

## Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC

Undergraduate program

2018-2019

**Name of Institution:** University of Puerto Rico – Rio Piedras

**Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer:** Dr. Luis Ferrao, Acting Chancellor

**Name of Unit:** School of Communication

**Name and Title of Administrator:** Dr. Jorge Santiago Pintor, Chair, School of Communication

**Date of 2018-2019 Accrediting Visit:** February 10-13, 2019

If the unit is currently accredited, please provide the following information:

**Date of the previous accrediting visit:** Feb. 5-8, 2012

**Recommendation of the previous site visit team:** Accreditation

**Previous decision of the Accrediting Council:** Accreditation

**Recommendation by 2018-2019 Visiting Team:** Reaccreditation

*Prepared and submitted by:*

**Team Chair**

Name and Title: Heidi de Laubenfels, Chief Operating Officer

Organization/School: Nyhus Communications

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_



**Team Members**

Name and Title: Diane McFarlin, Dean

Organization/School: College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_



Name and Title: Hubert Brown, Associate Professor, Broadcast and Digital Journalism; Associate Dean, Research, Creativity, International Initiatives and Diversity

Organization/School: Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_



## PART I: General information

Name of Institution:

**University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras (UPR-RP)**

Name of Unit:

**School of Communication**

Year of Visit:

**2019**

1. Check regional association by which the institution now is accredited.

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges

*If the unit seeking accreditation is located outside the United States, provide the name(s) of the appropriate recognition or accreditation entities:*

2. Indicate the institution's type of control; check more than one if necessary.

Public

3. Provide assurance that the institution has legal authorization to provide education beyond the secondary level in your state. **It is not necessary to include entire authorizing documents.** Public institutions may cite legislative acts; private institutions may cite charters or other authorizing documents.

Founded by law in 1903, the University of Puerto Rico started as the Insular Normal School. The University Act of 1942 reorganized the institution, adding the College of Humanities, the College of Natural Sciences, and the College of Social Sciences to the large academic/administrative units already existing at Río Piedras. The [Law of the University of Puerto Rico](#) (Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966, as amended) establishes the institution's governance structure at both the UPR System and campus levels. The law assigns specific policy-development and decision-making roles and responsibilities to particular officers and bodies within the institution. It institutionalizes the principle of shared governance and provides for the participation of faculty and students at all levels of governance.

4. Has the journalism/mass communications unit been evaluated previously by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications?

Yes

No

If yes, give the date of the last accrediting visit: **5-8 February 2012**

5. When was the unit or sequences within the unit first accredited by ACEJMC?

**April 2012**

6. Provide the unit's mission statement. Statement should give date of adoption and/or last revision.

The mission statement of the School of Communication was adopted on April 30, 2007.

**Mission of the School of Communication**

The School of Communication has as its mission the formation of professionals committed to the study, research, and practice of communication as it manifests itself in the dynamics of Puerto Rican culture and other international contexts. We aim to develop professionals in the communication media with a critical and investigative outlook, within a framework of ethics and social responsibility.

This mission allows for a theoretical orientation and in-depth study of communication, related directly to the mass communication media and to their social, political, economic, and cultural implications.

We have the mission to provide students with the tools they need to develop valued creative, research, communication, and critical analysis skills, and to develop the ethical values and the sense of social responsibility that our mission promotes.

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters of **15** weeks

Summer sessions of **5** weeks

8. Check the programs offered in journalism/mass communications:

- Bachelor's degree  
 Master's degree  
 Ph.D. degree

9. List the specific undergraduate degrees as well as the majors or sequences being reviewed by ACEJMC. \*Indicate online degrees.

**Bachelor of Arts in Communication, concentration in**

- **Audiovisual Communication**
- **Information and Journalism**
- **Public Relations and Advertising**

10. Credit hours required by the university for an undergraduate degree:  
(Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.)

120 semester credit hours for the Bachelor's degree

11. Give the number of credit hours students may earn for internship experience.  
Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.

Up to 6 semester credit hours

12. List each professional journalism or mass communications sequence or specialty offered and give the name of the person in charge.

<b>Name of Sequence or Specialty</b>	<b>Person in Charge</b>
Audiovisual Communication	Alfredo Rivas

Information and Journalism	Lourdes Lugo
Public Relations and Advertising	Esther Burgos

13. Number of full-time students enrolled in the institution:

**Full-time students, UPR-RP, spring 2019**

Undergraduate	11,685
Graduate	3,154
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,839</b>

**Full-time students, UPR-RP, fall 2017**

Undergraduate	10,589
Graduate	2,307
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,896</b>

14. Number of undergraduate majors in the accredited unit, by sequence and total (if the unit has pre-major students, list them as a single total):

**Spring Semester, AY 2018-19**

<b>Name of Sequence or Specialty</b>	<b>Undergraduate majors</b>
Audiovisual Communication	161
Information and Journalism	142
Public Relations and Advertising	155
<b>Total</b>	<b>458</b>

**Fall Semester, AY 2018-19**

<b>Name of Sequence or Specialty</b>	<b>Undergraduate majors</b>
Audiovisual Communication	181

Information and Journalism	160
Public Relations and Advertising	168
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>

15. Number of students in **each section** of all skills courses (newswriting, reporting, editing, photography, advertising copy, broadcast news, public relations writing, etc.). List enrollment by section for the term during which the visit will occur and the preceding term. Attach separate pages if necessary. Include a separate list for **online skills courses**, which also must meet the 20-1 ratio. (The Council has ruled that campaigns courses are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)

### Spring 2019

<b>Audiovisual Communication</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Section number</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
<b>COMA 4011</b> Basic Photography	1	20
	2	20
	3	20
	2U1	16
<b>COMA 4038</b> History of Cinema	0U1	18
<b>COMA 4100</b> Supervised Internship in Television	0U1	3
<b>COMA 4105</b> Supervised Internship in Radio	0U1	1
<b>COMA 4106</b> Supervised Internship in Film	0U1	3
<b>COMA 4315</b> Scriptwriting	1	15
	2	15
<b>COMA 4317</b> Digital Graphic Design	1	14
	2	14
<b>COMA 4341</b> Film Production I	0U1	18
<b>COMA 4342</b> Film Production II	0U1	15
<b>COMA 4351</b> Television Production I	0U1	11

<b>COMA 4352</b> Television Production II	0U1	9
<b>COMA 4362</b> Radio Production II	0U1	7
<b>COMA 4815</b> Film Seminar	0U1	11

<b>Information and Journalism</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Section number</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
<b>INFP 4001</b> Journalistic Writing I	0U1	10
<b>INFP 4002</b> Journalistic Writing II	1	5
	2	15
<b>INFP 4036</b> Multimedia Journalism Design and Techniques	0U1	20
<b>INFP 4059</b> Journalism for Radio and Television	0U1	20
<b>INFP 4097</b> Supervised Internship in Broadcast Journalism	0U1	0
<b>INFP 4099</b> Supervised Internship in Broadcast Journalism	0U1	0
<b>INFP 4108</b> Supervised Internship in Photo Journalism	0U1	0
<b>INFP 4109</b> Supervised Internship in Journalism	0U1	0
<b>INFP 4148</b> Convergent Media Writing	1	12
	2	20
<b>INFP 4809</b> Journalism Seminar	1	10
	2	15

<b>Public Relations and Advertising</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Section number</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
<b>REPU 4025</b> Copywriting	0U1	20
<b>REPU 4076</b> Conceptualization of Advertising for Audio, Video, Press y and New Media	1	11
	2	11

<b>REPU 4087</b> Public Relations Planning and Production	0U1	7
<b>REPU 4107</b> Supervised Internship in Public Relations	0U1	0
<b>REPU 4110</b> Supervised Internship in Advertising	0U1	0
<b>REPU 4147</b> Writing for Public Relations	0U1	20
<b>REPU 4155</b> Media Planning	1	16
	2	20
<b>REPU 4165</b> Public Relations Campaigns	1	20
	2	11
<b>REPU 4166</b> Advertising Campaigns	1	7
	2	20

**Fall 2018**

<b>Audiovisual Communication</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Section number</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
<b>COMA 4011</b> Basic Photography	1	20
	2	20
	3	18
	2U1	18
<b>COMA 4105</b> Supervised Internship in Radio	0U1	1
<b>COMA 4315</b> Scriptwriting	1	15
	2	15
	3	14
<b>COMA 4317</b> Digital Graphic Design	1	17
	2	16
<b>COMA 4341</b> Film Production I	0U1	18
<b>COMA 4342</b> Film Production II	0U1	17
<b>COMA 4351</b> Television Production I	0U1	14
<b>COMA 4116</b> Independent Study, Film	0U1	1
<b>COMA 4352</b> Television Production II	0U1	11
<b>COMA 4361</b> Radio Production I	0U1	7
<b>COMA 4819</b> Audiovisual Communication Seminar	0U1	14
<b>COMA 4815</b> Film Seminar	0U1	12
	2	16



