees are revised and updated yearly. This estimated annual study fee is used as a base for granting financial aid from federal, state, and private funds. Table 10 details the registration fees for students admitted at the UPR Cayey from 2018-2019 to 2024-2025.

Table 10

Registration Fees Per Credit for Students Admitted (2018-2025)

Fees	Academic Year						
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Resident Students	$124.00	$124.00	$145.00	$157.00	$157.00	$157.00	$157.00
Non-Resident Students	$186.00	$124.00	$145.00	$157.00	$157.00	$157.00	$157.00
Foreign Students	$248.00	$124.00	$145.00	$157.00	$157.00	$157.00	$157.00

Note. Source: New Fiscal Plan for University of Puerto Rico, 2018, as certified by the Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico.

The Financial Aid Office (FAO) at UPR Cayey plays an essential role in advancing our institution's mission of access, equity, and student success. Guided by federal, state, and institutional regulations, the office is dedicated to supporting students with financial need by ensuring they receive all aid for which they are eligible, empowering them to persist, thrive, and achieve their academic goals. Reflecting our commitment to transparency and student-centered service, UPR Cayey maintains clearly articulated financial aid policies and offers a comprehensive array of grants, scholarships, and loan programs that expand educational opportunity for a diverse student body.

Information about financial aid programs, eligibility requirements, and application procedures is readily available through the university's website and the Institutional Catalog (II.7.7), ensuring that students and families have reliable and accessible resources to inform their financial planning. Demonstrating the scale and impact of this support, Table 11 details the total financial aid disbursed to UPR Cayey students in 2024–2025, disaggregated by type of aid. This evidence underscores our continued commitment to responsible stewardship of financial resources and to reducing economic barriers to higher education.

Table 11

Financial Aid (2024-2025)

Type of Financial Aid	2024-2025
Pell Grant	$10,664,884
Institutional Waivers	484,124
Endowment Fund	0
SEOG Grant	197,366
Private Grant	0
Loans	422,500
Work-Study	455,386
Military, veteran educational benefits	252,054
Others	40,383
Total	$12,516,697

Note. Source: NEXT Report, Student Financial Aid Office.

The UPR demonstrates an enduring commitment to reducing financial barriers and expanding access to high-quality public higher education. In alignment with this mission, the GB approved *Institutional Policy on the Awarding of Financial Aid to Students with Academic Distinctions at the UPR* (IV.1.10), which extends significant financial benefits to students whose family income does not exceed $100,000 and who enroll in at least 12 credits per semester, maintain satisfactory academic progress, and demonstrate unmet financial need. This policy reflects the institution's ethical obligation to ensure that economic circumstances do not limit students' educational aspirations.

At UPR Cayey, this commitment is both substantial and measurable. Approximately eighty-five percent (85%) of our students receive financial assistance from a range of federal, state, and institutional sources that collectively enable them to fully cover the cost of tuition. Notably, this includes students who previously received only partial support through the Federal Pell Grant; under the current institutional aid structure, the remaining portion of their tuition is fully subsidized. These investments underscore the University's dedication to advancing equity, supporting student success, and fostering the economic mobility of the communities it serves.

Entry Experience (1b, 1c)

Orientation Experience

UPR Cayey provides a comprehensive set of services designed to strengthen the student's experience from the moment they enter the institution and throughout their academic journey. Central to these efforts is an academic advising system that reflects our commitment to student success, personalized support, and holistic development. Each semester, faculty and administrators collaboratively offer structured advising sessions to guide students in planning their coursework for the upcoming term. This

process ensures that students make informed decisions aligned with their academic goals and degree pathways.

Every academic department maintains a dedicated team of faculty advisors who bring deep knowledge of curricular structures, prerequisites, and graduation requirements. These advisors review students' academic histories, including completed coursework, current enrollment, and remaining degree components, to develop clear pathways toward timely completion or, when appropriate, facilitate seamless transfer to other campuses within the UPR system. Their role extends beyond course selection; they serve as mentors and resource connectors who help students navigate challenges, identify opportunities, and access institutional services that support learning and persistence.

Academic advising also creates meaningful touchpoints between students and faculty, fostering a supportive environment where questions, concerns, and aspirations can be addressed openly. Advisors routinely share information about tutoring services, mental health and wellness resources, financial aid processes, and other initiatives that enhance student achievement. For additional guidance, students may meet with the Registrar or their assigned evaluator to review degree progress and ensure alignment with institutional policies and requirements.

Through these intentional, student-focused advising practices, UPR Cayey cultivates a culture of care and guidance that empowers students to achieve their educational goals and thrive within the university community.

Student retention at UPR Cayey is supported through a comprehensive, coordinated set of strategies implemented by the Dean of Academic Affairs in collaboration with academic programs and student support units. These strategies address multiple dimensions of student success, including academic preparedness, early monitoring, financial support, emotional well-being, engagement, and life skills development, and are designed to promote persistence, timely progression, and a sense of belonging. These strategies show in Table 12.

Table 12

Student Retention Strategies Coordinated by the Dean of Academic Affairs at UPR Cayey

Retention Strategy	Description
Orientation Programs	Academic program orientations are offered through academic departments, the University website (via announcements and flyers), and official social media platforms using videos and podcasts to ensure broad student access to program information.
Academic Support	The Tutoring Program supports students in strengthening course-related knowledge and developing academic and professional skills. Tutoring services are available in both face-to-face and virtual modalities.
Early Monitoring	Faculty monitor class attendance, while the Office of the Registrar administers attendance census reporting after the third week of classes and again at the midpoint of the semester to identify students at risk.
Scholarship and Financial Aid Programs	Students have access to loans and scholarships sponsored by nonprofit organizations, including the *Maestro* Cares Foundation, to support persistence and degree completion.

Retention Strategy	Description
Emotional and Mental Health Support	The Department of Counseling and Psychological Services provides emotional support, counseling services, support groups, and wellness resources through referrals or self-initiated student engagement.
Curricular Enrichment	Experiential learning opportunities and extracurricular activities enhance student engagement, interest, and sense of belonging. The institution supports participation in more than 30 student organizations.
Life Skills Development	Workshops and programs offered throughout the academic year promote essential life skills, including study strategies, time management, problem-solving, and communication skills.

Equally vital to UPR Cayey's student success infrastructure is the ISDC, which plays a transformative role in helping students meet their personal, academic, and professional goals. Grounded in preventive, developmental, and remedial approaches, ISDC supports students across the personal, social, educational, and psychological domains, as well as in life and career planning. This multidimensional model embodies our mission of fostering well-being, resilience, and holistic student development.

Professional staff of ISDC are composed of highly trained specialists who hold the required academic credentials, licensure, certifications, and substantial experience in applying cognitive, affective, and behavioral theories. Their integrative approach recognizes the complexity of human behavior and ensures that interventions are evidence-based, ethical, and responsive to the diverse needs of the student community. In addition, ISDC collaborates closely with faculty, non-teaching personnel, and the administration to enhance the campus climate and promote an environment conducive to student learning and well-being.

To ensure efficient, confidential, and high-quality service delivery, ISDC utilizes TITANIUM, an electronic clinical platform that manages all aspects of its operations, including appointment scheduling, reminders, attendance records, contact information, individual and group session notes, reports, and diagnostic documentation. According to data compiled through this system, ISDC has served approximately one third of our student population throughout the last five years. These metrics highlight the unit's essential role in supporting student persistence and overall institutional retention efforts.

UPR Cayey also maintains a rigorous and transparent process for evaluating students' eligibility for graduation, overseen by the Registrar's Office. Each evaluator is assigned a cohort of students based on last name and is responsible for monitoring academic progress, guiding students through degree requirements, and ensuring timely degree completion. The degree requirements for all programs at UPR Cayey are published in the *UPR Cayey Academic Catalog 2025-2026* (II.7.7), further supporting transparency, accountability, and student empowerment.

Support for Inadequately Prepared Students

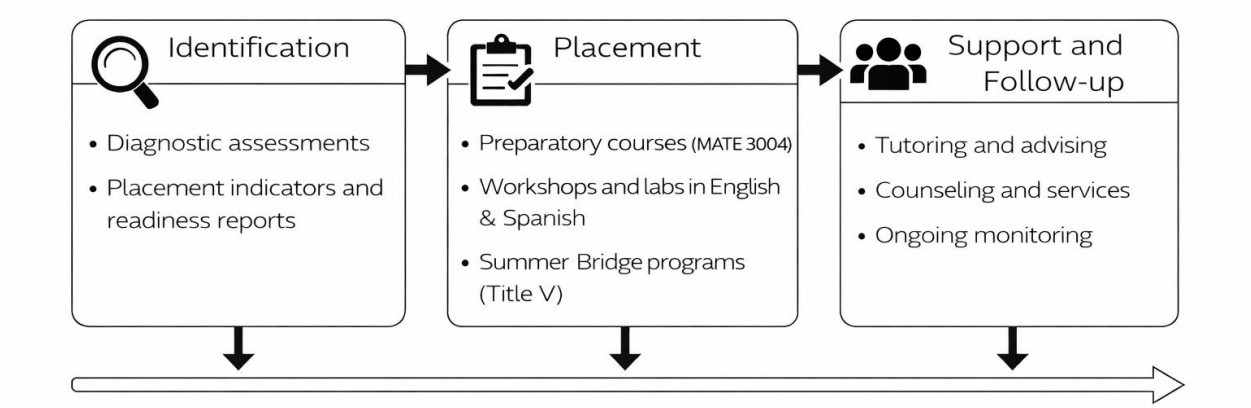
UPR Cayey upholds a strong commitment to educational equity by ensuring that students who enter the institution with academic gaps are systematically identified, placed appropriately, and supported through intentional academic and co-curricular interventions that promote persistence and long-term success. This commitment reflects UPR Cayey's broader mission of expanding access to high-quality public education while maintaining clear academic standards that foster student achievement.

Institutional policy guiding developmental and pre-university education is established through the *Report on the Effectiveness of Pre-University Courses* (IV.1.11), which synthesizes longitudinal evidence for the academic years 1995–1999, 2007–2013, and 2018–2020. This certification provides the foundation for institutional decision-making related to preparatory education and mandates a continuous evaluation cycle to ensure that pre-university courses remain effective, evidence-based, and responsive to evolving student needs.

Complementary certifications and amendments governing program implementation further affirm UPR Cayey's dedication to sustaining robust academic pathways for students who require additional preparation. Together, these policies support a coherent, mission-aligned structure for developmental education. In practice, UPR Cayey implements a clearly defined, multi-phase process designed to assess academic readiness, place students in appropriate preparatory pathways, and provide coordinated academic and co-curricular support to facilitate successful progression toward degree completion.

Figure 10

Developmental Education Support Framework for Underprepared Students



Note. As illustrated in Figure 10, UPR Cayey's developmental education framework operates through a structured sequence of identification, placement, and support and follow-up, ensuring that students receive timely and targeted interventions aligned with their academic needs.

Identification

Students are assessed prior to or upon admission using diagnostic tools and placement indicators. Pre-Basic English, Spanish, and Mathematics assessments generate outcome reports that enable academic departments to evaluate levels of academic readiness and identify areas requiring additional preparation before or during the early stages of enrollment.

Placement

Historically, students identified as underprepared were placed in pre-university courses prior to initiating their degree programs. Beginning in the 2023–2024 academic year, UPR Cayey redesigned this approach to emphasize greater flexibility and integration within the undergraduate experience. Current placement strategies include enrollment in the MATE 3004 preparatory mathematics course during the regular semester, supplemental workshops and laboratories in English and Spanish during the first year of study,

and Summer Bridge Programs offered under Title V to support students' transition into university-level coursework.

Support and Follow-up

Ongoing academic and co-curricular support is provided throughout the student's first year and beyond. Academic departments maintain official tutoring schedules, such as the Official Tutoring Schedule (Summer 2022–2023), while Student Affairs delivers integrated services through the Financial Aid Office, Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, Counseling and Psychological Services, and Medical Services. Peer mentoring and advising initiatives further supplement classroom-based instruction, particularly during the critical first year of study.

Table 13

Developmental Education Interventions and Support Mechanisms

Area	Intervention	Responsible
Academic Readiness	Diagnostic assessments (English, Spanish, Mathematics)	Academic Departments
Mathematics Preparation	MATE 3004 Preparatory Course	Academic Departments
Language Skills	English and Spanish workshops and labs	Academic Departments
Transition Support	Summer Bridge Programs (Title V)	Title V Project
Academic Support	Official tutoring schedules	Academic Departments
Co-curricular Support	Financial aid, counseling, disability services, medical services	Student Affairs
First-Year Engagement	Peer mentoring and advising	Academic & Student Affairs

Note. This table summarizes the primary academic and co-curricular interventions implemented within the developmental education framework and identifies the institutional units responsible for their delivery.

Collaborative Governance and Oversight

The implementation of this developmental education framework engages in multiple levels of institutional governance and administration. The Dean of Academic Affairs oversees pre-university initiatives and coordinates implementation with academic departments, which are responsible for designing and delivering preparatory courses, workshops, and tutoring. The Institutional Curriculum Committee and the Academic Senate review and approve curricular revisions and policy changes to ensure academic integrity and alignment with institutional standards.

Complementing academic oversight, the Dean of Student Affairs ensures integration of co-curricular services, including counseling, financial aid, and student support programs. In addition, the Title V Project and Bridge Programs provide federally supported resources that strengthen student transitions and reinforce institutional capacity to support underprepared students.

Through this coordinated framework of policy, structured process, targeted interventions, and shared governance, UPR Cayey demonstrates a clear and evolving approach to identifying and supporting inadequately prepared students. By integrating evidence-based assessment, flexible placement mechanisms, and comprehensive academic and co-curricular support, the institution maintains strong alignment with its mission and student success priorities

Supporting Student Success (1d)

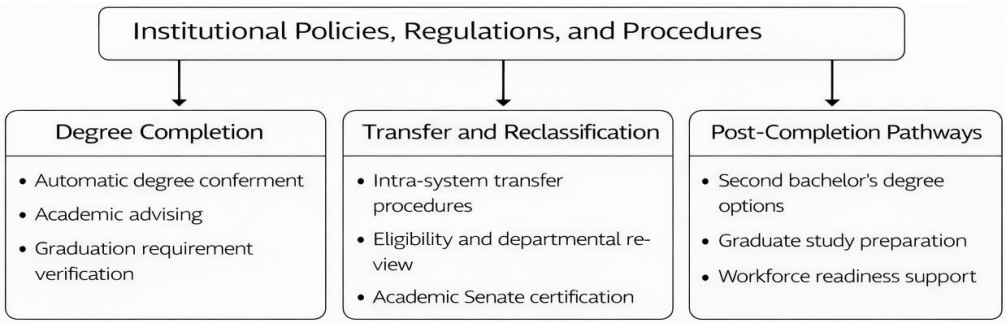
UPR Cayey has established a comprehensive framework of institutional policies and certifications that collectively shape clear, intentional, and equitable pathways to student success. This framework includes the *Institutional Policy for the Automatic Awarding of Degrees and Institutional Grading Policies* (IV.1.12), which ensures that students who satisfy all graduation requirements are awarded their degrees in a timely manner, as well as policies governing academic mobility and progression, including procedures for the completion of a second bachelor's degree (IV.1.13) and Amendment (IV.1.14), student reclassification (IV.1.15), and regular transfer and transfer with reclassification (IV.1.16). Complementing these policies, historical documentation of retention and suspension indices (III.8.1) evidences a longstanding institutional focus on student persistence. Together with the *Institutional Policy for the Automatic Awarding of Degrees and Institutional Grading Policies* (IV.1.12), this integrated policy framework promotes consistency in advising, fairness in academic evaluation, and sustained support for students throughout their academic trajectories.

These policies reflect UPR Cayey's commitment to academic excellence, equitable access, and transparent governance. Their implementation is guided by clearly articulated procedures documented in the Institutional Catalog, the General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico, and the Student Regulations. Collectively, these guiding documents ensure consistency, fairness, and coherence throughout the student experience, reinforcing the institution's mission to support learners at every stage of their academic journey.

As illustrated in Figure 11, UPR Cayey's student achievement framework encompasses multiple academic pathways designed to support students through degree completion, academic mobility, and post-completion planning. These pathways include degree completion processes, such as automatic degree conferment and structured academic advising to ensure timely fulfillment of graduation requirements; transfer and reclassification procedures, which provide clear, institutionally certified mechanisms for intra-system mobility through eligibility review, departmental evaluation, and AS certification; and post-completion pathways, including opportunities for a second bachelor's degree, graduate study preparation, and workforce readiness supported through advising and coordinated departmental initiatives.

Figure 11

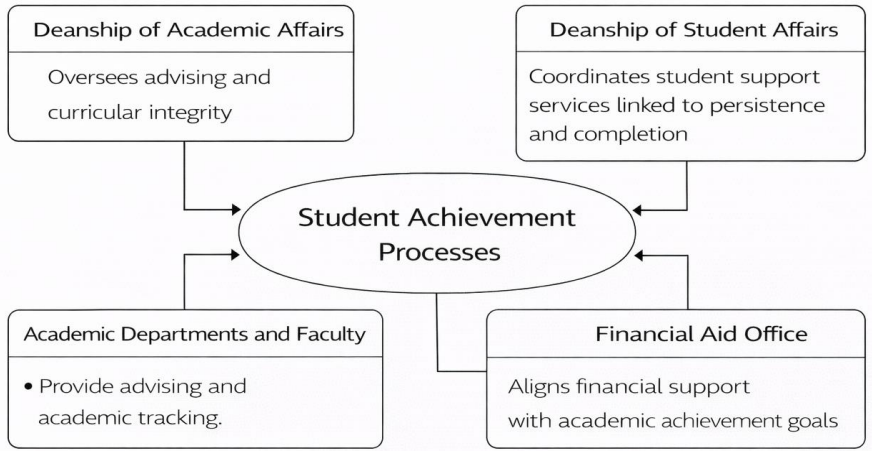
Institutional Academic Pathways Supported by Policy and Governance Frameworks



The effective implementation of these student achievement processes is sustained by a coordinated institutional structure that integrates academic oversight, student support services, and administrative functions. As depicted in Figure 12, responsibility for these processes is distributed across key institutional units. The Deanship of Academic Affairs oversees advising practices and curricular integrity; the Deanship of Student Affairs coordinates student support services linked to persistence and completion; the Registrar's Office manages degree conferment, graduation audits, and transfer processing; academic departments and faculty provide ongoing advising and academic tracking; and the Financial Aid Office ensures alignment between financial support and academic progression.

