

II. THE SCHOOL'S EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

A. The economic, political, social and cultural context in which the School operates

The GSIST functions within a complex, changing, and not easily understood economic, political, social and cultural context. The [archipelago of Puerto Rico](#) includes the main island of Puerto Rico (the smallest of the Greater Antilles) and a number of smaller islands, the largest of which are Mona, Vieques, and Culebra. Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States with commonwealth status.

On November 4, 1952, the [Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico](#) was approved, establishing the archipelago's own system of government with administrative autonomy for internal affairs, but subject to U.S. federal law and regulations. A considerable public discourse, dialogue, debate, and controversy exist in the media about the key central economic, political and social issues confronting the archipelago. This constitutes the framework of the School's external environment.

Even though these issues may be recognized and articulated, perspectives on their analysis and their solutions differ, depending on who, when, where, and why these issues are being discussed. For example, having access to and support for higher education on the archipelago may be viewed within a perspective of shrinking national funds, or a governmental budgetary crisis.

In order to understand the environment in which the School operates, it is important to have a grasp of the local political situation; for example, the impact of local political parties on key University appointments and support. The unique political situation on the Island and its unresolved political status reflects a sense of uncertainty and a lack of continuity in initiating and completing plans and projects on a national, municipal, and local levels. The gap between planning and action appears greater in Puerto Rico than on the U.S. Mainland, while at the same time the pace of change is slower.

Issues of confidence leadership and trust in political leaders are often in the forefront of discussions, along with ethical and moral concerns. The archipelago of Puerto Rico is positioning itself for a change in its political, economic, social, and cultural contexts. Although there is considerable energy and effort placed on the development of new programs and projects to improve the quality of life for all sectors of the population, there is a clear recognition in the population that considerable improvements are still needed in the overall quality of life.

The main industries of Puerto Rico include the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, electronics, apparel, food products, and tourism. Puerto Rico's human infrastructure has changed significantly over the past twenty years. Professional, technical, managerial, and administrative jobs have increased, in spite of the relatively high unemployment rate that has persisted on the archipelago for decades. The Government Development Bank for Puerto Rico reports that, as of June 2014, the [official unemployment rate in Puerto Rico](#) was 13.10 percent. [Trading Economics. (2014) Puerto Rico unemployment rate]. Although the socioeconomic conditions in Puerto Rico have improved dramatically during the past 50 years, the gap between the

island's per capita income and U.S. national levels has changed substantially; that is, one third of the U.S. national average, and roughly half of the poorest states to 10%, less than the poorest states in 2007 (US Dept. of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2014). [*Economy at a glance.*](#))

In spite of social problems, such as domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and a high prevalence of mental illness, there is a great interest and concern to maintaining and nourish local cultural expressions in language, literature, music, dance, theatre, and the visual arts are of great interest and concern. The diversity and richness of these cultural expressions are evident visible in all fields.

The University of Puerto Rico, the only public institution of higher education on the country, plays an essential, key role impacting economic, social, and cultural life. The University is directly and deeply involved in these aspects of Puerto Rican society. Faculty, administration, graduates, and students have assumed leadership roles and have made important contributions in each area, making recognized, important contributions. There is a wide consensus that the restructuring of the Puerto Rican economy and society will require the involvement of the educational, public, and private sectors at all levels.

B. Trends and Issues in the Information Industry and in the Library Field which Affect the School

Within the changing educational milieu in Puerto Rico, the University is in the process of exploring the essential role and responsibility of public education in the transformation of the archipelago toward a knowledge and information society. The University of Puerto Rico has gradually become involved in the digital revolution, toward the distance education environment, in seeking new models of education and communication, and in facilitating wider access to information with the use of new technologies. The institution is concerned and committed to explore problems, focusing research efforts on issues that are related to the developing knowledge society in Puerto Rico. It is involved in the new political, economic, social, and cultural agenda generated by the impact of globalization and new communication technologies.