<b>Information and Journalism</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Section number</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
<b>INFP 4001</b> Journalistic Writing I	1	18
	2	11
<b>INFP 4002</b> Journalistic Writing II	1	20
<b>INFP 4036</b> Multimedia Journalism Design and Techniques	0U1	17
<b>INFP 4059</b> Journalism for Radio and TV	0U1	19
<b>INFP 4097</b> Supervised Internship in Broadcast Journalism	0U1	1
<b>INFP 4099</b> Supervised Internship in Broadcast Journalism	0U1	1
<b>INFP 4108</b> Supervised Internship in Photo Journalism	0U1	1
<b>INFP 4109</b> Supervised Internship in Journalism	0U1	1
<b>INFP 4148</b> Convergent Media Writing	2	12
<b>INFP 4809</b> Journalism Seminar	1	15
	2	10

<b>Public Relations and Advertising</b>		
<b>Course</b>	<b>Section number</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
<b>REPU 4025</b> Copywriting	1	8
	2	14
<b>REPU 4076</b> Conceptualization of Advertising for Audio, Video, Press y and New Media	1	13
	2	17
<b>REPU 4107</b> Supervised Internship in Public Relations	0U1	1
<b>REPU 4147</b> Writing for Public Relations	1	18
<b>REPU 4155</b> Media Planning	1	14
	2	14
<b>REPU 4165</b> Public Relations Campaigns	2	23
<b>REPU 4166</b> Advertising Campaigns	1	12
	2	13

16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2017 – 2018 academic year:

Total expenditures for fiscal year 2018-19: 2,791,130.00

Give percentage increase or decrease in three years: + 1.8%

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$1,375,338.00

17. List name and rank of all full-time faculty. (Full-time faculty refers to those defined as such by the university.) Identify those not teaching because of leaves, sabbaticals, etc.

**Full professors (N = 12)**

Colón Zayas, Eliseo R.

Coss, Luis F.

Díaz Rodríguez, Héctor

Gracia Machuca, Rafael

Lugo Ortiz, Lourdes

Morales Alequín, Beatriz

Ramírez Sánchez, Rubén

Roche Morales, Mario

Santiago Pintor, Jorge

Seijo Maldonado, Haydeé (on sick leave as of February 2019)

Sepúlveda Rodríguez, Héctor

Torres Rodríguez, Jimmy (currently in service to another campus)

**Associate professors (N = 3)**

García, Ana María

González Buitrago, Ivette

Soto Ramírez, Nora

**Assistant professors (N = 2)**

De la Cruz, Iván

Reyes, Wanda

18. List names of part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at least one course in fall 2017. Also list names of part-time faculty teaching spring 2017. (If your school has its accreditation visit in spring 2018, please provide the spring 2018 adjunct list in the updated information.)

**Full time adjunct faculty (N = 6)**

Albert, Ramaris

Aponte, Héctor

Rivas Vélez, Alfredo  
Rodríguez, Israel  
Burgos, Esther  
García Arce, Carlos

**Part time adjunct faculty, spring 2019 (N = 10)**

Llovet, Carlos  
Luna, Nitza  
Romero, Angélica  
Ayala, José L.  
Malaret, María  
Torres, Mariliana  
Cruz, Enrique  
Lipsett, Pedro  
García, Luis  
Ortiz, Jannette V.

**19. Schools on the semester system:**

For each of the last two academic years, please give the number and percentage of graduates who earned 72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communications.

**72 or more semester hours outside of journalism and mass communications**

	<b>Total Graduates</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>2017-18 Academic Year</b>	92	92	100%
<b>2016-2017 Academic Year</b>	124	124	100%
<b>2015-2016 Academic Year</b>	104	102	98%

## **PART II — Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration**

*The policies and practices of the unit ensure that it has an effectively and fairly administered working and learning environment.*

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

The University of Puerto Rico (UPR) system includes 11 campuses across the island. It is governed by a central administration and a governing body consisting of elected and appointed members, as well as representation from the faculty and student populations. The University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras (UPR-RP) campus, where the School of Communication is based, is the oldest and most complex.

The School of Communication was founded in 1972 as the Graduate School of Public Communication. When its undergraduate program was added in 1977, the name was changed to the School of Public Communication. Areas of study at that time were journalism, film, television, radio, public relations, and advertising. In 1987, after a period of expansion, the School joined the Latin American Federation of Communication Schools and Colleges, which is viewed as a crucial step for internationalization.

Accreditation was first broached in the 1990s, when Richard Cole and Susanne Shaw visited the school for a pre-accreditation review. In 2002, the Puerto Rico Council of Higher Education approved a new curriculum and three majors: Audiovisual Communication, Information and Journalism, and Public Relations and Advertising. By then the School was hosting the campus radio station, Cadena Radio Universidad, and the campus television unit. A second pre-accreditation visit in 2004 resulted in recommendations for improvement.

The School submitted its first accreditation self-study in 2011. The accrediting site team visit followed in February 2012 and resulted in the school being accredited in April 2012.

The School's forward momentum was dramatically derailed in 2017 -- against the backdrop of the island's worsening economic crisis -- by a massive student strike, and two destructive, back-to-back hurricanes. Hurricane Maria, in particular, caused unprecedented, catastrophic damage to the island and, directly pertinent to this report, the UPR-RP campus and the School of Communication. The School lost its main building and had to relocate to temporary facilities. The reaccreditation process was delayed one year in consideration of the devastating impact of Hurricane Maria. The faculty and administration are to be commended for resuming the self-study process and getting back on track in 2018.

UPR-RP has a student enrollment of 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students, while the School enrolled 509 students this year and 477 in 2017-18. This is a decline from a student population of around 600 before the fiscal crisis and Hurricane Maria. Undergraduate majors are spread somewhat equally across the three sequences of Audiovisual Communication, Information and Journalism, and Public Relations and Advertising.

**(a) The unit has a written mission statement and a written strategic or long-range plan that provides vision and direction for its future, identifies needs and resources for its mission and goals and is supported by university administration outside the unit.**

The School of Communication has a published mission statement and has produced two strategic plans over the last 10 years that address how it seeks to fulfill its mission, which is (translated from the original Spanish) the "formation of professionals committed to the study, research and practice of

communication as it manifests itself in the dynamics of Puerto Rican culture and other international contexts.”

The mission statement continues: “We aim to develop professionals in the communication media with a critical and investigative outlook, within a framework of ethics and social responsibility. The mission allows for a theoretical orientation and in-depth study of communication, related directly to the mass communication media and to their social, political, economic, and cultural implications. We have the mission to provide students with the tools they need to develop valued creative, research, communication, and critical analysis skills, and to develop the ethical values and the sense of social responsibility that our mission promotes.”

The first strategic plan covered the period from 2013-2018. This plan was largely accomplished, as recorded in a summary table included in the accreditation study, with exceptions due largely to the disruptions of the protracted, 72-day student strike and two hurricanes in 2017.

An updated plan, adopted in 2018 in conjunction with the University Academic Senate’s *Commitment 2023* plan, looks ahead another five years and establishes nine goals that relate to the following: institutional optimization, strengthening research and creative productivity, reaching the highest academic and professional standards, recruitment and retention of a faculty and administration committee that aspires to excellence and social responsibility, consolidation of a diverse and exceptional student community, forging links of public and professional service between the school and the external community, expanding internationalization, optimizing use of information and communication technologies, and increasing fiscal sustainability of the school by diversifying sources of income through grant proposals and special projects.

During the site team visit, there was clear evidence of activity geared toward achieving each of these goals. Much of the School’s progress, however, has been slowed by the economic challenges that existed prior to 2017 and have been exacerbated by the devastating impact of Hurricane Maria. This impact will be referenced throughout this report.

The School’s strategic planning process was inclusive. A special committee guided development of the plan, in consultation with faculty and students. The plan was reviewed by faculty and student council representatives, who suggested revisions. Faculty considered the final proposal in what was described as “an extraordinary meeting” in October 2018. Faculty approved the plan five days later by referendum.

Although this action occurred more than one year past the accreditation term, the site team took into account that 2017 was in many ways a lost year.