Figure 12

Distributed Governance Structure Supporting Student Achievement Processes



Together, these integrated academic pathways and governance structures ensure that degree completion, transfers, and post-completion planning are addressed collaboratively, transparently, and in alignment with institutional priorities for student success.

Student Enrollment and Achievement (1e)

The foundation for UPR Cayey's commitment to evidence-based decision-making is formally articulated in the *Proposal for the Office of Institutional Assessment to Submit an Annual Report on the Findings of the Student Services Evaluation* (IV.1.17), which requires the OAIR to systematically present findings

derived from the evaluation of student services. This certification institutionalizes a culture of transparency and accountability by ensuring that assessment results are not merely collected but intentionally analyzed and integrated into institutional planning and the continuous enhancement of student support structures. In doing so, it reinforces our broader mission to strengthen student retention, persistence, and degree completion through informed, equitable, and data-driven practices.

Assessment at UPR Cayey is implemented through a coordinated system of evaluation instruments and tracking tools designed to capture student experiences, monitor enrollment and academic progress, and identify opportunities for improvement across academic and support units. This integrated assessment infrastructure supports a continuous cycle of reflection, action, and improvement, enabling the institution to respond proactively to the evolving needs of its diverse student population.

As part of this system, UPR Cayey regularly gathers student feedback through structured questionnaires that provide insight into key dimensions of the student experience. The Graduate Exit Questionnaire (IV.1.18) captures graduating students' perceptions of their academic preparation and institutional support, informing program-level and institutional improvements. Complementing this perspective, the Student Services Opinion Questionnaire (IV.1.19) collects student feedback regarding the accessibility, quality, and responsiveness of support services, allowing units to assess effectiveness and identify service gaps.

Beyond perceptual data, UPR Cayey employs real-time academic monitoring tools to support timely and proactive student interventions. The Academic Tracking System (ACT) (IV.1.20), integrated with the Student Success Prediction System (SSPS) (IV.1.21) module and supported through Title V initiatives, uses up-to-date enrollment and performance data to identify students who are not attending classes, have withdrawn, or are not making satisfactory academic progress. Information generated through this system enables early alerts and coordinated responses, including academic advising, tutoring referrals, and counseling support, thereby strengthening institutional capacity to intervene before academic challenges escalate.

Collectively, these assessment instruments and tracking mechanisms form a comprehensive evidence-based framework that informs decision-making, supports continuous improvement, and enhances UPR Cayey's ability to promote student enrollment, achievement, and success in alignment with institutional priorities.

Criterion 2: Awarding Credits for Prior Coursework and Learning Through Alternative Approaches

As established in the UPR Cayey Academic Catalog 2025-2026 (II.7.7), any student who has taken courses in other institutions of higher education may request a validation of credits to the department chairperson to which the credits belong. Our catalog contains detailed information on all courses offered at UPR Cayey. Each entry includes the course code, title, number of credits, weekly contact hours, prerequisites, and a brief description. This standardized and publicly accessible information serves as the authoritative reference used by the institution to evaluate, align, and consolidate courses from other universities for purposes of transfer credit, articulation, and curricular equivalency, ensuring academic integrity, consistency, and transparency in academic decision-making.

Also, to validate a course, its description and content as presented in the syllabus must contain at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the course content offered by the UPR Cayey. In those cases where it is difficult to obtain the course syllabus, the institution's Catalog may be used. Equivalence may be established between a set of courses with a course or set of courses of UPR Cayey, if the set represents

the seventy-five percent (75%) mentioned before. Likewise, only a course approved with a grade of "C" or more will be validated. Up to a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the credits of courses of the specialty to which the student requests will be validated. If the student comes from other higher education institution in Puerto Rico but the institution is not a bonafide one, not accredited by both the Puerto Rico Board of Education and the Higher Education Commission of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, courses from this institution will not be validated.

Similarly, a course with a lower number of credits will not be equivalent to one with a higher amount, except for those whose number of contact hours is equal to or greater than the number of contact hours of the course for which it will be validated. In these cases, the student must complete several credits with higher courses from the area. Each academic department establishes whether the equivalence of a sequence of course will be done in its entirety, or equivalence can be established for each course of the sequence. In the case of sequence of courses to be approved in full, the student must have approved both parts with "C" or more.

The course validation form must be accompanied by the official transcript of credits from the student's home university. In the case of new students admitted to the UPR Cayey, the recommendation for validation of courses will be made at the time when said student is considered for admission. The validation will be official after the student enrolls in the institution. The Departmental Curriculum Committee should be consulted in cases where there is doubt about the Department's course validations. Any validated course will appear on the credit transcript with the letter "P" (passed or approved) and will have no honor points.

The accepted validations will be based on the courses offered by UPR Cayey. Courses that do not have equivalence at UPR Cayey may be used to complete free electives if they have this option in their academic program. The student who is in a transfer program and has approved courses that can be validated in the receiving unit will process his/her application for validation in that unit once they have been accepted. There is a general guide providing the specific requirements accepted at UPR Cayey when students are transferred to the institution (IV.2.1).

For higher education institutions outside of Puerto Rico, the following guidelines will be followed to validate courses:

a. If the institution is in the United States of America, its accreditation status with one of the accrediting bodies recognized by the Council of Post-Secondary Accreditation (COPA) will be verified. If it is not accredited, its courses will not be validated.
b. If the institution is in another country other than the United States of America, it will be verified if it has collaboration agreements for the exchange of students with the UPR if it is a bonafide institution in that country. Bonafide is understood as an institution recognized by the government and that has some mechanism of accreditation of its programs and services, either externally or internally. If this condition does not exist, courses of the institution will not be validated.
c. The courses will be validated following the criteria established in the previous paragraph. Since there is a possibility that the grading system of higher education institutions outside of Puerto Rico is not equivalent to that of the UPR Cayey, the Dean of Academic Affairs will have the responsibility of establishing the relevant equivalences, so that it is respected that only courses approved with "C”, or more are validated.

UPR Cayey has established a comprehensive and coherent set of institutional policies governing student progression, mobility, and degree completion, ensuring transparency, consistency, and equity throughout the academic lifecycle. Central to this framework is the *Institutional Transfer Policy* (IV.2.2), which consolidates transfer requirements and streamlines evaluation processes by clearly defining transfer types, eligibility criteria, and assessment procedures. This policy is fully articulated and operationalized through detailed guidance published in the institutional Catalog (II.7.7). Complementing these provisions, specific criteria governing transfer into academic programs are established through (IV.2.3) ensuring program-level rigor and consistency.

In addition to transfer policies, UPR Cayey maintains clearly defined procedures for student readmission (IV.2.4) outlining the conditions and requirements under which students may resume their studies. Academic continuity and progression are further supported through institutional policies governing second bachelor's degrees (IV.1.13) and Amendment No. 44 (IV.1.14), which expand opportunities for continued learning and professional development beyond initial degree completion. The University also ensures timely recognition of academic achievement through the automatic conferment of degrees for students who meet all graduation requirements (IV.1.12).

With respect to admissions and transfer evaluation, UPR Cayey does not employ alternative assessment methods outside those established through systemwide policy. Evaluation practices for transfer students and first-time degree-seeking applicants are governed by the New Admission Policy for Non-Traditional Students (IV.1.5), which provides uniform criteria and ensures alignment with institutional and systemwide standards. Collectively, these policies form an integrated framework that supports student mobility, persistence, and completion while reinforcing UPR Cayey's commitment to equitable access, academic integrity, and transparent governance.

Criterion 3: Student Records

The UPR Cayey adheres to all state and federal laws and regulations governing the privacy and dissemination of information contained in student records, including academic performance, medical records, related actions, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), commonly known as the Buckley Amendment. FERPA ensures specific rights for students concerning their educational records. This law applies to all primary and secondary educational institutions, whether public or private, that receive federal funding. FERPA grants both parents and adult students the right to protect their personal records. Under FERPA, adult students are defined as those over 18 years old or enrolled in post-secondary schools, regardless of their age. Copies of this policy may be obtained from the Registrar's Office.

Additionally, the Medical Services Office abides by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) Act of 1996 to protect students' medical information. There is a document titled Consent for Outpatient Diagnosis and/or Treatment that includes a section in which students must sign certifying that they received the privacy and confidential policy established by HIPAA (IV.3.1). Likewise, the institution communicates this law's provisions to all students upon admission each year, through the student services platform. Both FERPA and HIPPA laws are available on the institutional webpage.

For the institution to comply with the FERPA law, the student accesses the NEXT Portal during the first days of class and when they try to access to see course schedule or any of their information, they must complete the FERPA form and submit it. Until they complete the FERPA process through the Portal, they will be unable to perform any process through the platform or through the Student Information System (SIS). The Registrar carries out a monthly process where the data from the Portal is migrated to the

Student Information System (SIS). The process opens from the third week of classes until the last day of final exams during their first semester so students can complete it.

Also, student records at the UPR Cayey are managed within the Student Information System. The Information System Office (ISO) is dedicated to fulfilling the campus's administrative computing and information needs. To achieve this objective, the ISO has implemented strict procedures for safeguarding the data stored within the system. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance that this data is housed on high-quality servers, subject to regular maintenance and rigorous monitoring, to ensure their optimal performance and reliability. *Policy on the Use of and Access to Information Technology Resources* (I.1.19) explains in detail these processes.

The Registrar's Office at UPR Cayey ensures the rigorous protection and stewardship of student academic records through the secure use of a dedicated records vault, a controlled environment designed to safeguard official documents, including transcripts, certifications and permanent academic files, against loss, damage, or unauthorized access. This practice reflects the institution's commitment to data integrity, confidentiality, and regulatory compliance by maintaining strict protocols for the access, storage, and retrieval of student records, thereby preserving the accuracy and permanence of academic credentials and reinforcing trust in institutional record-keeping.

These practices are grounded in a comprehensive policy framework that aligns institutional procedures with federal and systemwide requirements. Compliance with the Student Right to Know Act (SRTK) ensures that students are granted appropriate access to their records and are informed of disclosure procedures in a transparent manner. In addition, the *Institutional Policy for Data Classification* (IV.3.2) establishes clear guidelines for the classification, handling, and protection of sensitive information, while the *Institutional Policy in Accordance with the Buckley Amendment (FERPA)* (IV.3.3) demonstrates long-standing adherence to federal privacy standards governing student education records.

Together, these policies and operational safeguards demonstrate UPR Cayey's sustained commitment to ethical responsibility, regulatory compliance, and the secure management of student academic records, ensuring that institutional practices uphold both federal mandates and the University's own standards for transparency, accountability, and data protection.

Criterion 4: Athletics, Student Life, Extra-Curricular Activities

UPR Cayey provides a variety of support services that can give the students an adequate environment to prevail and achieve personal and professional goals. It also offers leadership, educational, social, and cultural activities; educational exchange students experiences (U.S. and International Exchange), athletics programs, and student organizations such as Association of Psychology Students, Med-Life, an Honor Studies Program Students' Association, among many others.

The Office of Social and Cultural Activities (OSCA) serve as the primary liaison for student organizations at UPR Cayey, supporting their development, oversight, and alignment with institutional policies and student engagement goals. Through this office, student organizations plan and implement a wide range of academic, cultural, athletic, and service-oriented activities that benefit both the campus and the external community. Student organizations are required to submit documentation for approval of their activities and receive ongoing consultation related to logistical planning, procedural compliance, and scheduling. These processes are governed by the Internal By-Laws of Student Organizations, and organizational leaders participate in regular monthly meetings with the Office Coordinator to discuss operations, compliance, and institutional expectations.

Students with artistic and athletic talents are actively encouraged to develop their skills through participation in student organizations and co-curricular activities. Recruitment for these organizations begins each academic year through tryouts and outreach efforts announced via official institutional channels, including email and the University website, as well as informal media such as social platforms. At the start of each academic year, the Dean of Academic Affairs, in collaboration with the Office of Student Organizations (OSO), hosts the Student Organization Recruitment Fair, providing students with opportunities to explore available organizations and submit required documentation.

Norms, Rights, Tasks, and Responsibilities of the Student-Athletes, and Trainers of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey are formally codified in (IV.4.1) ensuring that athletic participation is supported through clear institutional guidelines. In addition, the annual *Insignia Letter Ceremony* recognizes student-athletes' dedication and achievements, reinforcing institutional values of recognition, equity, and transparency.

Together, these coordinated recruitment, accreditation, and support practices demonstrate UPR Cayey's commitment to fostering student leadership, cultural and athletic development, and meaningful co-curricular engagement within a structured, transparent, and mission-aligned institutional framework.

Equally important, UPR Cayey complements its academic mission with structured peer education, athletic, and co-curricular programs that promote student well-being, leadership, and ethical responsibility. One such initiative is *FIESTA VIII* (Traffic Safety and Alcohol Facilitators and Instructors) (IV.4.2), an educational peer program designed to develop alcohol prevention activities and promote targeted messaging aimed at discouraging driving under the influence of alcohol. Through peer-led outreach and prevention strategies, the program reinforces responsible decision-making and contributes to a safer campus environment.

In parallel, the Athletic Program (AP) at UPR Cayey provides student-athletes with opportunities for formative personal development that complement their academic experience. Student-athletes represent the institution in inter-university tournaments and championships within the Inter-University Athletic League, competing against other UPR campuses and private universities while embodying institutional values symbolized by the University's colors: red, white, and green. The campus maintains multiple athletic facilities, including the Sports Court, Track, Field, and Soccer Grounds, which are available not only to student-athletes but also to members of the broader university community who wish to engage in activities that promote healthy lifestyles.

The AP also supports academic integration by serving as a practicum setting for students enrolled in the Physical Education Program, thereby linking co-curricular participation with experiential learning opportunities. Recruitment, participation, and retention processes for student-athletes are governed by clearly defined institutional standards established in (IV.4.1), which delineates the rights, duties, and ethical responsibilities of student-athletes and their coaches. Ongoing monitoring and program improvement are evidenced through formal evaluations and planning documents.

All students participating in peer education programs, student organizations, and athletic activities are subject to the UPR General By-Laws, the General Student Regulations, and all applicable academic, fiscal, and administrative policies. In particular, the General Student Regulations of the UPR (II.1.2), specifically Articles 2.21 through 2.25, establishes the regulatory framework governing student organizations. These programs operate under the same principles of accountability and equity that apply to all institutional units and comply with relevant federal regulations, including the SRTK Act and the Jeanne Clery

Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, with oversight and reporting supported by OAIR.

Together, these peer education, athletic, and co-curricular programs demonstrate UPR Cayey's commitment to fostering student development within a regulated, transparent, and mission-aligned framework, ensuring that student engagement activities contribute meaningfully to academic success, personal growth, and institutional integrity.

Criterion 5: Third-Party Vendors

Currently, the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) administers the sole contract identified for sign language interpreter services for students with hearing impairments. The process includes documented requests, justification letters, and contract oversight, demonstrating compliance with legal and institutional standards.

Table 14

UPR Cayey Student Services: Disability Services 2019 to 2024

Academic Year	Percentage of Students with Disabilities
2019-2020	4%
2020-2021	4%
2021-2022	5%
2022-2023	5%
2023-2024	6%

Note. Source from IPEDS Institutional Characteristics.

At UPR Cayey, third-party contracting for student support services is limited in scope and governed by a clear and well-defined regulatory framework. All such agreements comply with Puerto Rico Act No. 237-2004, which establishes the legal standards for the procurement of professional and consulting services by government entities. This careful oversight ensures that any contracted services uphold the institution's commitment to transparency, accountability, and high-quality support for students. This law requires that contracts:

- Demonstrate institutional needs and the lack of internal resources.
- Be executed prospectively, in writing, and include clear clauses regarding scope, professional ethics, and breach of resolution.
- Respond to the best interest of the public service provided by the contracting entity. In accordance with Act 237-2004, UPR Cayey ensures that all student-related service contracts adhere to the same academic, fiscal, and administrative standards that govern other institutional programs.

The contracting and oversight of third-party student support services at UPR Cayey are governed through a structured and coordinated framework designed to ensure legal compliance, institutional accountability, and alignment with student needs. When a unit identifies the need for a service not available internally, it submits a formal request accompanied by written justification. All proposed contracts undergo review by the Legal Office of the Chancellor to verify compliance with applicable laws,

including Act 237–2004, and adherence to ethical and institutional standards. Upon approval, contracts are formally executed and include mandatory clauses addressing ethics, termination, and accountability, with provisions for monitoring performance as applicable. Oversight of contracted student support services is sustained through a collaborative institutional structure in which the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) maintains direct oversight of contracts related to interpreter services, the Legal Department within the Chancellor's Office ensures ongoing legal and ethical compliance, and the Deanship of Student Affairs coordinates with OSEI to confirm that contracted services effectively support students and remain aligned with institutional priorities. Together, these integrated contracting and oversight practices ensure that third-party services are procured, implemented, and monitored in a manner consistent with legal requirements, institutional standards, and the University's mission to provide equitable and effective student support.

Criterion 6: Assessment of Student Support

UPR Cayey demonstrates a clear commitment to assessing the effectiveness of student support services for all student populations, employing a range of evaluation tools and performance metrics to improve student outcomes. These efforts reflect the institution's recognition that high-quality support services are essential to retention, persistence, and completion, and that continuous assessment is central to mission-driven improvement.

One of these recurrent evaluations is the Exit Survey for Graduation Candidates, a study carried out by the OAIR that analyzes the experience of graduating students at UPR Cayey. The main objective of this study is to measure student satisfaction in various aspects of the university, including academics, support services, and physical facilities. It also seeks to understand the students' professional goals upon completing their studies at the institution. Respondents evaluate how UPR Cayey contributed to their development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes, in addition to evaluating other aspects related to the university. The 2022, 2023, and 2024 *Exit Surveys to Graduating Students* were disseminated during degree conferral ceremony throughout the community and stakeholders (IV.6.1). A salient result of this evaluation demonstrates that, over the last five years, more than 80% of students surveyed reported a positive experience, and 75% would choose UPR Cayey again.