In its planning, development and assessment activities, the School continues to take into consideration trends in the information industry, such as the need for communication, marketing, and business skills; the importance of repackaging information to facilitate remote users; and broader access to information outside a traditional library environment; the focus on information organization of online resources; trends in content management systems and emerging information formats; the need for highly qualified information professionals with analytical skills to act as information brokers; and the demand for lifelong learning habits, flexibility, and openness to innovation and change.

At the same time, the School has recognized and continues to take into account current trends in the library science field, such as the increased application and effective use of information and communications technology; the growing demand for global information; the need for more advanced computer and information literacy

skills; the emphasis on digitizing collections, and improving methods of data storage and retrieval.

The School has increased its emphasis on the provision of virtual products and services; on developing information literacy competencies to create new and useful information products; and on expanding the role of libraries as cultural centers in the new knowledge society. The increasing and more sophisticated demand by a greater variety of users for a faster and more effective access to collections and services is another aspect of the changing library scene that is impacting the School. Also, the need to develop competencies in obtaining funding from public and private sectors to enrich and strengthen library collections, services and, for establishing effective partnerships, alliances, networks, and collaborative projects with other agencies, organizations, and institutions is another important trend and an opportunity to take into consideration in the School.

The increased importance of advocacy, intellectual property, intellectual freedom, privacy, and confidentiality of library users represents another set of challenges and issues that the School is also addressing. The increased emphasis on diversity in recruitment of new professionals, in the development of new collections and the provision of new services reflecting changing demographics and character of local communities is another example of a complex set of issues that the School is also geared to. The need to develop lifelong learning students and alumni in the field, to update current knowledge and develop new competencies, has become an essential part of this whole context.

C. The University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and the Río Piedras Campus (UPRRP)

The [University of Puerto Rico](#), founded on March 12, 1903, is a state supported university system established by [Law No. 1 of January 20, 1966](#), as amended, with the mission to serve the people of Puerto Rico and to contribute to the development and enjoyment of the fundamental, ethical and aesthetic values of Puerto Rican culture, and committed to the ideals of a democratic society. To advance its mission, the University strives to provide high quality education and create new knowledge in the Arts, Sciences and Technology.

The University system comprises 11 institutional units:

- Three main campuses: Río Piedras, Mayagüez, and Medical Sciences and Medical Centers, with high research activities – with Master’s Colleges and Universities, with [Carnegie Classifications](#).
- Eight additional campuses: UPR at Cayey, Humacao, Arecibo, Bayamón, Ponce, Aguadilla, Carolina, and Utuado with Baccalaureate Colleges - Diverse Fields with Carnegie Classification.

At present, the UPR system offers a total of 463 different degrees in the Arts, Sciences, Business, Engineering and Technology, including 35 philosophy and professional doctorates, 128 masters (of which one is the Information Sciences and Technologies), 16 graduate certificates, 245 baccalaureate and 39 associate degrees, many of which are unique to the Island, plus 42 Medicine and Dental Medicine

residency programs and 192 transfer programs between units leading to baccalaureate degrees.

Tuition is among the lowest in the nation, accounting for less than 10% of UPR revenues. In accordance with a 4% annual increase per incoming class established in [Certification No. 60 \(2006- 2007\)](#) of the Board of Trustees; tuition has increased from \$45 per undergraduate credit hour in 2007 to \$55 in 2014, and from \$113 per graduate credit hour in 2007 to \$137 in 2014. Each cohort is guaranteed the same tuition rate for a period of 150% the time required for degree completion.

Since its inception, the UPR confers 9,000 degrees per year. Of the over 30,000 high school students that take the College Board in Puerto Rico, 65% apply for admission to the UPR. One out of 3 university students on the Island pursues studies in UPR, and one of every two university degrees is conferred by the UPR. Over 90% of the UPR student body is of Hispanic origin, with close to 70% of undergraduates receiving a Pell Grant. With a faculty and nonteaching personnel of close to 5,000 and 9,000 respectively, and a total enrollment of over 57,853 in 2014, UPR is the premier Hispanic serving institution in the United States and the baccalaureate origin institution of 17% of all Hispanics that have obtained a Ph.D. in Science and Engineering nationwide.