*Commitment 2023* required that each school designate someone to track each project or objective. The unit must report outcomes, anticipated completion dates and actions taken to sustain progress. Each year units are required to submit an Annual Work Plan focusing on objectives and outcomes.

**(b) The unit has policies and procedures for substantive faculty governance that ensure faculty oversight of educational policy and curriculum.**

The School’s governance policies are designed to be inclusive and accessible. Both faculty and students are included in academic and administrative processes, and have representation at both the University and School levels. This includes the selection of school administrators.

The School's faculty contribute to University governance through service and representation in various institutional bodies. The School is represented on the University's Academic Senate by one elected faculty member.

The School is guided by the principal of academic freedom, as defined in the University's General Regulations, and has rules and guidelines that govern the handling of complaints and concerns of faculty, staff and students. These include the Faculty Evaluation Manual, the Student Ombudsman, and the School's Office of Student Affairs.

Faculty participate in School governance through faculty meetings (nine in the 2017-18 academic year) that follow parliamentary procedures, meetings with concentration coordinators, an elected Personnel Committee, direct participation in search processes and efforts toward the School's recognition as an autonomous school. (More below.) In addition, there are nine faculty committees.

Students are able to participate in academic processes and institutional governance through various student councils. It is codified that they have the right to express themselves and vote in academic departments, faculties, administrative boards, academic boards, the Academic Senate and the UPR Governing Board. Each college and school annually elects one or more student representatives to serve on the General Student Council. In addition, the School of Communication has its own student council of 15 individuals.

**(c) The unit's administration provides effective leadership within the unit and effectively represents it in dealings with university administration outside the unit and constituencies external to the university.**

During the site visit, faculty and alumni spoke well of the director's leadership and his effectiveness as an advocate for the School. He was described as being fair, hard-working, dedicated and supportive. He is credited with securing the School's current location, which – while inadequate for the School's needs and ambitions -- is far better than the initial solution prescribed by the University after Hurricane Maria destroyed the School's main building. In addition to securing a better temporary home, he initiated an effort to construct a new building. This campaign has involved a partnership with the School of Architecture, where students are participating in a competition to design the new School of Communication. Three finalists have been selected and the process of evaluating these three designs has begun. As will be discussed in the section on Standard 7, a new building is essential to the sustainability and forward momentum of the School's programs and reputation.

In addition to the building, the director is leading another campaign that is the top objective of the strategic plan and is also viewed as critically important to the prestige of the School. It involves the School's autonomy on campus, and the fact that the School is one of only two units on the Rio Piedras campus that do not have College status with their own deans. Instead, the School of Communication and the School of Information Sciences and Technologies are directly overseen by the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs, which adds a level of review and decision-making around topics such as curriculum reform. The director reports to the Dean of Academic Affairs, rather than to the Chancellor of the Rio Piedras Campus, which is the case for the leaders of all but one of the other units. Faculty believe that this puts the School of Communication at a distinct disadvantage.

While this arrangement has remained in place out of fiscal considerations, the director has proposed a consolidation with the School of Information Sciences and Technologies – a proposal that has been approved by the faculties of both schools. A decision is expected in May. Although it is common in

most universities for deans or directors to report to a provost, the organizational structure in this case represents another layer of authority that not all schools on the Rio Piedras Campus experience.

The Dean of Academic Affairs indicated to the site team that she will support this consolidation and said it is important to ensure that the new building considers the needs of the School of Information Science and Technologies.

**(d) The institution and/or the unit defines and uses a process for selecting and evaluating its administrators.**

The School has a clearly defined procedure for selecting, appointing and evaluating administrators, as outlined in Article 20 of the UPR General Regulations and detailed in the School's Faculty Guidelines.

It should be noted that the procedure for evaluating unit administrators has not been used by the Dean of Academic Affairs to evaluate the School's director. The Dean explained that she took office two months before Hurricane Maria and wanted to leave time for focus on the process of recovery.

**(e) Faculty, staff and students have avenues to express concerns and have them addressed.**

The School has rules and guidelines that govern the handling of complaints and concerns of faculty, staff and students. These include the Faculty Evaluation Manual, the Student Ombudsman, and the School's Office of Student Affairs.

Students have two primary mechanisms for channeling grievances, mediation within the School or intervention from the campus's student ombudsman. At the School, students may present a grievance to a program coordinator or, more commonly, the student affairs coordinator. The coordinator will then mediate between the affected individuals (for example, a faculty member and a student) to attempt a satisfactory resolution of the matter. If no satisfactory resolution is achieved, the matter can be advanced to the director, Dean of Academic Affairs or ombudsman, who reports to the Chancellor. Students may also directly seek the intervention of the ombudsman.

Faculty may channel any grievance to either the associate director or director. If a resolution is not met, the director may request the intervention of the Dean of Academic Affairs, who will channel the grievance to the Chancellor's office if a resolution is not met. The chancellor may then decide whether to request a legal consultation or send the matter to the legal unit for investigation.

**SUMMARY:**

The University and School have a sturdy system for shared governance. Faculty and students are represented at all levels of decision-making and play a key role in performance evaluations of both colleagues and administrators. The director is credited with advancing two critical needs for the School: 1) a new home to not only replace, but improve on the building ravaged by Hurricane Maria, and 2) a shift to college-level status, most likely in consolidation with the School of Information Science and Technologies, in order to be represented by a dean and stand on the same level as all other units on the Rio Piedras campus.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

**COMPLIANCE**

## **PART II – Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction**

*The unit provides curriculum and instruction, whether on site or online, that enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies and values the Council defines for preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society.*

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**a) The unit requires that students take a minimum of 72 semester credit hours (or 104 quarter credit hours) required for a baccalaureate degree outside of journalism and mass communications and meet the liberal arts and sciences-general education requirements of the institution. ACEJMC expects at least 95 percent of the graduating classes in the two academic years preceding an accreditation visit to meet this requirement.**

In the 2017-18 and 2016-17 academic years, 100% of students earned 72 or more semester credit hours outside of journalism and mass communications. In the 2015-16 academic year, the figure was 98%.

Students receive information about the General Education requirements starting with their first orientation. This component includes 42 credits of general education (such as Spanish, science, English, and mathematics) and another 15 in specific areas such as history, English and interdisciplinary studies; and – for students in the PR and Advertising and Audiovisual concentrations – 24 credits of electives in liberal arts (defined as academic knowledge that offers training on general culture and develops capacities of critical thinking, reasoning, social responsibility and the appreciation of diversity). Students in the Information and Journalism concentration must take 21 credits of electives in liberal arts and three credits of writing outside the School. In total, Communications students take 81 credit hours outside journalism and mass communication (78 hours for Information and Journalism students).

Students receive regular coaching on these requirements from the Office of Student Affairs. Definitions are also posted on the school's website. Any exception needs the chair's approval.

**b) The unit provides a balance between theoretical and conceptual courses, professional skills courses, and courses that integrate theory and skills to achieve the range of student competencies listed by the Council.**

All majors must take 21 credits of core courses that prioritize theory and concept. Courses include Basic Media Writing, Communication Theory, Media Law and Ethics, Theories of Meaning and Culture, an Introduction to Scientific Research in Communication, and an Introduction to Radio, Television and Motion Pictures.

The values and competencies of ethical and critical thinking, creativity and journalistic independence are woven through all professional courses. As an example of core curriculum, the Introduction to Media syllabus combines analysis of the development, organization and structure of mass media in Puerto Rico with the evolution of new technologies and their application in today's society. In addition to being



featured in introductory courses, research and writing are promoted in more advanced courses and seminars.

Core theoretical and conceptual courses are augmented by a sequence-specific curriculum that focuses on skills development, and the integration of skills with theory. The following are offered as concentrations within the major:

### **Audiovisual Communication (161 undergraduate majors)**

Students in this inherently creative sequence take an additional 18 credits in courses that include Basic Photography, Script Writing, Graphic Design, and Film, Radio or Television Production. This is the concentration for students interested in careers in radio, TV, graphic arts and even entertainment. Students in this sequence spend much of their time in the Radio, Television and Film building and the television lab, and they have exposure to current and former broadcast professionals to help orient them to the specific ways that broadcasters work. Objectives in this concentration include preparing students to incorporate their own ideas into screenplays, craft visual essays in photography and, eventually, develop short fiction films and documentaries. All of this is intended to demonstrate a sensitivity to social and ethical issues, and student projects show that this is the case.

### **Information and Journalism (142 undergraduate majors)**

In this sequence, students are required to take an additional 21 credits in courses that include Introduction to Journalism, Journalistic Writing, Newspaper Editing, Journalism Graphics and Techniques, Broadcast Journalism and a Communications or Journalism Seminar. This is the concentration that emphasizes research as part of a professional craft, and its practical courses incorporate technology with a goal of equipping students to perform successfully in a journalistic, digital and multimedia environment.