In addition to these surveys, OAIR conducted a study during the COVID-19 pandemic to evaluate technology-assisted courses. In collaboration with the Dean of Academic Affairs, an instrument was designed to know the students' perception of these courses (IV.6.2).

On the other hand, and as part of the Institutional Assessment Report prepared by OAIR, the Dean of Student Affairs presents a section that evaluates the level of satisfaction of students who use the services of the different offices overseen by the Deanship of Student Affairs, including all service offices. These Institutional Assessment Reports are presented in (IV.1.19). These reports compile and communicate evaluation results from all areas of the institution, including academic departments and the library.

Another recurrent evaluation mechanism at UPR Cayey is the Faculty and Classroom Evaluation (IV.6.3), administered each semester to provide systematic insight into students' classroom experiences. Complementing this process, the Student Assessment and Learning Inventory for the Second Semester 2024–2025 serves as an institutional instrument designed to document the assessment of student learning outcomes at the course and section level. This inventory collects both direct and indirect evidence of student learning aligned with expected outcomes, enabling faculty to evaluate student achievement upon course completion and to identify areas for instructional improvement. It documents

the General Education skills addressed in each course, the assessment techniques employed, the resulting findings, and the actions implemented to enhance teaching and learning. In addition, the instrument gathers information on courses offered in online, hybrid, or distance modalities, including the use of instructional technology and its impact on student learning. Together, these assessment tools complement departmental and program-level practices and support compliance with institutional program evaluation requirements and accreditation expectations, particularly those of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, by fostering a continuous cycle of evidence-based improvement.

Likewise, the UPR Cayey presents an Annual Institutional Effectiveness Reports, also prepared by the OAIR, which highlights the projects and achievements accomplished during the academic year, both at the level of students and faculty and non-faculty. One of the objectives of this report is to promote a university environment that provides the necessary data to generate an exact institutional profile. The Annual Reports for academic years 2018-2019 to 2022-2023 can be accessed in (IV.6.4).

Our institution also conducts several project-based evaluations that provide valuable, though non-recurring, insights into the effectiveness of student support initiatives. Title V Activity 1 assesses tutoring, mentoring, and academic support services, including summer intervention programs, offering important data on student engagement and developmental outcomes. Feedback from the *UNI 804 Seminar* helps evaluate transition-to-college programming and first-year experiences, informing improvements to early academic integration. The WhatsApp-based Mentoring Initiative represents an innovative approach to student support, particularly for fostering peer connection and rapid communication. Additionally, the Mid-Semester Grading Policy Survey generates targeted evidence on academic support effectiveness by identifying emerging academic challenges and guiding timely interventions. Together, these evaluations demonstrate UPR Cayey's commitment to evidence-informed practice, even as the institution works toward a more unified and systematic assessment cycle.

STANDARD V: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

Student achievement and learning outcomes show that UPR Cayey students accomplish educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

Criteria 1-2: Student Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes Assessment

UPR Cayey is deeply committed to the intellectual, humanistic, scientific, cultural, and ethical development of its students. This commitment is reflected in the institutional mission and is further underpinned by its academic programs, which develop their student learning assessment plans in accordance with guidelines and timelines established at the institutional level (I.1.3). Each academic department, in alignment with this mission, defines its educational goals, ensuring students acquire competencies and skills pertinent to their field of study. A specific example of this commitment can be seen in the assessment processes of the Teaching Preparation Program and Business Administration Department, detailed in (V.1.1, V.1.2). Their assessment systems were developed to ensure the programs align with the unit's and university's conceptual framework, state standards, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) professional standards, as well as Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), respectively.

Moreover, UPR Cayey educational goals are intricately linked with each other and with the institutional mission. The educational experiences that are offered are designed to mirror and fulfill the mission, ensuring that students not only gain academic knowledge but also undergo holistic development. These goals and experiences mutually reinforce each other, creating a cohesive and effective educational environment.

Also, the Institutional *Profile of the Ideal Graduate*, as detailed in (V.1.3), further elucidates UPR Cayey's duty to fostering a challenging and comprehensive environment that promotes student learning and the achievement of academic goals. This profile aligns with higher education expectations and the institutional mission by emphasizing communication skills, values awareness, technology information analysis, research skills, and quantitative and qualitative reasoning for problem-solving.

At the program level, an essential requirement for creating an academic program is its alignment with our mission (I.1.3). This alignment ensures that program learning outcomes are clearly articulated and correspond to the institution's mission and goals. Academic departments reflect the alignment between institutional goals and departmental goals in their course syllabi. An analysis of various course syllabi, graduating student profiles, and other departmental documents reveals that academic programs have clear and specific expectations for student learning, all of which are in harmony with the mission and goals statement. Our mission and vision reflect the alignment of the institutional and learning expectations of academic programs.

It is important to mention that UPR Cayey has contributed to student skill development and knowledge acquisition. To prove this, different surveys have been conducted by the OAIR. Respondents were asked about their perception of UPR Cayey's contribution to the development of skills or the acquisition of knowledge which are included in the institutional graduate profile. The skills and knowledge in the

profile are classified into seventeen (17) areas. These correspond to the *General Education Component of UPR Cayey*, as established in (V.1.4).

Table 15 compiles the competency ratings given by UPR Cayey graduates from three survey periods. Ratings are assigned on a 4-point scale: 4 for “substantial”, 3 for “moderate”, 2 for “fair”, and 1 for “none”.

Table 15

Contribution of the UPR Cayey in the Development of Skills or Knowledge Acquisition (2023 to 2025)

COMPETENCIES	SCALE	ACADEMIC YEAR				
		2023	2024	2025	N	%
Understand the relationship between general education knowledge and knowledge in your field of specialization.	4	87	77	19	183	70%
	3	27	24	7	58	22%
	2	4	9	2	15	6%
	1	1	3	0	4	2%
Perform effectively in a multicultural, international, and interdependent world.	4	84	76	17	177	68%
	3	27	23	6	56	22%
	2	8	13	5	26	10%
	1	0	1	0	1	0%
Learn independently through critical thinking, the generation of new knowledge, and a creative attitude.	4	89	81	22	192	74%
	3	26	19	3	48	18%
	2	4	9	2	15	6%
	1	0	2	1	3	1%
Strengthen and appreciate the Spanish language.	4	78	63	18	159	61%
	3	29	23	6	58	22%
	2	10	23	4	37	14%
	1	2	3	0	5	2%
Enhance your ability to communicate effectively and appropriately.	4	86	82	20	188	72%
	3	31	21	6	58	22%
	2	1	8	2	11	4%
	1	0	1	0	1	0%
Use diverse sources of information to expand your knowledge.	4	93	84	18	195	75%
	3	24	23	6	53	20%
	2	1	6	2	9	3%
	0	0	0	1	1	0%
Use technologies effectively, appropriately, and creatively as tools for your academic and professional development.	4	85	76	19	180	69%
	3	29	24	3	56	22%
	2	4	11	5	20	8%
	1	0	1	0	1	0%
	0	0	0	1	1	0%
Develop your self-esteem and self-confidence.	4	78	67	17	162	62%
	3	23	26	6	55	21%
	2	13	17	3	33	13%
	1	2	1	2	5	2%
	0	2	2	0	4	2%

COMPETENCIES	SCALE	ACADEMIC YEAR 2023	2024	2025	N	%
Make effective use of your initiative and leadership skills.	4	86	73	22	181	70%
	3	27	30	1	58	22%
	2	4	9	4	17	7%
	1	1	1	1	3	1%
Use independent judgment and prudence in decision-making to make ethical judgments.	4	84	82	21	187	72%
	3	25	19	3	47	18%
	2	7	7	4	18	7%
	1	1	2	0	3	1%
Anticipate problems, identify opportunities, and propose constructive changes.	4	84	82	22	188	72%
	3	28	23	2	53	20%
	2	4	6	4	14	5%
	1	1	0	0	1	0%
	0	0	1	0	1	0%
Understand social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental phenomena in Puerto Rico and around the world.	4	84	76	19	179	69%
	3	22	25	5	52	20%
	2	11	9	3	23	9%
	1	0	3	0	3	1%
	0	1	0	1	2	1%
Your participation in research programs, activities, and experiences.	4	72	69	15	156	60%
	3	28	18	3	49	19%
	2	10	14	7	31	12%
	1	7	5	2	14	5%
	0	1	5	0	6	2%
Your participation in interdisciplinary programs, activities, and experiences	4	73	71	18	162	62%
	3	29	22	5	56	22%
	2	12	10	4	26	10%
	1	3	5	0	8	3%
	0	1	4	0	5	2%
Commitment to justice, integrity, and the pursuit of peaceful solutions to common problems.	4	79	71	18	168	65%
	3	30	21	5	56	22%
	2	9	17	2	28	11%
	1	0	2	1	3	1%
	0	0	0	1	1	0%
The preservation and improvement of the environment.	4	79	70	18	167	64%
	3	32	19	5	56	22%
	2	6	15	3	24	9%
	1	0	6	1	7	3%
	0	1	1	1	3	1%
An institutional environment that ensures respect for differing opinions and the rights of others.	4	78	73	18	169	65%
	3	28	24	6	58	22%
	2	7	10	3	20	8%
	1	1	3	0	4	2%
	0	4	1	1	6	2%

Note. UPR Cayey Graduated Survey 2023 to 2025.

Since the last self-study, UPR Cayey has strengthened its systematic approach to assessment by aligning programmatic evaluation cycles, general education reforms, and accreditation reporting under a coherent institutional framework. This framework ensures that outcomes are clearly stated, systematically assessed, and regularly reviewed by faculty and appropriate professionals. Evidence from institutional assessments, program evaluations, and external accreditations demonstrates our commitment to continuous improvement and accountability.

These results demonstrate UPR Cayey's effectiveness in fostering skill development among its students while also pinpointing specific areas for further curriculum enrichment.
UPR Cayey articulates student learning outcomes (SLOs) at institutional, programmatic, and course levels, ensuring alignment with our mission and graduate profile. The *Profile of the Ideal Graduate* approved by the Academic Senate (V.1.3) specifies the knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of all graduates, while the *General Education Model* (III.5.1) integrates disciplinary and general education competencies. Programmatic outcomes are formally revised every five years under the *Programmatic Evaluation Schedule* (V.2.1). UPR Cayey meets this criterion through established policies and supporting evidence in the *Regulations for the Evaluation of Academic Programs of the University of Puerto Rico* (I.1.12).

At the UPR Cayey, the assessment of educational effectiveness, particularly the assessment of student learning outcomes, is a central component of institutional culture and strategic development. Consistent with our mission to provide an excellent undergraduate education that integrates general education, disciplinary knowledge, and community engagement (I.1.3), the campus has established structures, policies, and practices to ensure that student achievement aligns with institutional goals and national standards for higher education.

Assessment of policies and procedures undergoes periodic review to ensure effectiveness. The *Institutional Assessment Plan* has been updated through successive certifications (V.2.2), and in the *Programmatic Evaluation Schedule* (V.2.1) incorporating lessons learned from program evaluations and accreditation feedback. The Academic Senate plays a central role in revising assessment frameworks, while the Office of Institutional Research and Planning documents the implementation and outcomes of these revisions.

Assessment processes are sustained through faculty committees, program evaluation cycles, and Senate review. Results are disseminated via programmatic evaluation reports, institutional assessment reports, and Senate certifications, ensuring transparency to stakeholders (I.1.12, V.2.1). The OAIR maintains repositories of evidence, enabling the campus community to use results for curricular revision and strategic planning.

Preparation for successful careers, meaningful lives, and further education (2b)

The University of Puerto Rico at Cayey strong commitment to academic excellence is deeply rooted in its institutional mission. The institution's primary objective is to ensure that students are well-prepared for successful careers, meaningful lives, and, where appropriate, further academic pursuits by embedding career readiness, civic engagement, and transferable skills within its curriculum. This rigorous alignment with the institution's mission guarantees that students are not only prepared with the necessary skills and knowledge for their immediate goals but are also poised for lifelong learning and significant societal contributions.

The *Profile of the Ideal Graduate explicitly* emphasizes integration of general education, disciplinary expertise, and social responsibility (V.1.3). Evidence from accreditation reports in Business Administration (ACBSP) and the Teacher Preparation Program (CAEP) demonstrates that programs not only align outcomes with the mission but also produce graduates capable of success in careers and advanced studies (CAEP Annual Reports, 2021–2023).

The institution also honors the success of its alumni and promotes the enhancement of its academic programs through annual alumni panels. These events are coordinated by academic programs such as Biology, Chemistry, Math and Physics, Education, Social Sciences, the Business Administration program, Office Systems Administration, and Technology. These panels allow alumni to discuss how their education has influenced their professional trajectories and lives. A particularly relevant example was the alumni panel organized by the Psychology programs during the 2023 academic year, which provided a rich exchange of experiences and encouraged constructive feedback for the constant evolution of the institution (V.2.3).

Through the years, the institution has intensified its efforts in student learning assessment, raising faculty awareness about the significance of setting clear course learning objectives. As mandated by GB (I.1.12), every course syllabus explicitly outlines the expected student outcomes derived from the course's educational experiences. These outcomes span from knowledge acquisition to skill development and relationship building, helping students to be prepared to have successful careers.

Criterion 3: Use of Disaggregated Assessment Results

The UPR Cayey systematically uses disaggregated assessment results across all student populations to enhance student learning outcomes, improve student achievement, and strengthen educational effectiveness at the institutional, program, and course levels. Through comprehensive data collection and analysis processes, UPR Cayey ensures that disaggregated results inform targeted strategies for continuous improvement. The institution disaggregates assessment data by gender, academic year and other relevant demographic variables to identify gaps, design interventions, and measure the effectiveness of curricular and co-curricular initiatives.

Course-Level Use of Disaggregated Assessment Results

The Student Success Prediction System is an innovative initiative that uses disaggregated data to analyze diverse student populations and predict academic risks. This prediction model analyzes student data across five key stages: (1) admission details including high school GPA and school of origin, (2) results from remedial summer course exams (No apply for recent students UPR-Cayey cohorts), (3) student grades and averages at the five-week mark, (4) attendance census results, and (5) final grade point average at the end of the semester. It integrates real-time alerts and may initiate collaborative interventions to improve retention and graduation rates. This data-driven system may enhance institutional effectiveness by guiding targeted academic support and continuous outcome assessment.

Equally important, UPR Cayey's assessment of its *Interdisciplinary Model of General Education* (V.1.4) demonstrates a mature and evidence-driven approach to evaluating student learning across academic programs. Drawing on a longitudinal analysis spanning 2014–2015 through 2023–2024, the institution systematically examines disaggregated results to understand performance patterns across cohorts, disciplines, and course types. The analysis of core general education courses (conducted using annual approval rates, grade distributions, and course-level outcomes) reveals both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Across the period studied, most general education courses consistently

achieved approval rates above 80%, yet year-to-year fluctuations underscore the importance of analyzing results by course, section, and academic year to identify pedagogical needs and structural factors influencing performance.

The report also highlights how assessment findings directly inform curricular refinement and instructional practices. As the institution continues to update and recalibrate its general education curriculum, including the standardized 42-credit core, interdisciplinary seminar (INTD 3027), and capstone experiences, faculty committees rely on disaggregated data to evaluate the effectiveness of learning experiences and to determine where alignment between learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and evaluation methods may require strengthening. The continued review of the model in 2023–2024, along with the creation of new courses and annual written reports, reflects a deliberate institutional commitment to ensuring the relevance, rigor, and coherence of the general education component.

A central feature of UPR Cayey's approach is its emphasis on faculty development and collaborative interpretation of assessment results. The report identifies targeted training in assessment as a key institutional strategy, equipping faculty with the skills needed to design effective evaluations, interpret results, and adapt instructional methods to student needs. Faculty training, as documented, strengthens the institution's capacity to engage in meaningful data interpretation, identify trends in student learning, and foster equitable outcomes across disciplines.

This ongoing professional development demonstrates UPR Cayey's commitment to cultivating a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement rooted in shared academic responsibility. Furthermore, disaggregated assessment has revealed broader structural needs within the general education model. The analysis indicates that students and faculty alike would benefit from clearer and more consistent communication regarding the purpose and expectations of general education. The report notes insufficient orientation efforts regarding the value of general education in academic and personal development, a finding that is guiding new strategies to strengthen advising, communication, and institutional messaging.

This level of transparency reinforces the institution's commitment to ethical stewardship of its academic mission.

Taken together, these practices demonstrate that UPR Cayey employs disaggregated assessment results not merely as a compliance measure but as a strategic tool for strengthening academic quality and advancing student learning at the program level. By grounding decision-making in evidence, engaging faculty and governing committees in analysis, and responding proactively to identified needs, UPR Cayey upholds its mission of intellectual rigor, social responsibility, and equitable student success. The institution's continued refinement of its General Education model affirms its dedication to building a planning and assessment ecosystem characterized by integrity, inclusivity, and purposeful improvement.

Program-Level Use of Disaggregated Assessment Results

At the program level, departmental self-studies incorporate disaggregated assessment data as a core element of program evaluation and planning. These studies are conducted on a regular five-year cycle and are critical for accreditation, curriculum development, and resource allocation as seen on Biology, Psychology, Psychology and Community Mental Health, and History (V.3.1, V.3.2, V.3.3, V.3.4). Following its five-year programmatic assessment, the undergraduate program in History was placed under moratorium (V.3.5).

In the years comprising this self-study, our Academic Programs within the Liberal Arts have met at a crossroads. On the one hand, we are experiencing a progressive and sustained decline in 5 of the 7 undergraduate programs. Currently, 40% of our students are classified as being in their fourth year or beyond. This presents us with a challenge in recruitment, admissions, and student retention.