On November 2013 [Dr. Uroyoán Ramón Emeterio Walker-Ramos](#), a full-professor, Mathematician, at the UPR Mayagüez Campus, was appointed President of the University of Puerto Rico. Past presidents during the period from 2008 to 2014 were Antonio García Padilla, Esq., (2001- 2009), Dr. José Ramón de la Torre (2010-2011), and Dr. Miguel Muñoz (2011-2013). In spite of changes in presidencies, the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the University remained stable.

On July 16, 2014, [Dr. Carlos Severino-Valdés](#), full-professor, Geographer, was appointed Chancellor of the Río Piedras Campus. Past chancellors during the period from 2008 to 2014 were Dr. Gladys Escalona de Motta (2002-2009), Dr. Ana Guadalupe (2010-2013), and Dr. Ethel Ríos-Orlandi (Acting Chancellor) (2013-2014). The documents *Ten for the Decade* and *University Vision 2016*, as well as Certifications of the Academic Senate , for undergraduate and graduate studies, guided the action plans for the continuity of performance, and have set the stability of academic programs and the campus study and creative/research endeavors.

The Río Piedras campus is the largest and oldest of these units, celebrating its hundredth anniversary in 2003. The Campus offers eight undergraduate degrees with a total of 71 majors. There are 39 programs at the master's, 5 post-master's and 13 doctoral levels. It has been classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning as a [Doctoral Research Intensive Institution](#) and it is the only institution on the Island with this classification.

The Río Piedras Campus is affiliated with the Association of Caribbean Universities and Research Institutes ([UNICA](#)), the Council of Graduate Schools, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, and the Asociación Universitaria Iberoamericana de Postgrado.

[\[http://graduados.uprrp.edu/catalogo/rrp_campus_accreditation.htm\]](http://graduados.uprrp.edu/catalogo/rrp_campus_accreditation.htm)

The recently appointed Chancellor, Dr. Carlos Severino-Valdez, is committed to maintaining high standards of excellence in professional graduate education, as evidenced by the emphasis on and support for up-to-date accreditation of all University graduate and professional schools or programs.

The [Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research \(DEGI\)](#), established in 1989, with its new appointed Dean, [Dr. Pedro Juan Rodríguez-Esquerdo](#), Mathematician, aims to promote, coordinate, and support the graduate programs of the UPRRP. It stimulates research, creative, and collaborative activities on the graduate level. Its bilingual journal, [Inventio: Revista de Investigación y Creación](#), presents the results research and accomplishments of these activities. The DEGI aims to be at the vanguard of changes in higher education, and recognizes the value of learning communities and the importance of technological change impacting graduate studies and research. The DEGI staff includes an associate dean in charge of providing guidance in the revision and evaluation of academic programs and professional accreditations, and an assistant dean in charge of seeking and obtaining external funding and support for graduate students and professors.

The University system's development is based on continuous strategic planning, as evidenced in its most recent 10 year plan: *Ten for the decade: Agenda for Planning 2006-2016 (Diez para la década: Agenda para la planificación 2006-2016)*. This strategic plan was created through a participatory process involving all of the system's constituencies of the university. As it is expressed, *Ten for the Decade* "is a guide and contract of principles and actions which identifies the parameters of a desirable institutional life for the University of Puerto Rico and collects the motivations of renovation and continuous improvement of the academic offerings, research, and service." It is an instrument that leads the planning efforts of the system, defines, and forwards the institutional action areas that which will be evaluated throughout the next ten years. The 10 broad goals with objectives that were established in *Ten for the Decade* have guided the development of the strategic plans at each University campus.

Within this context, in 2006 the Río Piedras Campus developed its updated strategic plan, *Vision University 2016 (Visión Universidad 2016)* its updated strategic plan which allows the university community to move on toward a process of innovation and change for the next ten years. *Visión Universidad 2016* was also the result of participatory planning within the Río Piedras Campus community.