### **Public Relations and Advertising (155 undergraduate majors)**

In this sequence, students must earn an additional 18 credits in courses that include an Introduction to Advertising and Public Relations, Advertising or Public-Relations Writing, Ad Production and Design, Media Planning and Public Relations and Advertising Campaigns. Emerging mechanisms for influence and persuasion are highly relevant in this concentration, which incorporates current theory and skill regarding social and other digital media into its courses. Professionals in the public relations and advertising fields expressed high confidence in graduates from this sequence, applauding their ability to write, think critically and work productively right away. One employer shared his confidence in an intern who arrived incredibly well prepared. “She’s a keeper,” he said.

Across the board, students were observed to be attentive and intentional, and discussion was lively. It was clear to the site team that students have positive regard for – and relationships with – their professors.

Interviews with alumni and professionals underscore the strength of the School’s efforts to equip students with theory, critical thinking and ability to tell stories. Some noted gaps in technical skills, such as data analysis and research. But those can be easily taught, one executive noted. “I bet on their brains,” he said. “They learn fast and get ahead.”

**c) Instruction, whether on-site or online, is demanding and current, and is responsive to professional expectations of digital, technological and multimedia competencies. Achievements in teaching and learning are recognized and valued.**

Digital skills-building is woven through the curriculum, and students are encouraged to deepen their abilities through extracurricular activities. Advertising course work incorporates social media and other digital methods and metrics into material on more traditional media approaches. Classrooms and labs are equipped with Dell desktop PCs, printers and projectors. The Radio, Television and Film Unit offers extensive digital newsgathering and storytelling gear, including large-screen Mac computers with full Adobe Production Suite licenses.

The Digital Graphic Design course, new in 2013, teaches basic and intermediate skills in pixel and vector graphics. @Medialab is a physical space created and used by students. It features 17 new computers and spurred creation of the school's digital journal, *Intersecciones*. A specialist in data journalism was hired in 2016 to expose students to interactive and multimedia journalism involving tools such as Tableau and Story Maps for data visualization. A graduate course in communication and entrepreneurship is being converted into an undergraduate seminar. And capstone seminars emphasize digital elements such as video, audio, graphics and blogs as a key element of students' final projects.

An Advanced Seminar in Communication course (COPU 4045) called on Public Relations students to produce digital stories and a website promoting the La Perla neighborhood, which is experiencing a renaissance after years of neglect. Students' work included photography, interactive graphics, video, an events calendar and resources for volunteers. One professional in the public-relations field said the students' La Perla work was so good it's become the official tourism guide for the area.

The School has an annual awards ceremony right before graduation to recognize students for academic achievements such as stellar grade-point average and noteworthy participation/citizenship in the School. Winners receive medals, certificates and – in one case – a cash award.

**d) Student-faculty classroom ratios facilitate effective teaching and learning in all courses; the ratio in skills and laboratory sections, whether on-site or online, should not exceed 20-1. (Campaigns classes are exempt from the 20-1 ratio.)**

Twenty-nine skills and lab sections were offered in the fall quarter, and 34 in spring. Enrollment exceeded 20 in only two campaigns courses.

**e) The unit advocates and encourages opportunities for internship and other professional experiences outside the classroom and supervises and evaluates them when it awards academic credit.**

Direct work experiences known as "supervised practices" are available to students in each concentration as electives. Students earn three credits for a semester of supervised (and unpaid) training in a professional workplace. Grading is pass/fail. Some paid internships currently are also available to students for a maximum of an additional three credits. A university-wide program called "My first career experience" provides payment for work in a government or private organization within students' area of study.

In either case, coordinators of each of the three concentrations identify, vet and promote opportunities surfaced in collaboration with private-sector contacts, alumni, other campus programs and more. Mechanisms for communication with students include email, physical postings on school walls and bulletin boards, the Student Council's social media and word of mouth. Recent practice work sites include the Metro newspaper, WSKN Radio Isla, WAPA TV Channel 4, J. Walter Thompson and Zapatero Films production company.

Throughout the practice, students have their workplace supervisor sign weekly attendance worksheets and comment on their work. At the end of the practice, supervisors assess the students on criteria such as writing and technology competency; ethics, social responsibility and demonstrated knowledge of freedom of expression and diversity; ability to research and interpret data and statistics; and a host of professional behaviors. Among the elements that students assess are their understanding of concepts, theories and skills studied in class; the constructiveness of regular performance evaluations; availability of support; working relationships; and overall preparation for the work world. Students also prepare print and digital portfolios of their accomplishments in the practice.

Interviews with students, alumni and professionals suggest that opportunities for internships and other experiences outside the classroom are stronger for journalism and audiovisual students than they are for students in the public relations and advertising sequence. In spring semester 2019, eight of the total 14 School students in paid internships were in the PR and Advertising concentration. No one was engaged in an unpaid supervised practice, which can be an unworkable burden for low-income students. Opportunities exist for the school to strengthen relationships with employers in these categories and create more professional pathways.

## **SUMMARY:**

Conceptual content is a particular strength of the School, which has a mission that includes developing critical thinking, ethics and social responsibility. Alumni and professionals applaud students' preparedness to work professionally, with a solid ability to integrate historical context and the humanities into their efforts. The School uses technology, tools and visiting professionals to ensure its instruction is current and demanding.

## **Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

### **COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness

*The unit has an inclusive program that values domestic and global diversity, and serves and reflects society.*

### Unit performance with regard to indicators:

**a) The unit has a written diversity plan for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse faculty and student population, and a supportive climate for working and learning and for assessing progress toward achievement of the plan. The diversity plan should focus on domestic minority groups and, where applicable, international groups. The written plan must include the unit's definition of diversity and identify the under-represented groups.**

The school's diversity plan was approved by faculty in October 2018. The plan's objectives include:

- Increasing the number of high school students from public schools who participate in the school's baccalaureate programs
- Ensuring that 80 percent of courses, conferences and seminars include projects, reading materials, audiovisuals, research, conferences or presentations on diversity issues
- Seeing to it that 10 percent of courses, conferences and seminars reflect issues of diversity as a central theme
- Reviewing the school's current diversity policy

In Puerto Rico, cultural distinctions around race differ from those elsewhere in the United States. Nearly 100 percent of the population identifies as Latino, regardless of skin color or other physical attributes. Many dimensions associated with diversity in mainland institutions, such as race and sexual orientation, are not routinely measured. So diversity tends to involve gender, religion, cultural background, national origin, age, social class, physical ability and political point of view.

The School's point of view on diversity is included in most syllabi and articulates a conviction that human differences should be valued, rather than drive inequality. The written statement references Article Four of the Universal Declaration on the cultural diversity of UNESCO (2002), which affirms that "the defense of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for Dignity of the human person."

As a public institution, the School has prioritized socio-economic diversity. Its diversity plan includes intention and goals around recruiting and retaining students from public high schools, who tend to be underrepresented given the university's requirements around grade-point average. As the School puts it in the self study, adult literacy rates and bilingual statistics in public schools "reflect gaps that make UPR-RP admission and retention standards difficult for many to meet." Consequently, the university is offering tutoring and academic support in subjects such as Spanish, English and Math, as well as coaching and guidance on university life.

The university has stepped up its summer-school programs, open houses and engagement efforts in public-housing projects and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. In addition, School faculty visit high schools, guide campus visits and conduct summer workshops on topics such as photography, blogging, radio work and storytelling.

The School's focused efforts appear to be working. The number of students from public schools admitted to the School since 2012 has grown. In 2016, the ratio of those from public and private schools flipped,

with 43 percent coming from private schools and 57 percent coming from public schools.

**b) The unit’s curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of domestic concerns about gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. The unit’s curriculum includes instruction in issues and perspectives relating to mass communications across diverse cultures in a global society.**

Nearly every syllabus incorporates learning objectives around multicultural perspectives, social impact and ethical concerns. Examples of relevant course work in recent years include topics on hate crimes and the media; women in wars and their media representation; sex, gender and privacy in social media; socioeconomic effects of gentrification in Puerto Rican neighborhoods; Dominican health-care workers’ journey to obtain health services of their own in Puerto Rico; and drag shows as safe spaces for the LGBTQI.