On the other hand, our institution has a highly qualified and widely trained faculty, many with doctoral degrees, who actively participate in interdisciplinary research, creative work, and community service. However, this faculty and the students they serve are situated in programs that commonly reproduce traditional disciplinary structures. This presents us with a challenge of curricular transformation: how to redesign our academic programs so they are aligned with the demands of the contemporary world, where the convergence and integration of knowledge emerge as vital modes for producing new understandings.

To this end, several recruitment, admissions, and student retention strategies are already being implemented at our institution. These will address the first challenge. However, to address the second challenge, the faculty of these programs, and the AS have decided to revitalize our Liberal Arts curricula as established in *Report with a Critical Analysis of the Document: Diagnosis and Proposal for the Academic Programs of the UPR in Cayey and its Recommendations* (V.3.6). This transformation will bring together disciplinary perspectives as varied as the social, economic, literary, historical, geographic, philosophical, psychological, biological, and public health fields, and will orient them toward examining local, regional, and global island-specific issues in the context of the shifting realities of the contemporary world.

In this regard, two substantial grants from The Mellon Foundation are allowing us to allocate part of the awarded funds toward developing a critical mass of faculty who will help shape the thematic core of a new academic program in Arts and Sciences. This academic venture is essential to propelling the transformation of our UPR in Cayey, as well as to generate the data needed to apply for future grants supporting our curricular transformation.

Accredited Programs

Our Education Preparation Program is nationally accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation for initial preparation programs (V.1.1). All School of Education programs are registered with the Puerto Rico Education Department. Furthermore, the following programs have national recognitions and accreditations:

- GR 4-6: Elementary Education, B.S., Initial Certification; Nationally Recognized by Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)
- GR K-12: Special Education, B.S., Initial Certification; Nationally Recognized by Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
- GR K-12: Physical Education, B.S., Initial Certification; Nationally Recognized by National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE)
- GR 7-12: Secondary Education: Science, B.S., Initial Certification; Nationally Recognized by National Science Teaching Association (NSTA)

Equally important, our Bachelor's degree in Accounting, Bachelor's degree in Technology and Office Administration, and Bachelor's degree in Management are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) since 2011 (V.1.2).

Criterion 4: Third-Party Assessment Service Providers

UPR Cayey does not employ any third-party providers for assessment services.

Criterion 5: Periodic Assessment of Assessment Practice

The UPR Cayey's unwavering commitment to academic excellence is anchored in its systematic and ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes. The OAIR directs the ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes and ensures that assessments are both comprehensive and driven by tangible data, as highlighted in the OAIR Annual Institutional Effectiveness Report 2022-2023 (Annual Institutional Effectiveness Reports for Academic Years 2018-2019 to 2022-2023) (IV.6.4).

OAIR does not merely gather data; it employs a diverse range of quantitative methodologies, diving deep into metrics that span from individual course grades to broader institutional and programmatic graduation and retention rates, as evidenced in the Graduation and Retention Data (Table 6). This data is meticulously summarized into detailed reports, shedding light on both the institution's overall performance and the individual achievements of its students.

Prioritizing transparency, all analytical efforts, findings, and insights are made publicly accessible via the OAIR's webpage (V.5.1). The OAIR Informs bulletins released by the office serve as a regular conduit of information, updating the university community on vital assessment statistics, news, and accreditation processes.

UPR Cayey is strengthening its commitment to collaborative and systematic institutional assessment, building on the foundation established by its Institutional Assessment Plan, originally developed in 2002 (V.2.2). The Plan provides a structured framework for the assessment of student learning outcomes by establishing expectations for the use of standardized rubrics, multi-year assessment cycles, and faculty-driven evaluation processes that promote consistency, rigor, and shared responsibility across academic units. Over time, implementation of the Plan has been uneven, reflecting shifts in administrative capacity and institutional priorities. In response, the current administration has reaffirmed assessment as a strategic priority and is actively revising, updating, and fully operationalizing a renewed Institutional Assessment Plan to strengthen coherence, improve the systematic use of results, and ensure that assessment meaningfully informs planning, resource allocation, and continuous improvement in direct support of the University's mission.

This renewed assessment framework is reinforced through five-year programmatic evaluations, such as those conducted in Biology (2018–2023) and Psychology and Community Health (2020–2023), which provide evidence that student achievement is assessed with rigor, reliability, and disciplinary relevance. Together, these processes ensure that assessment is not episodic but embedded within a sustained cycle of institutional review and academic quality assurance.

Assessment of student learning and institutional effectiveness is further supported through a comprehensive combination of qualitative and quantitative measures. These include student perception surveys, administered periodically to assess satisfaction with the educational experience and its contribution to learning goals; graduating student surveys and exit interviews, which gather direct feedback on academic experiences at the point of program completion; and alumni surveys, which extend assessment beyond graduation by capturing post-graduation outcomes and alumni perspectives on the impact of their education at UPR Cayey.

In parallel, the institution employs robust quantitative analyses focused on key indicators of academic success, including course grades, course completion and withdrawal rates, retention and graduation rates, and related performance metrics. These data are synthesized and disseminated through institutional reporting mechanisms such as the Annual Institutional Data Profile, IPEDS submissions, and a range of interactive dashboards that present information at the program, departmental, degree, and institutional levels. The administration and coordination of several assessment instruments, including nationally benchmarked tools such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), are managed centrally to ensure data quality, comparability, and accessibility for institutional planning and decision-making.

Together, these integrated assessment practices support a continuous cycle of evidence-based evaluation and improvement, reinforcing UPR Cayey's commitment to academic quality, transparency, and accountability, and ensuring alignment with accreditation expectations and institutional priorities.

STANDARD VI: PLANNING, RESOURCES AND INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

UPR Cayey's planning, resources, and institutional improvements are fully aligned to fulfill its mission "to offer an interdisciplinary education across the Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Professional Schools". It promotes the development of ethical, autonomous, critical, and socially responsible citizens." Our students complete rigorous academics and receive necessary support to complete their courses of study. The institution focuses on providing real-world opportunities to students to broaden their minds while giving them tangible skills to succeed in careers and in life. To support each student to become leaders in a diverse world, the University continuously assesses and works to improve its programs and services, and responds effectively to opportunities and challenges, as is documented below across the thirteen listed criteria for Standard VI.

Criterion 1: Goals Linked to Mission

Building from the foundation of the UPR System, UPR Cayey developed its own mission, strategic plan priorities, and academic plans. Each of these offers essential framing decisions regarding planning and resource allocation.

UPR Cayey's commitment to mission-driven planning and institutional coherence is reflected in the clarity and alignment of its organizational structures and unit-level goals. The institution maintains comprehensive organizational charts for the campus, as well as for each division and administrative unit, that delineate reporting lines, responsibilities, and functional relationships (VI.1.1). These charts underscore a governance framework intentionally designed to advance the University's public mission of intellectual rigor, equity, and service. Likewise, detailed organizational charts for the Academic Senate, councils, and standing committees illustrate a vibrant shared-governance culture in which faculty, staff, and students participate meaningfully in institutional decision-making.

Across divisions, unit goals and objectives are explicitly linked to institutional priorities, reinforcing a unified direction for academic excellence, student success, operational effectiveness, and community engagement (VI.1.2). These goals are crafted to be measurable and actionable, ensuring that planning at every level contributes to mission fulfillment and provides a foundation for ongoing assessment. By articulating how each unit's work advances the broader aims of the institution, UPR Cayey promotes a shared sense of purpose and fosters collaboration across academic and administrative areas.

This integrated framework directly supports the development and implementation of the *UPR Cayey Strategic Plan 2025–2030* (I.1.8), which operationalizes the institution's mission into strategic pillars, goals, and measurable outcomes. This Plan establishes campuswide priorities that reinforce academic excellence, student success, research and creative activity, community service, and responsible stewardship of resources. Through this alignment, UPR Cayey ensures that our strategic goals flow logically from its mission, that planning processes are transparent and inclusive, and that every unit (academic or administrative) advances the broader public purpose of the institution with integrity and intentionality.

UPR Cayey continuously establishes priorities and directions to sustain and improve the use of institutional resources, academic quality, and the fulfillment of its mission. Fostering a strategic alignment between the systemic and institutional plans, the following pillars of *UPR Cayey Strategic Plan 2025-2030*, established: Research; Artistic Creation; and Community Service.

Considering these strategic pillars that will mark the path towards achieving the mission and vision of the UPR Cayey, the following twelve (12) goals were developed:

Goal 1: Promote student success by strengthening recruitment and admissions.

Goal 2: Strengthen institutional support that fosters retention and the completion of academic degrees.

Goal 3: Highlight interdisciplinarity, research, creativity, and the impact of community service as institutional pillars.

Goal 4: Restructure administrative and institutional service processes to place students at the center of the university's management.

Goal 5: Improve and diversify academic offerings through the revision of existing programs, new certifications, diverse modalities, and stronger links with the labor market.

Goal 6: Foster an institutional ethos based on university identity, ethical commitment, social responsibility, and appreciation of culture.

Goal 7: Manage resources responsibly by promoting fiscal responsibility, energy efficiency, and environmental stewardship.

Goal 8: Manage infrastructure and green areas responsibly.

Goal 9: Increase student participation in research and creative work as an integral part of the university experience.

Goal 10: Strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration in research, innovation, and institutional initiatives (as outlined in the continuation of the research/innovation section).

Goal 11: Promote cultural activity across all institutional units for the benefit and enjoyment of both the university and surrounding communities.

Goal 12: Establish collaborations among the humanities, social sciences, law, natural sciences, technology, and administration in support of artistic and cultural creation.

Each deanship, department, and administrative office bears the responsibility of aligning their operational and strategic plans with the pillars and goals outlined in this new plan (I.1.14).

Equally important, the specified assessment metrics are to serve as key indicators of success within the operational plans of each administrative unit (I.1.14). Additionally, the distribution of the institution's budget is to be strategically oriented to consider the identified priorities (VI.1.3).

To ensure the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan, the institution's administrative body provides the university community with the opportunity to thoroughly review and discuss it within their respective academic or administrative personnel. Encouraging collaborative participation from the entire university community is instrumental in executing the plan successfully (VI.1.4). In tandem, in 2023, the OAIR began the design of several institutional dashboards designed to facilitate the dissemination of up-to-date and validated data to both the university community and external stakeholders (VI.1.5). These dashboards are a crucial and innovative tool for evidence-based decision-making that enhances the planning process, assessment, and accreditation processes of our academic programs.

Together, this evidence demonstrates a coherent and transparent planning ecosystem that aligns structure, governance, and goals with UPR Cayey's mission. While the campus continues to refine its planning processes, the organizational clarity and inclusive framework already in place affirm the institution's dedication to integrity, continuous improvement, and the public value it provides to Puerto Rico and its communities.

Criterion 2: Inclusive Planning Processes

UPR General By-Laws ensure that both faculty and students have a voice in all UPR Cayey's governing bodies, promoting their active involvement in institutional decision-making processes. UPR Cayey's Academic Senate, a forum for academic deliberation, features a representative from each academic department among its tenured faculty members. Student representation in this body is enabled through the participation of the GSC president and six members elected annually by their peers. The AS plays a crucial role in making academic decisions and addressing matters that concern the academic community (VI.2.1). The AS certifications are shared with all stakeholders by email and are available on its website. In addition, UPR Cayey's AB is another deliberative body that evaluates and approves administrative affairs over the entire institution. The Board's composition allows faculty and students to participate in all administrative decision-making processes, including budgeting, faculty promotions and tenures, academic calendars, among other matters. Enacted norms of both the AS and AB are communicated to stakeholders through numbered certifications.

Faculty members are also given opportunities to express their views and engage in the decision-making process during faculty meetings (VI.2.2). According to the UPR General By-Laws, these meetings are scheduled at least once per semester, with the flexibility to convene extraordinary meetings when necessary. Institutional and departmental committees serve as additional avenues for faculty, non-faculty, and students to be part of decision-making processes at various levels.

Institutional committees are appointed by the Chancellor, while departmental committees are appointed by department chairpersons or selected by the faculty.

The SC also serves as a platform for students to propose ideas and initiatives for institutional enhancement. This student body, elected annually, is the official forum representing the student community and has a presence in UPR Cayey's primary governing bodies, as previously discussed in this chapter. Student senators can submit proposals concerning matters that impact them. Members of student organizations can also communicate their concerns and ideas to the Dean of Student Affairs, who then channels them to the appropriate governing body.

Together, these long-standing structures of shared governance provide the foundation upon which UPR Cayey builds its inclusive planning processes. The same commitment to broad participation that animates the Academic Senate, Administrative Board, faculty assemblies, institutional committees, and student governance also shapes the institution's approach to strategic planning. This culture of engagement ensures that planning is not confined to administrative leadership but reflects the voices, experiences, and aspirations of the entire university community.

As UPR Cayey advances into its next planning cycle, this collegial and mission-anchored decision-making environment becomes the driving force behind the development, review, and refinement of institutional priorities—demonstrating how shared governance and strategic planning operate in concert to strengthen institutional effectiveness and public value.

In 2024, the Steering Committee responsible for formulating UPR Cayey's Strategic Plan for 2025-2030 was appointed. This committee conducted a comprehensive SWOT Analysis to pinpoint the institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (I.1.8). The initial draft of the plan was shared with the university community, ensuring that the final document would be the result of a collective and collaborative effort. Additionally, in 2024, a public hearing was convened, allowing students, faculty, and non-faculty the opportunity to provide input and suggestions for the Plan. The *UPR Cayey Strategic Plan 2025-2030* outlined the foundational pillars that guide the institution in achieving its mission and vision. However, the strategic plan fosters assessment results for improving decision-making processes. It encompasses twelve (12) goals aligned with specific objectives, activities, and assessment of metrics looking for continuous improvement.

Each of the twelve (12) strategic goals from the *UPR Cayey Strategic Plan 2025-2030* guides the planning process for all office directors, department chairpersons, and deans annually. They are required to submit their office, department, and deanship Operational Plan for each academic year, outlining the activities they intend to undertake (I.1.14). All planned activities should be aligned with the goals and objectives of the UPR Cayey Strategic Plan. At the end of each academic year, an annual report should be submitted by the office and department's chairpersons to the OAIR. Department chairpersons and deans are further tasked with analyzing their departments or deanships activities during the year and outline necessary actions for continuous improvement. The report will include an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, along with the identification of three significant achievements per year.

Criterion 3: Integrated Planning

UPR Cayey's planning effectively integrates student achievement, educational outcomes, and overall institutional improvements, as is envisioned in our Strategic Plan 2025-2030 (I.1.8). The plan focuses on key elements that are crucial to our mission. These include student success, a curriculum that takes an aspirational, yet practical approach anchored in research, artistic creation and community service; our institutional ethos; as well as fiscal and institutional sustainability. Furthermore, this Plan supports adherence to agreed-upon goals of regular performance reviews by supervisors and aligning reviews with strategic institutional goals and key performance indicators (KPI's).

To support these goals, significant resources have been spent to ensure our students are competitive for employment in the global workforce. The institution has extensively upgraded classroom technology and laboratory equipment to provide students with an enhanced educational experience using state-of-the-art facilities. It's committed to recognizing every student's potential by facilitating opportunities to maximize their potential.

One challenge that the UPR Cayey has faced is a decline in enrollment that started after Hurricane Maria (2017). The UPR System and UPR Cayey have undertaken several initiatives to attract new students. Among these, since 2023, we have been implementing a new, accessible and inclusive admission policy (VI.3.1, VI.3.2, VI.3.3) which has helped mitigate our declining enrollment trends. In tandem, our new recruitment initiatives are benefiting from an established partnership with the Department of Education through the *Adelanta 180°* Program (VI.3.4), an initiative in that seeks to strengthen high school students' pathways toward postsecondary education by improving their academic performance in their sophomore, junior and senior years. Equally important, our institution is decisively working to revitalize our undergraduate programs in the liberal arts (V.3.6), as well as in the flourishing of our hybrid undergraduate biology program (VI.3.5).

In addition, UPR Cayey continues to advance a comprehensive reconstruction and modernization agenda of our infrastructure; the most recent case in point being the opening of the Student Success Innovation Center, a highly pertinent space that better equips our students to the realities of the current world, where higher education must prepare them not only with disciplinary knowledge but with adaptability, creativity, and resilience.

Criterion 4: Planning and Resources for DEI

In light of executive orders, Dear Colleague Letter, and other guidance prohibiting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in institutional operations, the Team has not considered this criterion as it conflicts with Standard II Criterion 8 and Commission expectations.

As a constituent campus of the University of Puerto Rico system and an instrumentality of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, UPR Cayey has an established institutional record of serving broad segments of the population and ensuring that all members of its academic community are afforded consistent and lawful treatment across institutional functions.

UPR Cayey conducts its academic, administrative, and employment activities in full compliance with applicable federal civil rights statutes governing higher education and public employment. These laws prohibit discrimination in educational programs, services, and employment practices and establish enforceable standards related to admissions, instruction, student support, workplace conditions, compensation, promotion, accessibility, and participation in institutional life. The institution's policies and procedures reflect these requirements and are designed to ensure that protected characteristics do not limit access to opportunities, resources, or institutional processes.

In parallel, UPR Cayey operates under the constitutional mandates and statutory framework of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, which impose affirmative obligations on public institutions to guarantee equal protection and prohibit discriminatory conduct on grounds that include social condition, political ideas, and religious beliefs. Commonwealth law provides comprehensive protections in the areas of public employment, educational services, accessibility, workplace conduct, and protection from retaliation, and in several respects establishes standards that exceed those required under federal law. UPR Cayey integrates these requirements into its institutional policies, collective agreements, and administrative practices.

Consistent with these federal and Commonwealth mandates, UPR Cayey ensures fair and lawful treatment in admissions and recruitment, academic evaluation, student services, employment, promotion and tenure, compensation, access to facilities, and participation in co-curricular activities. The institution maintains formal mechanisms for reporting, investigating, and resolving complaints, provides reasonable accommodations when required, and assigns institutional responsibility for oversight and compliance. These mechanisms are embedded within the institution's governance, planning, and assessment structures and are subject to ongoing review.

Through sustained adherence to these legal and ethical obligations, UPR Cayey affirms its responsibility as a public institution to uphold equal opportunity, accessibility, and respect for individual rights. This commitment is integral to the institution's mission, its standards of integrity, and its accountability to students, employees, and the broader public it serves (I.1.6, II.2.1, II.3.2, II.3.3, II.3.4, IV.1.2).

Criterion 5: Budgeting and Planning Process

The budgetary projections for Fiscal Years 2027 and 2028 reflect UPR Cayey's disciplined and mission-centered approach to financial planning within a constrained public funding environment (VI.5.1).

Projected revenues remain largely stable ($27.57 million in FY 2027 and $27.39 million in FY 2028) with approximately two-thirds derived from legislative appropriations and supplemental operational support from the Government of Puerto Rico. Modest declines in operational revenues, including tuition and fees, are consistent with demographic and enrollment trends affecting public higher education across the island. In response, the institution aligns expenditures with conservative revenue assumptions, demonstrating prudent stewardship and a commitment to maintaining fiscal equilibrium while safeguarding core academic functions.

Albeit for its estimative character, our expenditure patterns across both fiscal years underscore a clear institutional prioritization of people and academic quality. Personnel-related costs represent more than 70% of total expenditures in both FY 2027 and FY 2028, reflecting UPR Cayey's sustained investment in faculty, staff, and the student services that support learning and persistence. At the same time, the projections transparently acknowledge structural pressures associated with rising fixed costs, including employee health benefits, utilities, and mandatory retirement system contributions. These realities limit discretionary flexibility and reinforce the importance of strategic workforce planning, cost containment, and operational efficiencies to ensure long-term sustainability.

Taken together, the FY 2027 and FY 2028 projections affirm UPR Cayey's fiscally responsible, data-informed, and mission-aligned budgeting and planning process. The institution recognizes that financial resilience depends not only on prudent expenditure management but also on the continued diversification of revenue streams. Accordingly, these projections highlight the strategic importance of enrollment stabilization initiatives, external funding, and targeted investments in infrastructure supported by federal and disaster-recovery funds. As documented throughout this Self-Study, UPR Cayey uses budgetary planning as a forward-looking tool; one that integrates assessment, supports student success, and advances the University's enduring public mission with integrity and accountability.

In a significant recent development and demonstration of systemwide responsibility and strategic foresight, through Institutional Transformation Action #22, approved on December 18, 2025. This action authorizes a comprehensive evaluation of the sustainability of the eleven-campus UPR System and the exploration of alternative structural models (VI.5.2). This certification explicitly calls for the analysis of organizational configurations that may include campus specialization and the creation of multi-campus university centers (hubs). For UPR Cayey, this action represents a decisive and proactive systemic response to long-term fiscal and demographic pressures, situating the campus within a broader framework of collaborative efficiency, academic complementarity, and shared services. Rather than a reactive measure, this system-level initiative reflects an ethical commitment to preserve academic quality, protect student access, and strengthen institutional resilience. As such, it aligns with UPR Cayey's own strategic planning efforts by opening pathways for innovative organizational models that can enhance fiscal sustainability while reaffirming the University's public mission and service to Puerto Rico.

Equally important, UPR Cayey has achieved a remarkable and sustained effort to submit funding proposals. Our research grant submission profile from 2019–2024 reflects a dynamic, steadily expanding scholarly enterprise marked by disciplinary diversity, strong engagement with federal agencies, and a growing portfolio of awarded projects that amounts to more than $45 million of external funds. Over this five-year period, faculty submitted 125 proposals across research, student support, community engagement, infrastructure, and educational innovation, reaching agencies such as NSF, NIH, DOE, USDA-NIFA, NASA, NEH, and major philanthropic foundations, such as The Mellon Foundation (VI.5.3). Our pattern of submissions shows a robust STEM research culture, particularly in chemistry, biology, and mathematics & physics, paired with significant activity in the humanities, social sciences, and public service initiatives. Notably, many awards supported undergraduate research experiences, capacity-

building instrumentation, and interdisciplinary projects linked to Puerto Rico's social and environmental resilience. The consistent approval of major grants, including multimillion-dollar federal awards, demonstrates our institution's increasing competitiveness and its faculty's ability to leverage external funding to advance scientific inquiry, strengthen academic infrastructure, and deepen community impact.

Since the pandemic, enhancing the educational experience through the strategic allocation of technology resources also stands as a top priority at UPR Cayey. Annually, the institution accrues a technology fee. UPR Cayey administers the Technology Fee through a transparent and structured process to ensure that all funds directly support student learning and academic success. The fee is deposited in a dedicated fund and used exclusively for instructional technology, computing infrastructure, and digital resources, with strict prohibitions against administrative, personnel, or physical plant expenses. A campus-based Technology Fee Evaluation Committee reviews and prioritizes proposals based on alignment with institutional priorities, measurable educational impact, and broad student benefit. Approved projects are funded through a merit-based process, implemented within established timelines, and documented through required reports that ensure accountability, transparency, and responsible stewardship of resources.

In advancing its long-term financial sustainability, UPR Cayey approaches resource development with institutional purpose and strategic clarity, recognizing that diversified and resilient funding streams are essential to fulfilling its public mission.

Criterion 6: Resources and Infrastructure

Despite facing a shifting economic landscape for public higher education, UPR Cayey has consistently managed its finances to support its mission. While the institution's total revenue has slightly decreased over the last five years, its revenue per full-time equivalent (FTE) student has grown by five percent. (II.2.3).

To maintain its core mission of preparing students to be innovative and inclusive leaders, the institution has strategically increased its investment in classroom instruction. UPR Cayey has also bolstered its staffing to enhance student success, adding tenured and tenure-track instructional staff positions since 2018 (II.2.4). For the academic year 2023-2024, the institution's workforce comprised faculty members and non-faculty support personnel (VI.6.1). These efforts demonstrate the institution's commitment to ensuring it has the necessary resources to support its operations and mission.

The Annual Institutional Data Profile (VI.6.1) encompasses a comprehensive range of data, encompassing statistics, trends in student applications, admission and enrollment figures, first-time degree seeking students and transfer statistics, retention and graduation rates, annual grade distributions, degrees conferred, and program-specific time-to-degree information. Furthermore, it offers a detailed overview of the faculty's composition, available resources, fiscal expenditures, budget specifics, salary costs, and information pertaining to physical facilities (VI.6.2).

UPR Cayey has fifty-two buildings occupying an urban campus of 106.6 acres of academic and administrative facilities. The campus is equipped with a modern network having a single-mode fiber optic wired infrastructure at a speed of 1 Gbit to connect all the buildings, with even higher capacities. During the last five years, considerable investment has been made in technological infrastructure. There have been network enhancements, implementation of equipment to offer hybrid courses, strengthening Wi-Fi signals on campus, better servers, and lab equipment. These investments were essential to ensure academic continuity through distance education at a time when the institution had limited capacity in

this area. The rapid expansion of technological infrastructure and digital platforms not only enabled the delivery of courses online but also laid out the groundwork for sustained innovation in teaching and learning. As a result, the campus was able to create and offer online courses for the first time, diversifying its academic modalities and addressing long-recognized gaps in flexibility and accessibility.

This progress also culminated in the development of UPR Cayey's first hybrid degree in Biology, the only program of its kind in the entire UPR system, marking a significant milestone in academic innovation. Furthermore, the technological upgrades allowed the institution to obtain the license to formally offer online courses, aligning with regulatory standards and accreditation expectations. These advancements demonstrate UPR Cayey's commitment to leveraging technology as a driver of academic transformation, student success, and institutional resilience in the face of evolving educational demands.

Beyond the network upgrades, the college has also committed human and fiscal resources to enhancing the learning environment. In October 2020, the UPR Cayey was awarded a $2,905,779 grant through the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (DHSI) Program, launching a transformative five-year initiative that concluded in September 2025. This institutional effort catalyzed a series of strategic interventions designed to elevate student success, strengthen academic infrastructure, and foster a culture of innovation across the campus. As part of its DHSI-funded initiative, the UPR Cayey implemented a proactive academic tracking system to identify and support at-risk students, with a strategic focus on first year and second-year cohorts. These students benefited from a comprehensive support network that included peer mentoring and tutoring, fostering resilience, and sustained engagement. Concurrently, the institution advanced a faculty-student innovation agenda, integrating progressive pedagogical practices and interdisciplinary collaboration. This cultural shift was reinforced by a bold reconfiguration of library spaces, transforming them into dynamic environments that promote research, creativity, and experiential learning. A flagship outcome of this transformation was the creation of the Student Success Innovation Center. Developed at a cost of $375,000, the SSIC is strategically located on the fourth floor of the Víctor M. Pons Gil Library and serves as a dynamic educational ecosystem designed to foster innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship among students and faculty. Guided by global trends that are redefining the role of academic libraries in the 21st century, the SSIC integrates artificial intelligence tools, makerspaces, digital literacy programming, and lifelong learning opportunities, positioning the library as a central hub for educational transformation and institutional renewal. The center comprises four Collaborative Stations, each designed to support group work, project development, and experiential learning. These are complemented with other five specialized areas:

- Nexus Room – A dedicated space for mentoring, academic advising, and faculty-led guidance.
- Eureka Zone – An ideation lab for creative problem-solving and innovation incubation.
- Conecta+ – An open-access area for spontaneous collaboration, networking, and academic reflection.
- Creative Lab – A hands-on environment for educational project development, particularly in STEM disciplines, equipped with advanced technological and instructional resources.
- Information Literacy Program Room – A curriculum-integrated space focused on strengthening research competencies and information management skills.

Together, these spaces embody a forward-looking institutional model that bridges library services with academic innovation. The SSIC stands as a testament to UPR Cayey's commitment to educational excellence, student empowerment, and social innovation in an era of rapid transformation.

Facilities and infrastructure planning have historically been coordinated through five-year renewal plans, with input from faculty, staff, and students. The 2016 Self-Study documented a participatory process for

prioritizing capital improvements. In recent years, however, the absence of a planning supervisor and the reassignment of responsibilities to Physical Resources has limited capacity to sustain long-term planning. In this regard, a new facilities plan that is linked to the recently approved strategic plan is required to return to full compliance with this criterion.

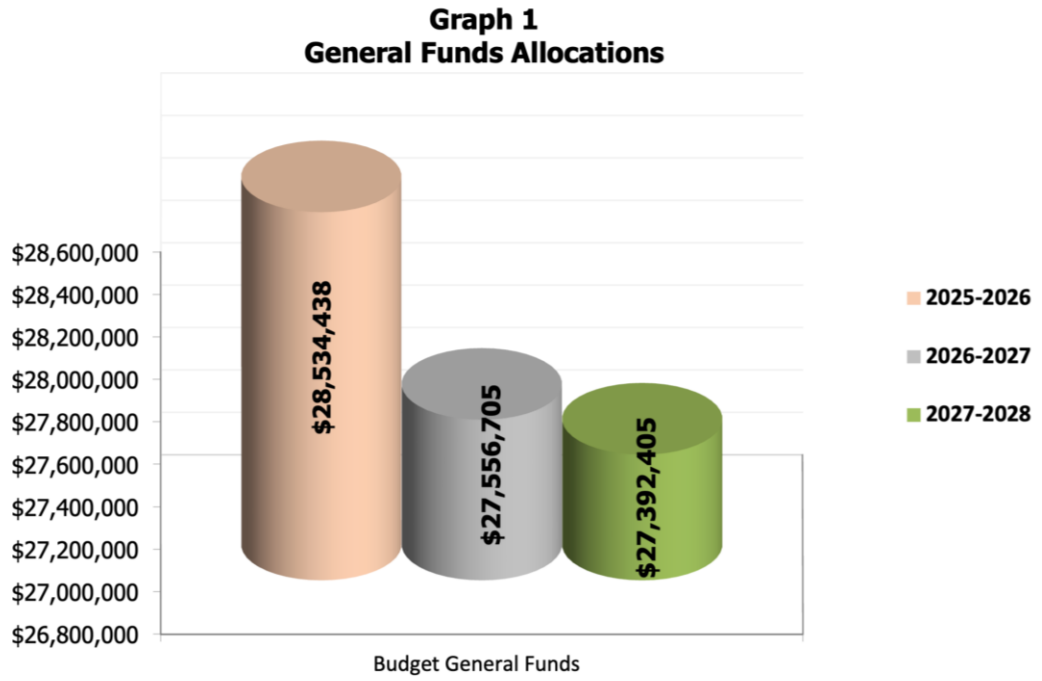
Criterion 7: Funding Base and Finances

The institution's core operating budget is anchored in the general fund of the Government of Puerto Rico, supported through legislative appropriations established under Act No. 2 of 1966 and Act No. 53 of 2021. In accordance with the Fiscal Oversight Board's Approved Fiscal Plan (2021–2026), annual budget allocations are determined and subsequently distributed across the UPR system by the Governing Board, ensuring that each campus, including Cayey, receives funding aligned with its scale, academic offerings, and operational needs (VI.7.1). This process reflects a shared governance commitment to transparency, equity, and stewardship of public resources. Evidence of these resources is reflected in the annual audited financial statements (VI.7.2), the budget certifications of the UPR Governing Board, and reports submitted to federal and state agencies.

Table 16

Budget Proceeding from State Funding

	Actual Budget	Budget Projections	
	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Budget General Funds	$28,534,438	$27,556,705	$27,392,405



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Note. Source of Budget Office: *General Funds Allocations Academic Years 2025-2026 to 2027-2028.*

While general fund appropriations remain a principal revenue source, UPR Cayey has cultivated a broader and increasingly dynamic funding profile. The campus benefits from income generated through its Extended University (UNEX), the Division of Continued Education and Professional Studies (DCEPS),

federal Title IV funds, externally sponsored research and service projects supported by state and federal agencies, and contributions from private foundations. These complementary sources contribute to a consolidated budget that strengthens the institution's capacity to sustain high-impact academic programs, student support structures, and community-engaged initiatives.

At the same time, UPR Cayey acknowledges the evolving fiscal landscape and the challenges inherent to public higher education. In response, the campus is mobilizing coordinated, data-informed, and forward-looking strategies to enhance revenue generation and institutional resilience.

Criterion 8: Responsible Fiscal Management

Since 2019, UPR Cayey has been rigorous and proactive in the delivery of accounting and financial data to ensure the auditing of our financial statements and reports for the last five years (VI.8.1). The reports present financial statements of the business-type activities, and the aggregate discretely presented component units of the UPR. The institution's audit is in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States (VI.7.2).

UPR Cayey established a robust system for overseeing audit processes within the institution through an audit coordinator. This coordinator, supervised by the Chancellor, ensures the seamless execution of audits, and assumes responsibility for submitting any corrective action plans, closely monitoring the progress of ongoing audits.

To enhance financial integrity, the institution has implemented meticulous procedures. This includes tracking all payment checks issued by UPR Cayey and the introduction of random audits. These measures significantly reduce financial risks, fostering a more secure financial environment for the institution. The periodic audits conducted at UPR Cayey play a crucial role in evaluating the effective and efficient utilization of resources, ensuring accountability, and optimizing resource allocation.

In compliance with MSCHE request for Annual Institutional Update (AIU) evidence documents on April 2025, UPR Cayey submitted the audited financial statements for fiscal years 2023 and 2024. The preparation of the audited financial statements 2025 is currently in progress.

As a University, the UPR prepares one consolidated financial statement, in accordance with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and the standards issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). As a component unit of the Commonwealth, the institution includes in its reporting entity all departments, funds, functions, and component units for which it maintains financial accountability.

The University of Puerto Rico remains committed to providing accurate, complete, and transparent financial information to the Middle States Commission. The audited data included herein demonstrates that, despite structural operating challenges common to public institutions, the University continues to meet its financial obligations through stable appropriations and federal support, thereby affirming its ongoing financial viability.

A specific financial control tool used by UPR Cayey is Quarterly Expenditures Projections, by which the use of assigned funds from the General Fund is assessed (VI.8.2). This helps the Chancellor make the necessary adjustments to fulfill the annual working plan and keep a balanced budget. This Quarterly Expenditures Projections is a requirement for the UPR Budget Certification (VI.8.3, VI.8.4).

Criterion 9: Inclusive Decision-Making

UPR's governance structure reflects a strong commitment to inclusive, mission-aligned decision-making. The Governing Board sets systemwide policy, guides institutional growth, allocates resources, and appoints the President and Chancellors, ensuring that decisions advance the University's public purpose (VI.9.1). In accordance with the UPR University Law, the President, appointed with input from the Academic Senates, serves as the chief executive officer and leads the system with the support of the University Board, which advises on academic, administrative, and financial matters. Working together, these bodies foster coordinated planning, institutional integrity, and continuous improvement. The President maintains open communication with all sectors of the academic community, promoting transparency, shared understanding, and broad participation in key institutional discussions. Standard VII will offer additional details on the roles and responsibilities of these governing entities.

Criterion 10: Comprehensive Planning

In the aftermath of Hurricanes María and the 2020 earthquakes (VI.10.1), UPR Cayey continues to advance a comprehensive reconstruction and modernization agenda supported by FEMA and insurance funds (VI.10.2). With over 206 Project Worksheets and more than 700 Damage Inventories obligated across the UPR System, representing approximately $1.2 billion in net construction cost, the Cayey campus is engaged in an unprecedented capital restoration phase. All campus facilities have been impacted to some degree, underscoring the scale and urgency of the institution's physical renewal. Within this systemwide context, UPR Cayey alone manages 19 PW projects and 54 DI projects, amounting to nearly $35 million in obligated funds and a broad portfolio of active contracts that position the campus for sustained infrastructure transformation.

Projects in Construction Bidding

Several priority facilities are currently in their second round of construction bidding after initial processes were unsuccessful or out of budget. These include the Miguel Meléndez Muñoz Building (136), Arturo Morales Carrión Building (152), the Gymnasium (173), and the Daycare Center (176). The works planned for these structures are comprehensive and will significantly enhance teaching, administrative, and student-support environments. Improvements include full interior and exterior painting, reconstruction of walls, replacement of windows and doors, upgrades to floors and ceilings, modernized lighting, new air-conditioning systems, and updates to all mechanical and electrical components. Pending successful bidding in December 2025, these projects are projected to begin construction in June 2026, positioning the summer months as a critical period for campus infrastructure activity.