Guest speakers – many of them from other countries – in recent years have led a workshop on how digital journalism can empower community organizations, and have addressed topics such as the use of non-sexist language and giving voice to “excluded communities.” Documented learning objectives include appreciating linguistic, psychological and social aspects of communication, as well as recognizing the media’s participation in social, political and cultural development. Student projects have embraced topics such as the power and relationship of church and state; migration and mental health in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria; and the plight of senior citizens in post-hurricane society.

Students also have opportunities to travel and study abroad. For example, faculty led a 10-week audiovisual communication course in Cuba in 2015, and in the 2016-17 academic year 26 Communications students studied in Spain, Mexico, Argentina and the mainland United States.

**c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to recruit women and domestic minority faculty and professional staff and, where feasible, recruits international faculty and professional staff.**

Total headcount at the School – and the university overall – is in decline due to financial restructuring and the associated budget cuts across the board. Since 2015, only two full-time faculty positions have become available. In the 2015-16 academic year, the hiring pool of 15 included seven women. Two finalists were female. In the following year, women comprised half of the hiring pool, and the position was offered to – and accepted by – a woman. Both hires were Latino. One international candidate was in consideration for each of the positions.

As of the 2017-18 academic year, 38 percent of full-time faculty (8 people) were women and 62 percent (13 people) were men. A number of recent retirements were women, and the School has been unable to fill the tenure-track positions. It has managed to close the gap with part-time and adjunct faculty, where the opposite is true. Women comprise 63 percent of this group, while 37 percent are men. As of 2018, three administrative staff are men, and four are women.

**d) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to help recruit and retain a student population reflecting the diversity of the population eligible to enroll in institutions of higher education in the region or population it serves, with special attention to recruiting under-represented groups.**

Consolidating a “diverse and excellent student community” is part of the School’s 2018-2023 strategic

plan. And recruiting underrepresented students is the focus of the School's diversity plan. That applies to economically disadvantaged populations, as well as to students with functional diversity. The School makes an obvious effort to accommodate students with special needs, such as more time to complete exams, technical assistance in class, reading support and closed captioning.

The university's Office for Students with Disabilities (OAPI in Spanish) focuses on improving the campus' social and physical environment to accommodate students' diverse needs and abilities. Currently, some 38 conditions are registered with OAPI, including attention deficit disorder and other learning disabilities, depression, visual impairment, and anxiety disorders. This office supports schools to ensure they're able to align with a "Bill of Rights of Persons with Disabilities." Syllabi consistently include information about reasonable accommodation.

**e) The unit has a climate that is free of harassment and all forms of discrimination, in keeping with the acceptable cultural practices of the population it serves, accommodates the needs of those with disabilities, and values the contributions of all forms of diversity.**

The university's anti-discrimination policy governs its academic and administrative responsibilities. In addition, in 2015 the Board of Governors approved Certification No. 45 (2014-2015), establishing the *Institutional Policy against Sexual Harassment at the University of Puerto Rico*. This specifically called out sexual harassment across the university and identified procedures for addressing grievances or complaints for different types of sexual harassment, as well as articulating a policy to protect against retaliation for reporting alleged acts of sexual harassment.

Female faculty interviewed reported that they feel they have equal opportunity and numerous female role models in leadership. Compensation at the university is set, transparent and non-negotiable, so gender discrimination in terms of pay doesn't happen. One faculty member who previously worked in a law firm noted that women were consistently under-paid there. But that isn't the case here.

## **SUMMARY:**

Puerto Rico's population has a heightened degree of racial diversity, and is comparably indifferent to skin color. Its emphasis on socio-economic diversity means more than ever in the wake of devastating economic and weather events that have left nearly half the island's population in poverty. The School has numerous women in leadership positions and is making a notable effort to incorporate international perspectives – both among students and among faculty and staff.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

## **COMPLIANCE**

**Academic year: 2017 – 2018 Full-time faculty**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>% of total faculty</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>% of total faculty</b>
Black/African-American				
White				
American Indian/Alaskan native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	8	38%	13	62%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander				
Two or more races				
Other race				
International (any race)				

**Academic year: 2017 – 2018 Part-time/adjunct faculty**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>% of total faculty</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>% of total faculty</b>
Black/African-American				
White				
American Indian/Alaskan native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	5	63%	3	37%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander				
Two or more races				
Other race				
International (any race)				

## **PART II — Standard 4: Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty**

*The unit hires, supports and evaluates a capable faculty with a balance of academic and professional credentials appropriate for the unit's mission.*

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

#### **a) The unit has written criteria for selecting and evaluating the performance of all full-time and part-time faculty and instructional staff.**

The School recently updated and expanded its Faculty Evaluation Manual to clarify faculty duties and obligations; establish clear expectations in the areas of teaching, service and research/creative; make clearer distinctions among the various faculty roles and levels; and provide better guidance for quantification of faculty accomplishments by incorporating a point system. It also has clear guidelines and qualifications for hiring.

The search process is conducted by the Personnel Committee, rather than unique search committees. However, the Faculty Evaluation Manual stipulates that faculty and students are included in the selection process and the Manual includes rubrics that are used to incorporate stakeholder input.

#### **b) Full-time faculty have primary responsibility for teaching, research/creative activity and service.**

In the 2017-2018 academic year (AY), 82 percent of core and required courses were taught by full-time faculty. That was an increase of 11 percent from the 2016-17 AY, 14 percent over the 2015-16 AY and 4 percent ahead of the 2014-15 AY.

The academic load at the University is the equivalent of 12 credit hours per week, which may include teaching, research, thesis/dissertation supervision, supervision of practicums, institutional service such as administrative positions, and special committee work. Lighter academic loads are typically associated with administrative or coordination positions and release time for research. Given the fiscal challenges of the School and University, the latter is allocated sparingly. Several faculty commented that they work on their research during off-hours.

#### **c) Credentials of the unit's faculty represent a balance of professional and scholarly experience and expertise kept current through faculty development opportunities, relationships with professional and scholarly associations, and appropriate supplementation of part-time and visiting faculty.**

Most of the faculty have professional experiences in their backgrounds. In fact, it is common for them to have worked in the professions for a meaningful period of time before going back to school to earn advanced degrees and join the academy. Only faculty with doctoral degrees are eligible for tenure or tenure-track and only tenure-track positions have been filled with full-time faculty.

The requirements for recruitment of faculty to the University are outlined in the General Regulations of the University, Article 43. Faculty are recruited on the quality of academics and the quality of the universities where he/she studied, mastery of the subject to teach and abilities to integrate it with related areas, experiences in teaching and in the application of knowledge in a particular field, published works and lectures, identification with the philosophy and objectives of the Law of the College, and capacity for scientific research. In order for the University to maintain its classification in research, in accordance with the parameters established by the Carnegie Foundation, the rationale for recruiting new personnel must



include the suitability of the candidate to teach at the graduate level and to direct master's and doctoral theses, the ability of the candidate to develop in the research lines defined by the unit, and the ability to integrate new knowledge into the teaching-learning process.

The School's process of evaluation also includes the ability to promote quality in teaching and contribute to the professional development of faculty. While professional experience is not dictated, it has been the School's practice to hire faculty who bring a history of practice.

Additional professional expertise is achieved through the hiring of adjuncts and part-time faculty who are not expected to qualify for tenure.

**d) The unit regularly evaluates instruction, whether onsite or online, using multiple measures that include student input.**

Evaluations are conducted by peers and students; there is no process for evaluation by an administrator until a tenure-track candidate is ready to apply for tenure, or until a tenured faculty member is ready to apply for promotion.

Guidelines for evaluation are clear. Evaluations seek to ensure faculty performance in terms of the goals defined by the UPR-RP Mission, the School's strategic plan, and individual programs through contractual letters. The School's Manual for Faculty Evaluation requires that tenure-track, adjunct and part-time faculty receive in-class peer evaluations by faculty from their respective concentrations. The manual specifies that these evaluations are formative, with the general objective of improving teaching and maintaining excellence in instruction. In-class evaluations are guided by a comprehensive rubric outlined in the Manual for Faculty Evaluation. Student evaluations are also an integral part of the process, as mandated by guidelines at the University level, with instruments developed by the School. Student evaluations are conducted each semester for every professor teaching that semester.

Based on personnel committee and student evaluations, the director makes recommendations to the Dean for Academic Affairs and the University's Academic Board on promotions, tenure and sabbaticals. Candidates are evaluated in the four areas of teaching, research or creation, dissemination or publications, and service. It was not clear whether the system of peer evaluations of classroom instruction provided the sort of rigor of annual administrative evaluations of performance across the areas of teaching, research and service, but it was roundly viewed as effective.

**e) The faculty has respect on campus for its university citizenship and the quality of education that the unit provides.**

The Dean of Academic Affairs and colleagues from other units expressed a high regard for the caliber of the faculty and the academic rigor at the School of Communication.