A parallel effort is underway for the Student Center (PW-7457), another key student hub. After the first auction in 2023 came in over budget, the project enters its second bidding phase in January 2026, with construction also anticipated to begin in June 2026. Once complete, the renovated Student Center will contribute to a revitalized campus experience, enhancing spaces for student life, services, and co-curricular programming.

Projects in the Design Phase

A substantial portion of the campus improvement portfolio (33 facilities) is currently undergoing architectural and engineering design. These include academic buildings, administrative offices, specialized laboratories, student-support units, artistic and cultural spaces, and faculty residences. Among the structures in design are the Physical Resources Building, Campus Security Building, ROTC facilities, Theater Cabin, Chancellorship, Carlos Iñiguez Building, Ramón Frade Theater, Academic

Deanship, as well as multiple buildings affiliated with the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research, Honor's Program. These projects reflect the campus's long-term vision: ensuring safe, modern, and pedagogically aligned environments for the full academic ecosystem.

Particularly transformative projects in this category include the design of the New Science Building (Bld. 181) and the renovation of the Víctor M. Pons Library (Bld. 140). Both projects began the design process in October 2025, with construction projected for May 2027. The new science building will redefine STEM learning and research capacity at the institution, while the library renovation will modernize the intellectual heart of the campus through updated study areas, technological upgrades, accessibility improvements, and resilient infrastructure.

Projects Transitioning to Construction Permits

Some facilities have reached the permitting stage, with Faculty House (PW-7182) and FAC ROTC 354 (PW-10198) both at approximately 25% of their current phase. The planned renovations to the Faculty House aim to restore a vital faculty gathering and collaboration space by repairing roofing, restrooms, kitchen areas, walls, and all mechanical and electrical systems. The ROTC building will see targeted repairs to enable the creation of new office areas, improving both functionality and safety. Both projects anticipate construction bidding in March 2026, followed by a projected construction start in August 2026. These improvements will strengthen critical spaces supporting faculty work, student leadership development, and program administration.

Large Multi-Building Project Packages

Several grouped project packages that encompass multiple campus buildings, such as NH Group 01 & 02, PH Group 06, and the Cayey Site / *Verdes Sombras* Park clusters. These packages include iconic campus facilities like the Chancellorship, Physical Resources Building, Ramón Frade Theater, Computer Building, and several student-focused and research-oriented structures. One major package currently at 85% completion of construction plans is expected to begin construction in May 2026. While other covering buildings, such as *Casa Universidad*, Residences I-2, I-3, and I-8, and the recording studio are in the early stages of Scope of Work Alignment, with construction projected for March 2027. These grouped projects represent a coordinated modernization effort that will elevate campus aesthetics, resilience, and functionality across dozens of essential facilities.

Projects in Design Procurement (RFP)

Finally, the campus is moving forward with procurement for design services for the Dr. Pío López Martínez Museum (PW-6430). A cornerstone of UPR Cayey's cultural and artistic identity, the museum will undergo repairs to floors, acoustic ceilings, interior and exterior finishes, and all mechanical and electrical systems. Design is expected to begin in January 2026, with construction estimated for July 2027. This renovation will allow the museum to continue serving as a vital regional space for public humanities, arts education, and community engagement.

Equally important, the institution has made some investments in physical plant projects, such as electrical infrastructure, maintenance, paint, air conditioners, and others. However, due to insurance requirements, some projects of reconstruction within the gym and fencing areas have proven slower than expected.

Criterion 11: Compliance with Regulations

UPR Cayey remains committed to ensuring compliance with federal and state financial aid regulations and recognizes its fiduciary responsibility to safeguard Title IV funds and provide equitable access to higher education. The institution maintains eligibility for federal financial aid participation through an active Program Participation Agreement, supported by a current Eligibility and Certification Approval Report and a valid Statement of Accreditation Status that confirms its standing with MSCHE.

The Office of Financial Aid operates under federal regulation 34 CFR 602.16(a)(1)(x) and institutional policies that codify procedures for awarding, disbursing, and reconciling Title IV funds. Evidence of compliance is demonstrated through annual submissions, including the Single Audit Report (2 CFR 200 Subpart F, FY 2024), which identified minor findings in documentation timeliness but confirmed no material weaknesses in institutional controls. Additionally, the University received its most recent *Final Program Review Determination Letter* (2022) from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), noting overall compliance but requiring corrective action in verification file documentation and reporting timelines.

Institutional indicators remain generally strong. The three-year official cohort default rate (FY 2021 cohort, 0%) is below the national threshold, reflecting effective default prevention practices. The financial responsibility composite score (FY 2022, 1.6) indicates financial health above the minimum compliance threshold. Importantly, the institution has not been placed under *Heightened Cash Monitoring* (HCM) status and maintains its Title IV eligibility in good standing. (VI.11.1, VI.11.2, VI.7.2, II.8.1).

Criterion 12: Utilization of Resources

UPR Cayey affirms that intentional planning, systematic assessment, and responsible resource allocation are essential to advancing its public mission and institutional goals. This commitment is reflected in the newly approved *UPR Cayey Strategic Plan 2025–2030* and the accompanying Operational Plan (I.1.8, I.1.14), both of which articulate clear priorities in academic excellence, student success, financial sustainability, and community engagement. Together, these plans provide an evidence-based framework that guides the institution's use of resources, from enrollment management and capital improvements to fiscal benchmarks aligned with mission fulfillment. By grounding decisions in data and shared institutional priorities, our institution strengthens its capacity to steward resources effectively, respond transparently to evolving challenges, and ensure that investments directly support student learning and community impact.

Criterion 13: Periodic Assessment of Planning

The Office of Assessment and Institutional Research was originally established to institutionalize a culture of evidence integrating assessment, institutional research, and planning in support of mission fulfillment and organizational integrity. Although fiscal constraints later narrowed its formal scope to assessment and research functions, the office has continued to sustain systematic data collection, analysis, reporting, and accountability processes that inform institutional decision-making and accreditation compliance. Despite structural limitations, the office has demonstrated sustained innovation through the development of dashboards, electronic evaluation systems, and integrated data platforms, and has effectively led strategic and operational planning through formally recognized leadership responsibilities. In recognition of this documented performance and institutional need, the administration is working to restore the planning function, consolidating the unit as the Office of Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research, thereby strengthening governance, evidence-based

planning, continuous improvement, and alignment between mission, strategy, and institutional effectiveness.

UPR Cayey's emerging revision of its Institutional Assessment Plan reinforces the University's commitment to evidence-based planning by ensuring that all expected outcomes and objectives are clearly aligned with the campus mission and strategic goals. Assessment activities are being systematically integrated into the operational plans of every academic department and administrative unit, creating a cohesive framework for evaluating effectiveness across the institution. Following implementation, assessment coordinators gather results and constituent feedback, allowing departments, programs, and offices to use these findings to inform decision-making, refine practices, and guide resource allocation as part of a transparent and continuous improvement process.

Furthermore, recognizing the need to strengthen our planning infrastructure, UPR Cayey is taking intentional steps to enhance the rigor, consistency, and utility of its planning processes. Proof of this is in the recent capacity enhancement of the *Office of Assessment and Institutional Research*, to also include planning as a central component. This investment provides stable leadership and coordination for assessment activities across units, which directly inform planning and resource allocation. This signals a decisive and transparent commitment to cultivating a robust, evidence-based culture of assessment that will strengthen institutional effectiveness and advance UPR Cayey's mission of equity and academic excellence.

STANDARD VII: GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION

The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with a related entity, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

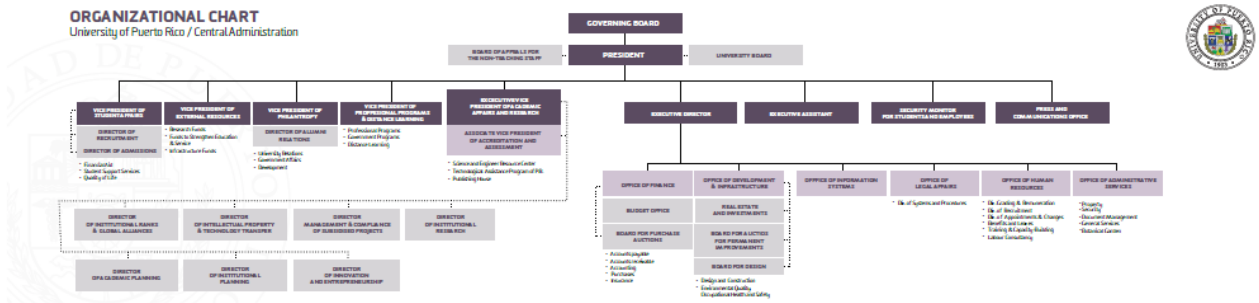
UPR Cayey's governance and administration effectively realizes its mission and goals, benefiting the institution, its students, and its constituents. Its shared governance structure, involving diverse stakeholders, promotes collaborative decision-making. UPR Cayey benefits its affiliation as a member of the UPR System while still maintaining autonomy over its academic functions, enabling it to advance its mission with particular attention to its students' needs.

Criterion 1: Governance Structure

The UPR is a state-supported university system created by Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966, Law of the UPR (Act No. 1), as amended (VII.1.1). The UPR Cayey is an integral part of the UPR System. The Central Administration (CA) is headquartered in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, and exercises oversight over the operations of the eleven academic units, including the UPR Cayey. As shown in Figure 13, the highest governing and administrative body of the UPR system is the Governing Board of the UPR, which was established by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Legislature on April 30, 2013, through Law 13 (PC 927). Previously, the Board of Trustees had the responsibility of governing the public university system. However, Law 13 repealed Article 3 of Law 1 of January 20, 1966, as amended, known as the "UPR Law", and replaced it with a new Article 3, for the purpose of eliminating the Board of Trustees of the UPR and creating the Governing Board of the UPR.

Figure 13

Organizational Chart for the University of Puerto Rico System



The UPR University Law (Law 1 of 1966, as amended) clearly delineates the university's governance structure, including the composition, duties, and responsibilities of each constituent of the university in the formulation of policies and the decision-making process. The internal administration of each institutional unit is guided by relevant provisions of the law, UPR General By-Laws (II.1.1), and complementary by-laws applicable to the university system. Moreover, these units are guided by resolutions enacted by the Governing Board, the guidelines established by the University President, and the rules and regulations endorsed by each institutional governing body. An example of this governance-related interaction can be found in GB Certification 40 2011-2012, which addresses the approval of amendments to the University of Puerto Rico debt collection regulations and strengthening of collection mechanisms (VII.1.2), which establishes the approval of amendments to the University of Puerto Rico for

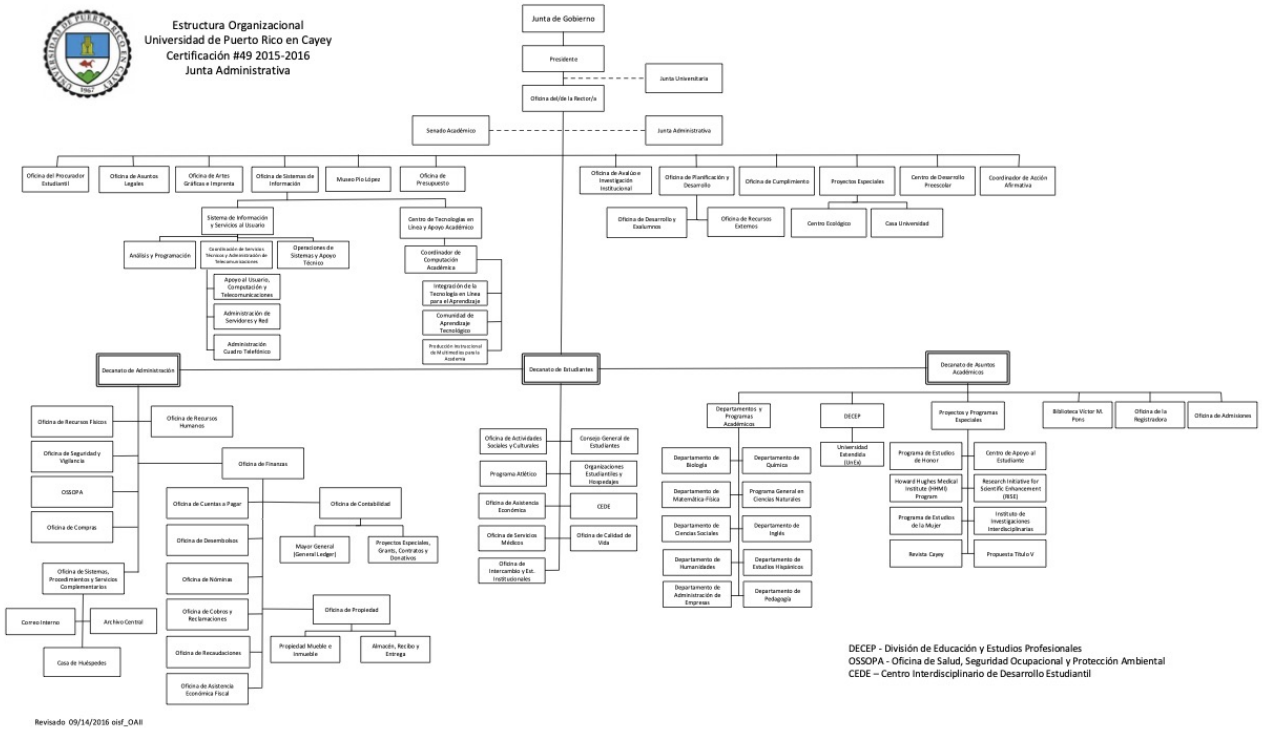
debt collection mechanisms**.** Chapter II of the UPR General By-Laws outlines the composition of the UPR university system; Chapter III describes the central governing structure, and Chapter IV details the institutional units. Each entity within the UPR System shares responsibility for formulating, planning, and executing policies within the framework of their defined roles and duties, guided by the vision, mission, strategic plans, and objectives of the institution and the UPR System. Finally, Chapters V, VII, and VIII establish personnel regulations and provisions.

The Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico was created under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), which was enacted by the United States Congress in June 2016. This legislation established the board to oversee and manage the financial affairs and fiscal stability of the government, including the UPR. By virtue of the provisions of Article 16 of Law No. 2 of 2017 known as the Law of the Financial Advisory Authority and Fiscal Agency of Puerto Rico (FAAFA), the Executive Director of that agency, or his designee, will be a member of the UPR Governing Board because the UPR is an entity covered under the federal PROMESA Law, as determined by the Fiscal Supervision Board.

UPR Cayey has a clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for multi-level decision-making (see Figure 14). It operates within a governance framework that balances system-level authority with campus-level participation.

Figure 14

Organizational Chart for the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey



UPR Cayey conducts formal consultation processes for the appointment of Chancellors and deans, managed by the Academic Senate. While non-binding, these processes are widely recognized as mechanisms for shared decision-making.

The university's governance structure is grounded in a clear and well-defined regulatory framework. The University Law of 1966 establishes system-wide governance, providing the overarching administrative framework for the university system. At the campus level, the General Regulations of the UPR for 2022–2023 specify campus governance, including the Academic Senate and the Administrative Board. Additionally, the Internal Bylaws of both the Senate and Administrative Board outline the operational rules that guide campus governance. For greater clarity, the organizational charts of the UPR System and UPR Cayey illustrate reporting relationships, ensuring a transparent and effective organizational structure. This clearly defined regulatory framework has allowed for the continuity of UPR Cayey's governance in view of the administrative leadership transitions mentioned before.

UPR Cayey's governance is representative of its constituents. Faculty and students actively participate in decision-making through elected representatives. Since the last 2016 Self-Study, shared governance has been an area of focus for the UPR Cayey, with particular emphasis on the alignment between governing board consultations and its outcomes.

Criterion 2: UPR Governing Board

The Governing Board role encompasses policy formulation, system development guidance, budget allocation, and the appointment of President and Chancellors for each unit within the UPR system. Additionally, it plays a vital role in resource generation to secure external funding from nonpublic sectors and organizations to sustain and enhance UPR's activities. The Governing Board's commitment, as outlined in its Internal By-laws (VII.1.1, VII.1.2) is firmly directed towards improving the UPR's ability to meet societal needs, with its primary allegiance lying with the UPR. A complete list of the non-delegable duties and powers of the Governing Board established in the UPR University Law can be accessed through the Board's website (VII.2.1).

The UPR is a public corporation of the Government of Puerto Rico directed by a fourteen members Governing Board. The Law of the UPR describes the duties of the members of the Governing Board. Also, all members shall comply with the provisions of Law No. 1 of January 3, 2012, known as the Puerto Rico Government Ethics Act. This law formulates a Code of Ethics that regulates the conduct of active and former public employees and constitutes the guiding principle of the legislation to prohibit actions that endanger the stability of the moral integrity of the State by injurious actions or by conflict of interests. This Government Board establishes policies related to conflict of interest (VII.2.2).

The UPR Governing Board has authority to oversee the quality of educational programs, the awarding of degrees, the formulation of policy for the system, guiding its development, allocating the budget, and the appointment of the President and Chancellors. The Governing Board includes two (2) full time students, two (2) tenured professors, and eight (8) members appointed by the Governor of Puerto Rico and confirmed by the Puerto Rico Senate. The Secretary of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico and a representative of the Fiscal Agency and Financial Advisory Authority are *ex officio* members. The list of current members of the Governing Board during fiscal year 2023-2024 is established by (VII.2.3).

Administrative transitions have characterized the period comprehended in this self-study. They have provided an opportunity to apply new thinking to the University's longstanding commitment to serve the public interest, ensure that the institution clearly states and fulfills its mission and goals, have fiduciary

responsibility for the institution, and be accountable for the academic quality, integrity, planning, and fiscal well-being of the institution.

The Governing Board fulfills its legal mandate and ensures system-wide stability. In this respect, there is an opportunity to further strengthen UPR's shared structure, emphasizing the alignment between governing board consultations with institutional decisions and outcomes.