**SUMMARY:**

Faculty at the School of Communication are highly credentialed academics who typically bring to the table notable professional experience in fields that align with the degree programs at the School. These faculty receive teaching evaluations each semester by their peers and students. These evaluations come into play, along with assessments of research and service, when faculty members go up for tenure or promotion. At that point they are reviewed for overall effectiveness by the School's Personnel Committee,

which makes a recommendation to the director, who then makes a recommendation to the University's Academic Board.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

**COMPLIANCE**

## **PART II — Standard 5: Scholarship: Research, Creative and Professional Activity**

*With unit support, faculty members contribute to the advancement of scholarly and professional knowledge and engage in scholarship (research, creative and professional activity) that contributes to their development.*

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

#### **a) The unit requires, supports and rewards faculty research, creative activity and/or professional activity.**

The School of Communication's Faculty Evaluation Manual explicitly requires and rewards research and professional/creative activity. The School supports publications, conference travel, symposia and other activities that allow faculty to present their work to appropriate audiences. Research assistance is regularly offered to and utilized by faculty.

#### **b) The unit specifies expectations for research, creative activity and/or professional activity in criteria for hiring, promotion and tenure.**

The Faculty Evaluation Manual sets minimum percentages for scholarly and creative activity alongside percentages for teaching and service, and evaluates faculty for promotion and tenure according to those percentages.

#### **c) Evaluation criteria for promotion, tenure and merit recognition account for and acknowledge activities appropriate to faculty members' professional as well as scholarly specializations.**

The School's evaluation rules do not value professional and scholarly contributions differently. Each is seen as contributing to the total of the School's productivity in these areas.

#### **d) Faculty members communicate the results of research, creative and/or professional activity to other scholars, educators and practitioners through presentations, productions, exhibitions, workshops and publications appropriate to the activity and to the mission of the unit and institution.**

There is a record of consistent support for faculty travel for conferences, even while financial exigencies have kept the total travel budgets low. The School launched an online publication to showcase the research and creative activity of faculty members alongside top-performing students. In 2017, the School launched a National Communication Congress, which attracted more than 700 participants from Puerto Rico, the United States and a host of other nations. The Congress featured research from faculty within the School as well as others from the various institutions invited to participate.

#### **e) The unit fosters a climate that supports intellectual curiosity, critical analysis and the expression of differing points of view.**

Discussions of research and how it can be better supported take place regularly at the School. Faculty members report that there is an emphasis on supporting their ideas and encouraging them to share those ideas with students.

**SUMMARY:**

The financial crisis on the island has made things especially difficult for the unit in this area. A lack of robust funds for such things as travel, combined with higher teaching loads, have made it difficult to be productive yet the unit has made a conscious effort to maintain productivity and model it with students. When more funds become available, increased support for scholarly and creative activity should be a priority.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

**COMPLIANCE**

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total from Unit*	Individuals				Totals
		Full Professors	Associate Professors	Assistant Professors	Other Faculty**	
		11	4	2	6	23
Awards and Honors	50	31	11	0	8	50
Grants Received Internal	2	2	0	0	0	2
Grants Received External	1	1	0	0	0	1
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	12	8	1	0	3	12
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored	0	0	0	0	0	0
Books Edited	1	1	0	0	0	1
Book Chapters	15	10	1	0	4	15
Monographs	1	1	0	0	0	1
Articles in Refereed Journals	29	8	0	0	21	29
Refereed Conference Papers	35	6	10	6	13	35
Invited Academic Papers	75	37	1	3	34	75
Encyclopedia Entries	0	0	0	0	0	0
Book Reviews	8	7	0	0	1	8
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	57	27	1	0	29	57
Juried Creative Works	11	2	0	0	9	11
Non-juried Creative Works	69	12	18	8	31	69
Other (Book Release and Moderator of TV Program)	30	10	18	2	0	30

## **PART II — Standard 6: Student Services**

*The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study.*

### **a) Faculty and/or professional advising staff ensure that students are aware of unit and institutional requirements for graduation and receive career and academic advising.**

The School partners with the University's Office of Student Services to provide students with essential information regarding degree requirements and academic pathways. In 2018 the Office upgraded its services by launching an online platform for conducting academic evaluations, which replaced a system that relied completely on human intervention and could take as long as a week to produce an evaluation.

In addition to providing students with personalized, web-based guidance, this platform also enables unit-level data collection and tracking. This provides a means of monitoring processes and progress toward degree completion.

At the School level, there is heavy reliance on the web site, which includes all essential information regarding student services, course sequences, and academic requirements, and printed materials.

Incoming students attend an orientation program. Students also attend a special presentation by their concentration coordinators. On an ongoing basis, communication consists of email, bulletin boards and social media posts from the concentration coordinators and faculty.

Although the students do not have access to full-time advisers, the University's approach of making essential information available seems to be effective and reflects a level of self-sufficiency on the part of UPR students.

### **b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.**

Faculty are required to reserve at least six hours per week as office hours for student consultation. These hours must be included in syllabi. In addition to face-to-face meetings, faculty make themselves available to students through Moodle, a course management platform, and email.

### **c) The unit keeps students informed about the activities, requirements and policies of the unit.**

The 20 or so students who met with the site team expressed concerns about inadequate communications. However, the administrative team demonstrated that messaging is routine, via email, WhatsApp and the Student Council's social media platforms. Given the adage that you can't communicate too much, the administration might consider how to enhance the level, channels, and frequency of communication.

### **d) The unit and the institution provide students with extra-curricular activities and opportunities that are relevant to the curriculum and develop their professional as well as intellectual abilities and interests.**

The School provides extracurricular activities on a regular basis. International guest speakers present lectures and workshops on topics relevant to the disciplines.

The School has four student organizations that provide activities related to professional and academic aspirations. These organizations include the School of Communication Student Council, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, the Association of Public Relations and Advertising Students, and the Puerto Rican Association of Journalism Students.

**e) The accredited unit must gather, maintain and analyze enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success. The unit regularly publishes retention and graduation information on its website.**

Retention and graduation information is posted on the School's web site.

Its six-year graduation rates are improving but are still somewhat low because of the economic challenges that many students face. At the time of the site team visit, the four-year graduation rate was 52 percent and the six-year rate was 68 percent.

The School's data collection on the effectiveness of student services is all analog and records services requested, types of students making the requests and student perceptions of the service received. The administration hopes to upgrade to a web-based tracking platform.

#### **SUMMARY:**

The School is committed to providing the guidance that students need to be successful. Because of the School's economic challenges, it relies heavily on the University's Office of Student Services to achieve this goal. Fortunately, the University has recently upgraded to web-based solutions that enable a higher quality of service, which is augmented by faculty and administration at the unit level. It should be noted that 75 percent of the School's students receive financial aid.

#### **Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

#### **COMPLIANCE**

## **PART II — Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment**

*The unit plans for, seeks and receives adequate resources to fulfill and sustain its mission.*

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

#### **a) The unit has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.**

The School's budget details expenses over the past four academic years. Steady growth in equipment allocations – a 250 percent increase to \$15,889 in 2017-18 over 2016-17, and another increase to \$24,000 in 2018-19 – reflects the strategic plan's emphasis on optimizing the use of information and communication technologies for research, teaching-learning and service.

#### **b) The resources that the institution provides are adequate to achieve the unit's mission. The resources are fair in relation to those provided other units.**

The School has historically depended almost entirely on allocation of funds from the state-funded university administration. The School's 2018-2023 development plan, which aligns with institutional objectives, includes a goal to strengthen external sources of funds to supplement these allocations and become more self-sustaining. Several efforts in this regard are beginning to take shape already and offer the promise of future success.

Grant applications are one of those. The School is deepening its expertise on this front with broad faculty education and partnership with university grant-writing expertise. The School won one of three grants that it has applied for this academic year. That \$17,850 will help fund the finalization of a documentary film on Rafael Cancel Miranda, an important historical figure in Puerto Rico.

The School's Radio, Television and Film unit has a track record of effective fundraising and revenue-generation. It offers recording, editing, streaming, equipment rental and other services to the rest of the university and the general public, and in the 2017-18 fiscal year it earned \$16,661 for those services. In the 2018-19 fiscal year, that revenue was \$24,702. The radio station, which is funded in part by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, raises additional funds through underwriting, events and donations. The Radio Amigos (friends of the station) are charitable contributors, and growing that pool of support is part of the strategic plan.

Also worth noting is the beginning of the School's efforts to create certificate and distance-learning programs that can reach an international audience and become a significant source of revenue.

Meanwhile, while budget for teaching payroll had been on the rise leading up to 2017, the economic crisis and resulting debt restructuring across the island has resulted in steady drops since then. Spending had dropped for administrative salaries in 2017-18, but the current 2018-19 academic year shows a nearly 10 percent increase.

Leadership in the university's Office of Strategic Planning and Budget affirms that the allocations for the School of Communication are fair in relation to those for other schools. An obvious comparison is

the School of Architecture, which has a similar number of students and tenure-track faculty. The 2018-19 budget allocation for Architecture is \$4,053,514. The same period's total budget for the School of Communication – including the Radio, Film and, Television Unit – is \$3,786,627. The difference has largely to do with pay for full-time faculty, which was established by the university years ago as higher in the School of Architecture.

The School of Communication's mission is to develop professionals in the practice of communication – as manifested in Puerto Rican culture and other international contexts – with a critical and investigative outlook, within a framework of ethics and social responsibility. The cultural context includes avid audiences for radio, television and print media, as well as an island-wide economic crisis that has 45 percent of the population living in poverty. Given all of that, the unit's resources could be described as adequate to achieve the mission.

**c) The facilities of the unit enable and promote effective scholarship, teaching and learning.**

In September 2017, Hurricane Maria destroyed the School of Communication's 13,078-square-foot building. The structure had included the Communication Library, a 95-seat auditorium, dozens of offices and a variety of well-equipped classrooms and labs. While numerous other units lost classroom and office space in the storm, the School of Communication was the only unit to lose its facilities nearly completely. The separate, two-story building occupied by its Radio, Television and Film Unit – including the University Radio Network – survived.

In the time since campus reopened for classes on Oct. 30, 2017, the School has implemented a patchwork of interim solutions in order to function. Those included co-locating administrative and key academic staff with the Institute of Labor Relations and teaching classes in the Student Commons, the College of Social Sciences, and the University Plaza building. For months, many faculty and staff had no workspaces of their own.

It took persistent behind-the-scenes pressure, letters, press conferences, news releases and social media campaigns – driven by the school's administration, faculty, students and alumni – to persuade the chancellor to carve out a reasonably contiguous, “dignified” space for the school in the North Tower of University Plaza. The School fully moved in in August 2018. This move has provided office space for faculty and staff in one building, and also has opened up 10 classrooms, three computer labs, one meeting room and a kitchen.

Much of the computer equipment from the destroyed building was salvaged, and the school's equipment budget more than doubled in 2017-18 – to \$15,889 – and grew again to \$24,000 in 2018-19 to support reinvestment.

All of this has restored much of the ability for the School to function. But it hasn't come close to replacing what it had before the storm. As one person pointed out during the visit, the “heart” of the School's new location is a small elevator lobby. Students hang out there, on the floor and in a few scattered chairs. But the facility lacks a central gathering place where communication and a sense of belonging can truly be established.

The school partnered with the School of Architecture to have students (supervised by faculty) develop designs for a new School of Communication. The architecture students presented several proposals, and



three finalists – on three different lots – have been identified. Funding is needed to move forward with construction. FEMA insurance funds are a possibility, but that allocation is not yet a reality.

Funding for faculty travel, conferences, sabbaticals, supplemental books, continuing education and relief from teaching load to enable scholarship and service remains low. Faculty members report that university bureaucracy inhibits quick solutions and initiative. “I manage to find what I need,” one faculty member said. “But it’s frustrating.”

Another member of the faculty expressed concern about the future because of growing economic constraints. Everyone has been working incredibly hard, and the past two years have been very challenging, she said, adding that faculty and staff are “very committed.”

“We do it out of love,” she said. “But it’s hard. It has taken a toll.”

**d) The institution and the unit provide faculty and students with equipment or access to equipment to support its curriculum and the research, creative and professional activities of the faculty.**

The Radio, TV & Film building houses satellite control, a video head-end room, four sound-optimized post-production rooms, audiovisual archives and a storage and check-out space for a robust set of audiovisual field gear, from a range of digital cameras to lights, mics, arms and clamps. A television recording lab with two digital cameras, two teleprompters and a host of production gear occupies space nearby, on the first floor of the campus’ main library.

Students and faculty indicate that the equipment is sufficient, although students complain that check-out is cumbersome and timeframes too short. A single 24-hour period – the norm – is insufficient to produce complex video projects, they say.

**e) The institution and the unit provide sufficient library and information resources to support faculty and student research and professional development.**

Much of its physical Communication Library – many of its printed books, journals and periodicals recovered – has been re-established in a corner of the main campus library, where the collections share space with the Information Sciences and Technologies library (and a charming collection of children’s books).

Robust electronic resources, including ProQuest archives, a range of journalism and mass-communications journals and periodicals provide students and faculty with considerable digital depth. The list of academic search engines, online databases, and mass communication, journalism, and social sciences journals is 58 pages long. Students and faculty report that they have the resources they need, although students lament that they no longer have a dedicated space for research and study, and the new location of the collections is inconvenient to the North Tower space now occupied by most of the unit’s offices, classrooms and computer labs.

**SUMMARY:**

The myriad efforts that have been made to enable this well-respected, more than 45-year-old School to

continue to function have been Herculean and admirable. And yet the result is insufficient to achieve the unit's mission. The current space is barely adequate and lacks the kind of cutting-edge classroom audio-visual gear that is needed to support contemporary communications work. It provides no central gathering place for students – no “heart” where camaraderie can develop and casual communication can happen. The result is an evident malaise among students and a degree of faculty frustration that – combined with other negative impacts of what are expected to be hundreds of millions of dollars in budget cuts the university must make as part of Puerto Rico's challenging debt restructuring – threatens to undermine morale among passionate, deeply committed faculty and staff.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

**NON-COMPLIANCE**

## **PART II — Standard 8: Professional and Public Service**

*The unit and its faculty advance journalism and mass communication professions and fulfill obligations to its community, alumni and the greater public.*

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

**a) The unit consults and communicates regularly with its alumni and is actively engaged with alumni, professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching, whether on-site or online, current and to promote the exchange of ideas.**

The School has an alumni database of more than 3,000 graduates from the inception of the School, with names gathered through an alumni survey, the school's blog and other activities over the years. In 2017, the School established a faculty committee on alumni, and an alumni chapter for the School. It is the first school-based alumni chapter in the University of Puerto Rico system.

During the site visit, alumni expressed a deep and heartfelt connection to their alma mater. The energy in a group conversation visibly rose after one person mentioned her pride in being a "copuqueña" (member of the COPU – the Spanish shorthand for the School of Communication). "It's like a religion," another said.

**b) The unit provides leadership in the development of high standards of professional practice through such activities as offering continuing education, promoting professional ethics, evaluating professional performance, and addressing communication issues of public consequence and concern.**

The School has a record of contributing to discussions of communication ethics, standards and issues of concern at the community level, through workshops, discussions and panels. Faculty members have served as jurors in competitions and have lent their expertise through television interviews and the production of programming for radio and television, locally, nationally and internationally.

**c) The unit contributes to the improvement of journalism and mass communication as academic disciplines by supporting the faculty's involvement in academic associations and related activities.**

The School's faculty is well represented in the activities of associations and organizations ranging from the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers, the Advisory Board of the Journal of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and the National Communication Association, among others.

**d) The unit contributes to its communities through unit-based service projects and events, service learning of its students and civic engagement of its faculty.**

The School and its faculty participate in many events that contribute to the communities that it serves. Most prominent in this activity is the work of Radio Universidad, the radio station under the direction of the School. The station produces a number of series focusing on local issues and the activities of various faculty members at the University of Puerto Rico. Among the offerings are "Today's Agenda," a public affairs program; "Today in the News," a news program with local, national and international news as well as news from the campuses of the University of Puerto Rico, and "Voice and Culture," a program centering on conversations about cultural activity throughout Puerto Rico. The station keeps the listeners informed through a community calendar on its website. In addition, the Film and Television Unit

provides documentary programming on issues ranging from climate change to the 2016 elections in Puerto Rico. The projects in both operations involve both faculty and students.

Within Advertising and Public Relations, service-learning projects give students valuable experience while providing needed assistance to community organizations and campaigns. Recent beneficiaries include The Ricky Martin Foundation, the La Perla community, and the Alliance for a Drug-Free Puerto Rico.

**e) The unit supports scholastic journalism through such activities as faculty workshops, visiting lectures and critiques of student work.**

The School does not have a specific program for scholastic journalism, but contributes journalism and mass communications education within the University of Puerto Rico's summer school programs for area high school students. Activities have included workshops in radio production, photography and multimedia story production.