Criterion 3: UPR President

The President of the UPR is appointed by the Governing Board in consultation with all Academic Senates of the UPR System. As per Article 5 of UPR University Law (Law 1 of 1966, as amended), the President is the chief executive officer of the University System. This law stipulates that the President manages all academic, administrative, and financial affairs of the institution. The President also represents the institution and the Governing Board in all pertinent forums, presides the University Board, and harmonizes the Governing Board and University Board initiatives, as well as his own, to ensure the development and fulfillment of the University goals. As per of the Governing Board Certification 115-2015-2016, the President is evaluated in terms no less than two (2) years and greater than four (4) years (VII.3.1).

Since June 21, 2025, Dr. Zayira Jordán Conde is holding the title of President of the UPR (VII.3.2). Dr. Jordán Conde has a bachelor's degree in electronic journalism (minor in Spanish) and a master's degree in Cultural Anthropology (minor in Women's Studies). She also completed a doctoral degree in Logistics, Operations, and Management Information Systems (major in Human Computer Interaction) at Iowa State University. Dr. Jordán Conde has worked as a President of Atlantic University, and prior to this served as Associate Professor at the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Computer Science of the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico.

Criterion 4: UPR Cayey Administration

University Board

According to Article 6 of the University Law (VII.1.1), the University Board is responsible for maintaining a cohesive university system through a planning process that responds to the university's mission and goals (VII.4.1). In the fulfillment of this function the Board evaluates academic proposals and advise the President regarding the development plan and the integrated budget project of the University. These functions, among others, are carefully balanced to respect the autonomy of individual units. In fact, to ensure autonomy and a broad University representation the Board has as members of the Chancellors, a faculty member, and a student representative of each UPR unit. The Chancellor, one senator elected by the Academic Senate, and a student elected during GSC elections represent UPR Cayey on this Board. The list of current members of the University Board during 2023-2024 academic year can be accessed through its website (VII.4.2).

Chancellor

Chancellors hold the maximum academic and administrative authority at each UPR unit. Upon a vacancy, qualified members of the community could nominate themselves for the position. The selection process includes consultations with the Academic Senate, faculty, non-faculty, and student committees according to Article 19 of the UPR General By-Laws. These committees hold public hearings to evaluate the candidates' qualifications and their proposals to accomplish the institutional goals. After these consultation processes, the President recommends a nominee to the Governing Board, which appoints the Chancellor. Chancellors for each unit of the University's system are evaluated periodically according

to *Performance Evaluation of the President and Chancellors* (VII.3.1). This evaluation is conducted by the President, who reports the results to the Governing Board. The Chancellor's duties are outlined in Article 7 of the University Law and Section 19.3 of the UPR General By-Laws.

Since August 2025, Dr. Rochellie Martínez Vivas has been holding the title of Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey (VII.4.3). Dr. Martínez Vivas holds a Bachelor's and a master's in business education. In 2010, she completed a Doctoral degree in Administration and Supervision in Education from Inter American University of Puerto Rico. Dr. Martínez Vivas has worked in UPR Cayey as a professor since 1998, and has participated in several institutional committees that have coordinated processes regarding learning assessment, accreditation, curriculum development, and faculty professional development, among other relevant academic affairs. From 2014 to 2017, and 2023 to 2025 she served as Dean of Student Affairs.

Academic Senate

The Academic Senate (AS) serves as the official deliberative body for the academic community at each unit. Its responsibilities encompass a wide range of academic matters, including academic policies, course and curriculum content, and admission requirements. The composition of the Academic Senate, as outlined in UPR General By-Laws Article 21, Section 21.4, includes *ex officio* members, such as the University President, the Chancellor, and the Deans, along with representatives of the academic departments. Furthermore, it includes a representative from the Counseling and Psychological Services Department, the Library's chairperson, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research chairperson (as permanent guests), and four student representatives. The Student Ombudsperson has been included as an observer during AS meetings, as per (VII.4.4). The composition of the Academic Senate for 2023-2024 academic year is detailed as follows: six *ex officio* members, fourteen faculty senators, and four students (VII.4.5).

Administrative Board

The Administrative Board serves in an advisory capacity to the Chancellor, providing guidance on a range of matters and assuming the responsibility for formulating plans and projects aimed at institutional development. Additionally, the Board carries out evaluations and grants approvals for the allocation of the institutional budget presented by the Chancellor, as well as for the UPR Cayey academic calendar, as specified in the UPR Cayey Administrative Board By-Laws. Furthermore, the Board is responsible for making decisions and granting licenses, academic ranks, tenure and promotions of faculty and non-faculty of the institutional unit, in accordance with the UPR General By-Laws.

The composition of the Administrative Board is established in accordance with certifications from Puerto Rico's Council of Higher Education (1970-1971-49) and (1985-1986-180), as well as Law 186 from August 7, 1998. Its membership includes the President of the UPR (*ex officio*), the Chancellor of UPR Cayey, the Deans of Academic, Student, and Administrative Affairs, four academic department chairpersons appointed by the Chancellor, two faculty representatives elected by the Academic Senate, and one student representative elected by peers through an assembly, in accordance with the Student By-Laws.

Deans

The Dean of Academic Affairs oversees various aspects of academic administration, including academic departments, the Library, the Continuing Education and Professional Studies Division, the Honor Study Program, the Registrar, Counseling and Psychological Services, Admissions Office and the Distance Education Office. Also, the Dean, which is considered a trusted employee serving at the discretion of the

Chancellor, is responsible for managing academic programs with professional accreditation requirements.

The Dean of Student Affairs oversees supporting services for students and supervises several offices, including, Student Exchange Office, Financial Aid, Medical Services, Athletic Program, Student Recreation Center, Extracurricular Activities, and Veterans' Affairs. On the other hand, the Dean of Administrative Affairs oversees administrative supporting services, which encompass Human Resources, Security, Printing Services, Operations and Maintenance, Documents' Administration, Receiving and Delivery, and Finance (including Accounting, Disbursement, Property, Purchasing, Payroll, Pre-Intervention, Fiscal Financial Aid, Accounts Receivables, and Bursar).

Academic Department Chairpersons

Academic department chairpersons serve as faculty members with administrative roles, acting as the primary executive and administrative authorities within their respective departments. Their responsibilities encompass chairing department meetings and serving as the official representatives of their departments to university authorities. Additionally, they hold *ex officio* positions as presidents of all permanent department committees, excluding the Personnel Committee, where they are members and the president is selected among the committee's members, as stipulated in UPR General By-Laws Articles 25.3 and 25.4. The appointment of department chairpersons is made by the Chancellor upon the recommendation of the Deans. The Chancellor engages in consultations with department members in accordance with the provisions outlined in Article 40 of the UPR General By-Laws. Chairpersons are considered trusted employees serving at the discretion of the Chancellor.

Office Chairpersons

Office chairpersons are individuals in non-faculty roles, and they manage different administration and operational offices, such as Budget, Finance, Human Resources, and others. Their appointment is made by the Chancellor, upon the recommendation of the correspondent Dean. The Chancellor conducts consultations with members of the specific department or unit, as outlined in UPR General By-Laws Article 37 Section 37.3.2. Office Directors are considered trusted employees serving at the discretion of the Chancellor.

UPR Cayey's Organizational Structure

UPR Cayey has a well-defined organizational structure with clear lines of organization and authority to facilitate its efficiency and effectiveness. The UPR Cayey organizational chart illustrates this structure (VI.1.1). Evidence to support these lines can be found in many documents, which clearly respect hierarchical lines of communication and approval. Among these documents are Request for Approval of Contracts, Request for Purchases, and Request for Activating Courses, among many others.

Duties and responsibilities of institutional administrators and academic leaders are established in the UPR General By-Laws, Chapter IV. These include, among others, academic program planning, development, and assessment; personnel management; budget approval and distribution; proposal writing; innovative project development; external funding activities and administration; and supervision and assessment of student support services. These responsibilities involve their interaction with other university system administrators, local and federal government agencies, and the community.

Following the Chancellor in the organizational structure are the Deans of Academic, Student, and Administrative Affairs. They are appointed by the Chancellor, endorsed by the President, and approved by the Governing Board after a rigorous consultation process among faculty, non- faculty, and students.

The process for appointing the UPR Cayey institutional leadership is clearly defined in Articles 20 and 37 of the UPR General By-Laws. The deans are supported by academic department chairpersons and the corresponding administrative offices chairpersons. A careful examination of job descriptions for people in positions of trust and administrative positions shows that authority and accountability for policy development and decision-making is clearly assigned. The deans, the academic department chairpersons, the Academic Senate, the Administrative Board, and the office chairpersons assist the Chancellor in the decision-making process at UPR Cayey.

Other administrators who share responsibilities for ensuring that institutional plans and activities are done are the Directors of the Planning and Institutional Research, External Resources, Budget, Finance, and the Information Systems Office. Their duties and responsibilities are clearly defined in detail in the job description of questionnaires available in the Human Resources Office. These administrators respond directly to the Chancellor.

To ensure institutional effectiveness and efficiency, it is essential that administrative personnel have academic credentials and professional qualifications that are inherent to the duties and responsibilities of their positions. The institution recruits its administrative leadership through the consultation process stipulated in the UPR General By-Laws (Articles 19 and 20, 2006 as amended. Clearly established criteria guide the selection processes for the positions of Chancellor and Deans to ensure they have the appropriate skills, degrees, and training to carry out their duties. The selection processes include candidate nominations and evaluations by university constituents. Search committees constituted consultation purposes to draw up a profile with the essential professional characteristics. The UPR Cayey's Academic Senate ensures that the consultation process is carried out as mandated.

Administrative leaders are traditionally selected from within the institution and possess advanced academic preparation and senior faculty rank. The selection and evaluation of administrators follow established policies outlined in Articles 75–79 of the UPR General By-Laws. The table summarizes the academic qualifications of the current chancellor, deans, department chairpersons, and other institutional administrators

Table 17

Percentage of Employees with Doctoral and Master's Degrees by Category

Employee Category	Doctorates	Masters
Administrative Staff	12%	4%
Instructional Staff	65%	16%
Research Staff	1%	1%
Total	79%	21%

Note. Source: jasper.upr.edu Master Report.

The Dean of Academic Affairs is an experienced full-time faculty member with a hundred percent release time from teaching duties; to guarantee he has the necessary time to discharge his duties effectively. Both the current Dean of Student Affairs and Dean of Administrative Affairs are non-faculty members with high academic qualifications. The academic department chairpersons are released from fifty percent (50%) of their teaching load. Qualified non-faculty with the appropriate skills and experience to perform their responsibilities occupying other administrative positions.

The administration keeps the community informed about all relevant matters in multiple ways, including forums, meetings, electronic distribution of information, distribution of printed material, as well as posted dissemination of the relevant information in student spaces. This broad access ensures effective communication and, thus, more transparency in the administration. UPR Cayey guarantees its constituents the right to freely express, associate, meet openly, formulate petitions, and organize events that do not interfere with legitimate activities and must comply with institutional codes as according to UPR General By-Laws and Students By-Laws. UPR Cayey strives to remain transparent and make public documents accessible to the community.

Institutional policies

The Governing Board (GB) through its permanent and special committees evaluates and supervises the fundamental areas of the UPR. Such committees recommend the GB to the adoption of policies and actions, or make determinations of facts (Certification 40, 2012-2013, as amended) to ensure effective operation of the UPR system. The approval of policies, regulations, certifications, and any other dispositions must respond to a priority norm as established by Article 7 of the UPR General By-Laws. University authorities must adhere to regulations to establish rules, norms, resolutions, instructions, and procedures. These regulations are as follows:

- Certifications of the Governing Board
- Integral Development Plan for the University System
- UPR General By-Laws
- Norms, instructions, resolutions, and any other disposition of the President
- Certifications of the University Board
- Applicable dispositions by law
- Regulations of each institutional unit in accordance with the internally established hierarchy

Proposed rules, norms, resolutions, instructions, or procedures must consider the established organizational structure and chain of command. This must be done to ensure the preservation of democratic principles in decision-making processes, the functional independence of each unit, and the promotion of consistent cooperation and unity among different units, as outlined in the Declaration of Principles found in the General By-Laws of the UPR. This approach minimizes conflicts and nurtures a sense of belonging within the constituents.

The UPR Law takes precedence over any other rules, norms, procedures, certifications, resolutions, or customary practices enacted by any unit. The Governing Board establishes rules regarding the applicability of laws to address emerging conflicts. While the President can formulate policies, it is essential to keep the Governing Board informed about them, as detailed in Articles 5 and 6 of the UPR General By-Laws. Furthermore, governing bodies must ensure the autonomy of UPR-Cayey, as stipulated in Article 10.1 of the UPR General By-Laws in the establishment of any administrative or academic public policy.

Accessibility to governance of documents, policies, and procedures and maintaining the community informed is crucial for efficient administration. In response to this, governing bodies issue official certifications whenever a new policy or procedure is adopted or modified to ensure its implementation and to raise awareness within the community. The UPR Governing Board actively disseminates these certifications throughout the university system using electronic means, such as email and webpages

(VII.4.7). Likewise, the UPR Cayey Academic Senate and Administrative Board routinely distribute approved certifications to the university community via email and the institutional webpage.

Elected senators contribute to this transparency by delivering both written and oral reports during faculty meetings, addressing academic matters of interest to the body, and discussing newly approved certifications. These matters are further deliberated upon in departmental faculty meetings. Moreover, the Academic Senate ensures that students are well informed about its decisions and activities through Student Council representatives.

Involvement of constituents in decision-making processes

The Law of the UPR, as amended ensures that both faculty and students partake in the decision-making processes of UPR Cayey's governing bodies. Also, the UPR Cayey Academic Senate serves as a forum for deliberation, where each academic department is represented by a tenured faculty member. Student representation is evident through the involvement of the SC President and three student members elected annually by their peers. The Academic Senate actively engages in academic decision-making and matters concerning the academic community.

Another important deliberative body is the UPR Cayey Administrative Board, whose decisions have institution-wide implications. As previously explained, its composition allows for the participation of faculty, non-faculty, and students in the decision-making process regarding relevant issues. Faculty members also can express their views and engage in decision-making during faculty meetings, which are held at least once every semester in accordance with the UPR General By-Laws, with the possibility of convening extraordinary meetings as needed. Additionally, institutional, and departmental committees provide various avenues for faculty, administrative personnel, and students to contribute to decision-making at various levels. The appointment of institutional committees falls under the responsibility of the Chancellor, while departmental committees are appointed by department chairpersons.

The Disciplinary Board is yet another body where decisions related to student discipline are made. It comprises students, administrators, and faculty members, including the Dean of Student Affairs, two Academic Senate members elected by their peers, and two student representatives, as outlined in Article 17 of the UPR General Student By-Laws.

The Student Council, established as a platform for addressing student concerns and suggesting ideas for institutional enhancement, serves as the official forum for the student community. This body is elected annually and holds representation in UPR Cayey's primary governing bodies, as previously mentioned. Student senators are empowered to submit proposals on issues that affect them to these governing bodies. Student organizations also have a channel for voicing their concerns and ideas through the Dean of Student Affairs, who directs them to the appropriate governing body.

Non-faculty is integral to the decision-making process as well. They play significant roles in offering input and recommendations to various institutional policymakers, including the Chancellor, Academic Senate, and Administrative Board. Additionally, they participate in the consultation process for selecting Chancellors and Deans.

Over the past years, the institution has embraced a systemic culture by organizing public hearings, meetings, and forums. These activities allow all segments of the university community to participate, offer suggestions, and make recommendations to strengthen the decision-making process. Examples of these hearings, forums, and meetings include those related to the selection of the UPR President,

Chancellor, and Deans, as well as the creation of *UPR Cayey Strategic Plan 2025-2030,* and accreditation-related matters.

Within the UPR System, the University Board serves as a crucial platform for faculty and student voices to be acknowledged. The composition of the University Board is meticulously structured to uphold the autonomy of individual units. To guarantee both autonomy and comprehensive University representation, the Board includes Chancellors, a faculty representative, and a student representative from each UPR unit as its members.

Criterion 5: Evaluation & Assessment on Governance, Leadership, and Administration

As established by UPR Law, Section 3 (e) (7), the Governing Board will evaluate the work of the President of the UPR and the Chancellors of the institutional units. The procedures to assess the performance of the Chancellors of the UPR units and of the President are established in the Board of Trustees Performance Evaluation of the President and Chancellors Certifications, as amended by Governing Board Certification 115-2015-2016 (VII.3.1).

The UPR Law and General By-Laws establish that the evaluation of the President and the Chancellors has five purposes, which are as follows: to improve the performance of the institutional leaders, to promote a relationship of support and trust between the Governing Board and institutional leadership, to contribute to the achievement of established and defined plans and objectives for the institution, to account for the exercise of the duties of these officials, and to make decisions regarding their retention. The President is evaluated in terms no less than two (2) years and greater than four (4) years of their incumbency in the following criteria: institutional planning, administration, academics, leadership, problem solving and decision-making, relationship with the external community, professional development, and relationship with the student body. A committee is named by the Governing Board to conduct the evaluation process.

Chancellors for each unit of the University's system are evaluated by the same criteria. This evaluation is conducted by the President, who informs the Governing Board of said evaluations. In the UPR Cayey, the Chancellor is evaluated using the assessment instrument of Chancellor's Performance Evaluation Questionnaire for Faculty approved by the Academic Senate Certification (VII.5.2).

Academic department chairpersons are annually evaluated by the Dean of Academic Affairs using the criteria approved by the Release Report: Principles, Standards, Procedures, and Evaluation Instruments for the Teaching Staff of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey, which shows the assessment instrument used for this purpose (VII.5.3). The evaluation will form part of the file of the person and will be considered by the corresponding personnel committees.

Assessment of UPR Cayey Administration and Services

As part of the periodic assessment process of the effectiveness of administrative structures and services at UPR Cayey, multiple audits are conducted by internal and external regulatory agencies, such as the following:

- **Office of the Comptroller of Puerto Rico** - Periodic audits are performed to evaluate the effectiveness of the administrative processes, institutional management, and fiscal operations. The aim of this audit is to determine if institutional operations are carried out effectively and efficiently, and if they comply with all applicable regulations.