#### **SUMMARY:**

Public service is part of the identity of the University of Puerto Rico and the School of Communication, evident through a history of the production of content for and about the communities it serves.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

**COMPLIANCE**

## PART II — Standard 9: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

*The unit regularly assesses student learning and applies results to improve curriculum and instruction.*

### **Unit performance with regard to indicators:**

*The Accrediting Committee and Council seek site-team reports on assessment that are appropriately detailed for a judgment on compliance that is informed, fair and consistent from one team to another. Please respond to each of these questions in your report on indicators (a), (b) and (c):*

#### **a) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the “Professional Values and Competencies” of the Council.**

- *Who is in charge of the assessment program (e.g., administrator, sequence coordinator or faculty committee)?*
- *How has the unit verified that core and required courses cover all 12 of ACEJMC’s professional values and competencies?*
- *How has the unit ensured that the syllabuses for these courses state learning outcomes that address the values and competencies appropriate for each course?*

In each of the three programs, the School defines learning goals for each course in the curriculum using a shared set of learning outcomes. The outcomes are linked to a set of learning objectives (or “dominios”) that the University of Puerto Rico mandates for all its courses. In addition, the shared learning outcomes are mapped to the 12 ACEJMC professional values and competencies, and the School’s assessment plan schedules evaluation of specific courses. Many courses are assessed yearly; nearly all courses are assessed on no longer than a two-year cycle. A full-time faculty member serves as assessment coordinator working with faculty and sequence heads in each of the three sequences on rubrics, information gathering through direct and indirect measures, evaluation of information and course changes that come as a result of faculty evaluation of course data. The syllabi state learning objectives that are in line with the goals of each course, but most do not state specifically the values and competencies that are referenced in the assessment plan.

#### **b) The unit has a written assessment plan that uses multiple direct and indirect measures to assess student learning.**

- *What direct measures of assessment does the unit use, where in the curriculum and when?*
- *What indirect measures does it use, where and when?*
- *Are these measures effective for assessing ACEJMC’s professional values and competencies?*

The School’s assessment plan uses four assessment measures—three direct measures and one indirect measure. The direct measures are: a writing core courses evaluation, concentration courses evaluations, and an institutional assessment of effective written communications skills. The indirect measure is performance in student competitions. All three direct measures are collected each semester and reported each year. The direct measures explicitly rate student performance along the School’s and ACEJMC’s competencies, using rubrics for each course, and are thus effective measures of student performance. Since 2015, the University of Puerto Rico, through its Online Learning Assessment System (OLAS), has collected the data generated from these rubrics centrally. The change has resulted in easier and more systematic data collection in a more robust system.

#### **c) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and applies the data to improve curriculum and instruction.**

- *How does the unit collect and analyze the findings and identify unsatisfactory learning of specific values and competencies?*
- *What specific values and competencies had graduating classes not mastered satisfactorily?*
- *How does the unit decide how to address these areas of concern and what actions did it take to do so?*
- *How does the unit evaluate whether its actions overcame the weaknesses in student learning and what were the results?*
- *Was the program of data analysis and action effective for identifying and overcoming unsatisfactory student learning?*

The School collects information from each course to be assessed in a certain year and groups the data by learning objective (and competency) in each program. Within each concentration and in each course, the faculty members in each concentration are able to see where students improved and where they need more support. The OLAS system makes a wide variety of data available. The faculty members in each concentration discuss the data in designated assessment meetings and determine what to do to address problems they find. The result has been a number of specific steps to improve student learning, and further analysis indicated improvement once steps were applied. The system has withstood the disruptions that followed in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

The faculty members in each concentration, with the assistance of the assessment coordinator, have made some key decisions that have yielded positive results. In 2016-2017, the faculty addressed deficiencies in writing across concentrations by starting a pilot project for a comprehensive revision of the basic media writing course. New course material was developed for students to target writing deficiencies, and pre- and post-tests were developed. During the pilot project, the course was adjusted to give students more time on basic journalistic style, and the result was a substantial boost in student performance. Faculty members added material to another course to review material from the basic writing course and reinforce what the students learned.

**d) The unit maintains contact with the alumni to assess these experiences in the professions and to provide suggestions for improving curriculum and instruction.**

The School has launched an online survey of alumni to have them reflect on the skills and knowledge that they acquired during their training. The alumni were asked about the value of both their theoretical and their practical training during their years in the School. Overall, alumni who responded to the survey indicated that among their skills courses, they found the writing courses to be most valuable, and among the non-skills courses, they valued the communication theory classes most. The School is also soliciting open-ended comments from alumni on the curriculum, and the alumni's suggestions for improving it. As of the writing of this report, the survey is still ongoing.

**e) The unit includes members of journalism and mass communication professions in its assessment process.**

Professionals are involved in the assessment process through evaluation of capstone final projects. They also are involved in evaluation of student work through the Supervised Internship course. In both experiences, professionals are provided with a rubric that corresponds to the competencies specified for capstone and internship courses. Information is provided to faculty in each of the appropriate sequences, but these are not yet used as direct measures in the assessment plan.

**SUMMARY:**

The School's assessment story could be divided into two periods: before and after the establishment of the university's online system for assessment data collection. Before OLAS, the school had established a system of assessment that gave faculty members basic data that they could use to improve the curriculum. The School had made great strides to address the deficiencies highlighted in the previous site team report. Since the online system was established, more and better rubrics were constructed and more information was made available to the faculty. That information has resulted in changes that have made measurable improvements in student performance. A system that was already growing in efficiency was given a substantial boost. Information from internships and capstone projects could easily be used as direct measures in the future.

**Overall evaluation, compliance/non-compliance:**

**COMPLIANCE**

### **PART III: Summary by site visit team**

#### **1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.**

The strengths and weaknesses of this program are influenced to a significant extent by extraordinary circumstances that could neither be anticipated nor mitigated. Despite the impact of a severe economic crisis in Puerto Rico, a student strike that shut down the campus for 72 days in early 2017, and a hurricane later that year that was unprecedented in its ferocity, the School has continued to make notable strides.

#### **Strengths**

- Dedicated faculty, staff and students
- Leadership that strongly advocates for the School and has the confidence of the faculty
- A strong sense of loyalty to the School, the University and Puerto Rico
- Emphasis on community and public service within the curriculum and programs for professional practice
- Potential to expand its importance as a mass communications institution in Latin America
- Strong record of professional placement in Puerto Rican media and communications

#### **Weaknesses**

- Continued vulnerability in an uncertain funding environment
- Absence of a permanent home
- Lack of autonomy on a campus where other units have it
- Need for a space for students to congregate
- Inadequate funding for faculty to pursue research agendas

#### **2) List the standards with which the unit is not in compliance.**

Standard 7: Resources, Facilities and Equipment

#### **3) Summarize the problems or deficiencies that should be addressed before the next evaluation (i.e., related to non-compliance with standards).**

This program could begin to falter if it does not move into a building that is adequate for its needs and for a program with ambitions to grow and advance in a digital world.

#### **4) In the case of a recommendation for provisional accreditation, list the deficiencies that should be addressed before the provisional status can be removed.**

NA



**5) In the case of a recommendation for denial of accreditation, clearly and fully explain the reasons that led to the recommendation.**

NA

**6) If the unit was previously accredited, summarize the significant deficiencies noted in the previous report and the actions taken to correct them. If the unit was in noncompliance in the same standard(s) on the previous two visits, identify the standard(s) and the problems noted. Explain actions taken to correct the problems.**

- Lack of student/teacher recognition: A yearly student-recognition program has been instituted. Faculty recognition is still lacking.
- Strengthen alumni relations: The School now has an alumni group, which was the only one on campus at the time of the site visit.
- Assessment plan measures and ACEJMC value alignment: A new and more effective program has been implemented.
- Building inadequacies: Things have gotten worse with the total loss of the building to Hurricane Maria.
- Limited outside professionals in assessment: The School has incorporated a form of indirect assessment by professionals through alumni surveys.
- Uneven command of data: Both the University and the School have made significant improvements in terms of data collection and availability.
- Equipment shortages: School leaders believe that the inventory of equipment is now adequate.

**7) The self-study is the heart of the accrediting process. Often the quality of that document determines the degree of success of the site visit. Summarize the team members' judgment of the self-study.**

The self-study was very well done. It was clear, detailed in the right places and contained relevant examples. It left us with few questions after reading, signaling that it carefully covered the right material. The fact that vast sections of it had to be translated into English from Spanish makes it even more noteworthy.