- **UPR Governing Board** - This Board assesses different administrative and compliance processes through the Internal Audit Office. The results are used to improve these processes continuously. Audits are performed annually. Audits are performed in accordance with the Audit Plan prepared by the Office of Internal Audit and approved by the Governing Board.

- **External audits** - External auditing firms are contracted by the UPR to make annual assessments of the effectiveness of different administrative, operational, academic, and fiscal processes to financial aid programs. Upon issuance of the annual financial statements by the external auditors' firm, the Governing Board receives, deliberates them during a Board meeting, and grants authorization for widespread distribution to the university community. Financial Statements can be found in (VI.7.2).

- **Federal audits** - Federal agencies, such as the US Department of Education and Veteran's Affairs Department, regularly assess UPR Cayey in its administrative processes, including student services, such as Veterans' and Financial Aid Services.

- **Regulatory agencies** - Other state and federal agencies, such as Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Women's Advocate Office, Disabled Citizens' Ombudsperson Office, Office of Government Ethics, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and others make periodic assessments of the institution's fulfillment of agency mandatory regulations.

- **Assessment of the Annual Institutional Effectiveness Reports** - The Institutional Annual Report contains an assessment approach of the institutional effectiveness in compliance with its strategic plan.

After these assessments are carried out, the institution, through the Chancellor's staff, develops and implements plans for improvement, to address concerns raised by audits, and submits them to corresponding offices. The regularity of the audits ensures the institution's compliance with the plan submitted.

The Office of Assessment, and Institutional Research (OAIR) conducts institutional assessment activities and offers support to the periodic reviews, upon request. Institutional research reports conducted by the OAIR are important sources of information for assessing institutional and program effectiveness. Some of the institutional studies performed and published by this office during recent years are Alumni Surveys, Graduating Student Survey, UPR Cayey Annual Reports, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Reports (IPEDS), and First-Time Degree Seeking Students' Profile.

CONCLUSION

This Self-Study 2026 affirms that the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey is a mission-driven, resilient, and forward-looking public institution, deeply committed to academic excellence, equity, and service to Puerto Rico. Through an inclusive and evidence-based process engaging faculty, staff, students, and administrators, the institution has demonstrated substantial alignment with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Standards while strengthening a shared culture of reflection, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Our Self-Study process confirms several institutional strengths. UPR Cayey sustains a distinctive identity as the only baccalaureate arts and sciences campus within the UPR System, supported by a highly credentialed faculty, robust shared governance, and a strong record of student achievement and access. Evidence throughout the Report highlights effective academic design, meaningful undergraduate research opportunities, inclusive governance structures, and ethical stewardship of resources. Strategic initiatives, such as the Student Success Innovation Center, Title V interventions, and externally funded research and curricular projects, demonstrate the institution's capacity to translate assessment results into concrete actions that enhance student learning and engagement.

At the same time, the institution has been candid in identifying opportunities for improvement and innovation. These include the need to further revitalize enrollment and retention strategies in the context of demographic decline; to systematize and strengthen planning and assessment processes so that evidence more consistently informs decision-making; and to enhance long-term fiscal sustainability through diversified revenue streams, external grants, and partnerships. Additional areas for growth include advancing curricular transformation and interdisciplinarity within the liberal arts, expanding the use of disaggregated data to address equity gaps, and continuing to modernize infrastructure and digital capacities in support of evolving pedagogical models.

In response, UPR Cayey has articulated clear initial plans and institutional initiatives. The Strategic Plan 2025–2030 provides a coherent framework linking mission, goals, assessment metrics, and resource allocation. Ongoing administrative reengineering, the revision of the Institutional Assessment Plan, expanded institutional dashboards, and targeted investments in student support and academic innovation reflect a deliberate effort to strengthen an evidence-based culture of planning. Concurrently, externally funded initiatives, particularly through federal and philanthropic grants, are being leveraged to support curricular renewal, faculty development, and student success at scale.

Ultimately, this Self-Study has functioned not merely as a compliance exercise, but as a catalyst for institutional learning and renewal. By embedding assessment into governance, planning, and daily practice, UPR Cayey is using this process to advance student achievement, reinforce ethical and inclusive decision-making, and sharpen its public mission. With confidence in its direction and clarity about its challenges, the University emerges from this Self-Study well positioned to innovate, adapt, and continue serving as a vital engine of educational opportunity, social mobility, and the collective good for Puerto Rico and beyond.

Appendix A: Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and Working Group Members

Executive Committee

Dr. Juan F. Caraballo Resto, Chair; ALO
Full Professor, Department of Social Sciences

Ms. Olga I. Sierra Flores, Co-chair
Director, Office of Assessment and Institutional Research

Ms. Jessica Rosario Rivera, Assistant
Administrative Secretary, Office of Assessment and Institutional Research

The Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the Executive Committee and the coordinators of the Working Groups, as identified below.

Standard I: Mission and Goals

Prof. Vionex M. Marti González - coordinator
Director, Institute of Interdisciplinary Research

- Dr. Belinda Román Avilés - Biology Department
- Prof. Gustavo Salvarrey Iranzo - Victor M. Pons Library
- Mrs. Nissi San Antonio Rosario - Finance
- Dr. Rosana Grafals Soto - Department of Social Sciences

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Ms. Jessica Rosario Rivera - coordinator
Administrative Secretary, Office of Assessment and Institutional Research

- Dr. Gladys M. Laboy García - Title IX Coordinator
- Dr. Ruth N. Mercado Cruz - Interdisciplinary Center for Student Development
- Mr. Juan E. Santiago Quiles - Office of Human Resources
- Ms. Jenny Santiago Santiago - Information Systems Office
- Mr. Juan L. Rodríguez González - TAOF

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Dr. Juan F. Caraballo Resto - coordinator
Full Professor, Department of Social Sciences

- Prof. Awilda M. Caraballo Bonilla - Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
- Dr. Clary E. Ramos Flores - Director of the Office of Distance Education
- Dr. Sally J. Delgado - English Department
- Dr. Wilfredo Resto Otero - Chemistry Department
- Dr. Héctor Isona de Jesús - Víctor M. Pons Library
- Prof. Ana M. Soto Ramos - Business Administration Department
- Ms. Ana M. Rivera Aponte - Víctor M. Pons Library

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

Mr. Adriann Torres Pedraza - coordinator
Student Council/Department of Social Sciences

- Dr. Carilú Pérez Caraballo - Interdisciplinary Center for Student Development
- Dr. Dalvin D. Méndez Hernández - Chemistry Department
- Dr. Thayra M. Reyes Díaz - English Department
- Prof. José E. Berríos López - Acting Dean of Student Affairs
- Ms. Daisy Ramos Quintana - Registrar's Office
- Mr. Jesús Martínez Martínez - Director of the Division of Continuing Education

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Ms. Olga I. Sierra Flores - coordinator
Director, Office of Assessment and Institutional Research

- Dr. Xiomara B. Santiago Rodríguez - SC Member - Chair, Business Administration Department
- Dr. Patria C. López de Victoria - English Department
- Dr. María I. de Jesús Burgos - Chair, Biology Department

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

Prof. Fernando Vázquez-Calle - coordinator
Assistant Researcher, Office of Assessment and Institutional Research

- Ms. María M. Santiago Morales - Former Budget Director
- Ms. Ana M. Rivera Serrano - Budget Director
- Ms. Glorimar Ortiz Rodríguez - Finance Director
- Dr. Angel Ortiz García - Business Administration Department
- Dra. Rosario Rivera Negrón - Social Sciences Department
- Dr. Juan F. Caraballo Resto - ALO, Chair
- Ms. Olga I. Sierra Flores - Co-chair

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Ms. Katherine I. Vázquez Rivera - coordinator
Executive Secretary, Academic Senate and Administrative Board

- Ms. Rosalía Ortiz Colón - Chancellor's Office
- Mr. Raymond A. Rodríguez Burgos - President, Student Council

Appendix B: Evidence Citations

#	Evidence Name
I.1.1	Research, Creation, and Community Service Policies
I.1.2	Mission Statement, Goals, and General Objectives of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey
I.1.3	Mission and Vision of the UPR Cayey
I.1.4	Planning and Assessment Committee Report 2017-2018
I.1.5	Email - New Mission and Vision at UPR Cayey
I.1.6	General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico
I.1.7	Strategic Plan 2020-2023 of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey
I.1.8	Strategic Plan 2025-2030 of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey
I.1.9	Budgetary Presentations FY 2018-2026
I.1.10	FOMB - Budget Compliance Certification and Resolution
I.1.11	Faculty Recruitment Plan 2024-2025
I.1.12	Regulations for the Evaluation of Academic Programs of the University of Puerto Rico
I.1.13	Criteria for Undergraduate Enrollment Programming
I.1.14	Guide for the Preparation of the Annual Operational Plan (AOP)
I.1.15	Proposal to Promote the Development of Excellence in our Graduates
I.1.16	Guidelines for Submitting Proposals to the Institutional Fund for the Development of Research, Artistic Creation, and Community Service
I.1.17	Policies and Procedures for the Recruitment of Faculty at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey
I.1.18	Policy for the Payment of Institutional Incentive to Faculty Members Who Have Been Successful in Securing and Managing External Funds
I.1.19	Institutional Policy for the Use and Access of Information Technology Resources at the University of Puerto Rico
I.3.1	College Scorecard
I.3.2	New General Education Model
I.4.1	UPR Strategic Plan 2023-2028 A Map of Creative and Innovative Action
I.4.2	Demographic Transformation of Puerto Rico and the UPR Cayey Priority Region
II.1.1	General Students Regulations of the UPR
II.1.2	UPR Cayey Student Regulations
II.1.3	Institutional Policy Regarding Intellectual Property
II.1.4	Policy on Patents, Authorship, and the Commercialization of Educational Materials
II.2.1	Institutional Policy on Coexistence
II.2.2	IPEDS Fall Enrollment Summary 2018-2019 to 2023-2024
II.2.3	IPEDS Twelve Month Enrollment Summary 2018-2019 to 2023-2024
II.2.4	IPEDS Human Resources Component Summary 2018-2019 to 2023-2024
II.3.1	Protocol for Submitting Academic and Administrative Grievances
II.3.2	Institutional Policy against Workplace Harassment

#	Evidence Name
II.3.3	Institutional Policy against Sexual Harassment
II.3.4	Policy against Discrimination based on Sex or Gender
II.4.1	Contract for the Rendering of Personal Services at the University of Puerto Rico
II.4.2	Policy and Guidelines for Financial Conflicts of Interest and Commitments in Research and Sponsored Programs
II.4.3	Institutional Policy for the Solicitation, Acceptance, and Administration of Private Donations
II.4.4	Regulation for the Acquisition of Equipment, Materials, and Non-Personal Services
II.4.5	Policy for the Solicitation, Acceptance, and Administration of Donations 2020-2021
II.4.6	Policy for the Solicitation, Acceptance, and Administration of Donations 2021-2022
II.6.1	UPR Cayey Promotions
II.7.1	Mellon Proposal
II.7.2	Net Price Calculator
II.7.3	Institutional Policy for the Award of Financial Aid to Students with Academic Distinctions - Amendment
II.7.4	Institutional Policy for the Award of Financial Aid to Students with Academic Distinctions
II.7.5	Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Union of Non-Teaching Exempt Employees 2021–2024
II.7.6	Institutional Policy for the Authorization of Extended Absences Applicable to Students of the University of Puerto Rico
II.7.7	UPR Cayey Academic Catalog 2025-2026
II.8.1	IPEDS Student Financial Aid 2018-2019 to 2023-2024
III.1.1	Credit Hour Policy and Procedures - 34 CFR 600.2 and 668.8(k)–(l) U.S. Department of Education, 2020
III.1.2	Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations
III.1.3	Amendment Cert. 33 (2020-2021) - Guide for the Creation, Uniform Codification, And Registration of UPR Courses
III.1.4	Guide for the Creation, Uniform Coding, and Registration of Courses 2020-2021
III.1.5	Regulations for the Periodic Evaluation of Academic Programs at the UPR
III.1.6	Guide for Academic Program Evaluation at the University of Puerto Rico
III.2.1	Policies and Procedures for the Recruitment of Faculty at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey, and the Model Appointment Letter
III.2.2	Faculty Profile (2015-2016 to 2023-2024)
III.2.3	Principles, Norms, Procedures, and Instruments for the Evaluations of Teaching Staff
III.2.4	Faculty Evaluation Policy to Incorporate the Evaluation Document for Faculty Teaching Courses in the Online Modality
III.2.5	Professional Development Policy
III.2.6	IPEDS Fall Enrollment 2024-2025
III.4.1	Institutional Policy on Distance Education at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey
III.4.2	Library Collections Webpage
III.4.3	UPR Interlibrary Loan Agreement 2003 - Ratified 2023

#	Evidence Name
III.5.1	Assessment Report of the General Education Model at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey
III.7.1	UPR Handbook of Policies and Procedures for Sponsored Programs (2024)
III.7.2	Institutional Policy for the Acquisition, Use, and Oversight of External Funds Received by the University of Puerto Rico for Educational, Research, and Public Service Programs
III.7.3	Public Disclosures Policy 34 CFR 668.43
III.8.1	Institutional Retention Rates
III.8.2	Grade Reporting Policy
IV.1.1	Supplementary Policies and Regulations for Undergraduate Admission to the University of Puerto Rico
IV.1.2	UPR Regulations for Admission to the University of Puerto Rico
IV.1.3	UPR Admissions Pilot Plan
IV.1.4	Extension of the Validity of the Pilot Plan on the Undergraduate Student Admissions Policy of the
IV.1.5	New Admission Policy for Non-Traditional Students
IV.1.6	Student Recruitment Plan 2024-2025 and 2025-2026
IV.1.7	Admission Process for Gifted Students
IV.1.8	Early Admission of 11th-Grade Students to UPR Cayey
IV.1.9	Rules and Supplementary Procedures of UPR for Extended Admission of New Students
IV.1.10	Institutional Policy on Granting Financial Assistance to Students with Academic Distinctions at UPR
IV.1.11	Report on the Effectiveness of Pre-University Courses
IV.1.12	Institutional Policy for the Automatic Awarding of Degrees and Institutional Grading Policies
IV.1.13	Institutional Policy on Second Baccalaureate Degrees, Second Majors, Minors, and Professional Certifications
IV.1.14	Institutional Policy on Second Baccalaureate Degrees, Second Majors, Minors, and Professional Certifications - Amendment
IV.1.15	Reclassification Requirements
IV.1.16	Requirements for Regular Transfer and Transfer with Reclassification
IV.1.17	Proposal for the Office of Institutional Assessment to Submit an Annual Report on the Findings of the Student Services Evaluation
IV.1.18	Graduate Exit Questionnaire 2025
IV.1.19	Student Services Opinion Questionnaire
IV.1.20	Academic Tracking System (ACT)
IV.1.21	Student Success Prediction System (SSPS)
IV.2.1	Transfers - University of Puerto Rico at Cayey
IV.2.2	Institutional Transfer Policy
IV.2.3	Specific Transfer Requirements for the Bachelor’s Degree in Natural Sciences
IV.2.4	Readmission Regulations
IV.3.1	Consent for Outpatient Diagnosis and/or Treatment - HIPAA
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IV.3.3	Institutional Policy in Accordance with the Buckley Amendment
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IV.6.1	Bookmarks
IV.6.2	Questionnaire and Results on Available Technological Tools in Response to the COVID-19 Emergency
IV.6.3	Faculty and Classroom Evaluation Form
IV.6.4	Annual Institutional Effectiveness Reports for Academic Years 2018-2019 to 2022-2023
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V.1.2	Accreditation Council for Business School Programs (ACBSP) Accreditation – Last Reaffirmed on 2023
V.1.3	Ideal Graduate Profile
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V.3.5	History Program Moratorium
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VI.2.2	Faculty Meetings 2024-2025
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VI.3.2	Extension of the Pilot Plan for the Undergraduate Admissions Policy of the University of Puerto Rico
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#	Evidence Name
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VI.3.4	Adelanta 180° Program Proposal
VI.3.5	Board of Postsecondary Institutions - UPR License Renewal
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VI.5.2	Institutional Transformation Action #22
VI.5.3	Research Grant Submission Profile 2019–2024
VI.6.1	Institutional Profile 2018-2019 to 2023-2024
VI.6.2	IPEDS - Finance Survey Summary 2018-2019 to 2023-2024
VI.7.1	Budget Presentation for FY 2025-2026
VI.7.2	UPR Audited Financial Statements 2019 to 2024
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VI.8.2	Annual Institutional Update (AIU)
VI.8.3	Amendment to the UPR Budget Distribution 2025–2026
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VI.10.1	Building Adequacy Assessment
VI.10.2	Building Planning Presentation
VI.11.1	Cohort Default Rate
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VII.1.1	University of Puerto Rico Act - Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966, as amended
VII.1.2	Approval of Amendments to the University of Puerto Rico Debt Collection Regulations and Strengthening of Collection Mechanisms (Certification No. 40, 2011–2012)
VII.2.1	Duties & Responsibilities of the Governing Board
VII.2.2	To amend Certification Number 8 (2012-2013), Policy and Guidelines for Financial Conflicts of Interest and Commitments in Research and Sponsored Programs of the UPR
VII.2.3	Composition of the Governing Board 2023–2024 (GB Certification 88, 2023-2024)
VII.3.1	Performance Evaluation of the President and Chancellors
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VII.4.3	CV - Chancellor of the UPR Cayey
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VII.5.1	Statistical Report on the Results of the Evaluation of the Chancellor Presented to the Academic Senate
VII.5.2	Release Report: Principles, Standards, Procedures, and Evaluation Instruments for the Teaching Staff of the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey

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8	Roles and Responsibilities in the Student Learning Assessment Process at UPR Cayey
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9	Key Units and Responsibilities in the Admissions Process
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11	Financial Aid (2024-2025)
12	Student Retention Strategies Coordinated by the Dean of Academic Affairs at UPR Cayey
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