

Academic-Administrative Work Plan for the University of Puerto Rico

Two concepts in leadership I embraced are shared vision and leadership. These concepts fall under the principles of transformational and collaborative leadership. An outcome of these principles is empowerment, both team and individual empowerment.

A challenge when submitting a work plan is that while I can become familiar with the 2023-2028 strategic plan, I do not know what aspects have been implemented and/or accomplished. In the spirit of shared vision and leadership, I look forward to hearing from faculty, staff, and students to set priorities. Thus, please consider this document as a “draft” that will be modified by the input of the faculty, staff, and students.

The federal government's recent actions present challenges in all higher education institutions, particularly in all research areas. In addition, the decrease in funding from the Puerto Rican government, driven by the action of la Junta, presents challenges. While I have seen similar actions, such as a decrease in state funding for higher education, a challenge Puerto Rico faces is a decrease in population growth and the income level of the students.

These challenges suggest, and the Strategic Plan indicates, that UPR must find an additional revenue stream and reimagine its curriculum using the unique identities of each institutional unit. As in many state institutions, UPR remains a source of promoting social mobility and developing human capital on the island.

Vision and Alignment Statement

This proposed work plan is guided by UPR's vision as "a university of excellence and international standing committed to student success through innovative and transformative endeavors in teaching, research, creation, innovation, and service in the various branches of human knowledge to develop responsible citizenship." All proposed initiatives directly support the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan.

Key Strategies and Actions

In developing this **Academic-Administrative Work Plan for the University of Puerto Rico**, I have focused on four areas: Strategic Enrollment, Research Innovation, Community Well-Being, and Philanthropic Initiatives.

1) Strategic Enrollment Initiatives by Addressing Academic Excellence and Innovation

Like many universities, UPR should reimagine its future. UPR has experienced a decrease in enrollment, and with Puerto Rico's aging population, more enrollment challenges are

forthcoming with an aging population. Aligning with the Strategic Plan, I present overarching ideas to address strategic enrollment. Strategic enrollment emphasizes the recruitment and retention of students.

Actions:

a) US Mainland and International Student Recruitment

- i) While at UTSA, I have met many Puerto Ricans who chose the university. Many universities benefit from students from Puerto Rico and students from all over the world. Because of the different rates (higher) in tuition, out-of-state students are sought after by institutions of higher education. I mentioned in my cover letter that with its cultural richness and bilingual character, Puerto Rico is uniquely positioned to serve as a bridge between the Americas. I envision promoting UPR as a place to experience the richness of our culture and the excellence of its education opportunities across the globe. This initiative would increase enrollment and provide tuition dollars to the UPR.

b) Develop partnerships with local companies.

- i) Invite corporate partners to share ideas about what skills they want to see in future employees. Then, use that information to develop experiential learning opportunities for the students, such as entrepreneurship and internships. Entrepreneurship opportunities can be in teams from different disciplines, such as the arts, science, and business.

c) Dual Enrolment

- i) I noticed that in 2022, a pilot program was formed to offer dual enrollment opportunities. I could not find an assessment of the program. However, dual enrollment opportunities are associated with higher enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates. Quality control must be maintained in the courses offered. This can be accomplished through a certification process for the high school teachers offering the courses.

d) Retention and graduation rates

- i) The six-year graduation rates across campuses are around 50% (data varies across campuses). I suggest using predictive analytics to identify students at risk of dropping out and targeting interventions such as:

- (1) An early warning system.

- (2) Robust first-year experiences
- (3) Targeted academic support systems that could include learning assistants/peer mentors. While funding is limited, one can use the federal work-study program to offer financial support.
- e) Psychosocial Factors that Affect Student Success
 - i) The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine reported the importance of non-academic factors in students' success. While the report sounds STEM-focused, it is not. The focus was on the role of intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies in supporting student success. I propose emphasizing psychosocial and cultural factors, such as a sense of belonging and a faculty/student mindset, to promote retention and graduation rates
- f) Online (synchronous and asynchronous) and hybrid course offerings
 - i) During the pandemic, many universities began offering courses online. Online course offerings are an excellent way to address enrollment. However, ensuring that the course delivery uses evidence-based practice is important. The framework I used to build my courses is the Quality Matters Framework. The Quality Matters Framework helps develop well-designed and well-presented online courses. I am not sure what Framework UPR has used in its online offerings. Building a strong academic innovation office is crucial to achieving a robust online enrollment. For any of these courses, implementing QM principles would include:
 - (1) Stating clear learning objectives visible in all modules
 - (2) Creating intuitive navigation with a consistent structure
 - (3) Providing multiple ways to engage with content
 - (4) Ensuring accessibility features for all materials
 - (5) Offering regular, constructive feedback opportunities (enhancing student engagement)
 - (6) Including clear technology requirements and support resources (inclusive)
 - (7) Aligning assessments directly with stated learning objectives (clear expectations)

2) Research Innovation

According to the 2025 Carnegie classification, Rio Piedras and Mayaguez are considered R2 High Research Spending and Doctorate Production. The Medical

Sciences campus is classified as a Research College and University. UPR should leverage those classifications to promote innovation on the island.

Actions:

a) Improve research infrastructure by developing strategic alliances

- i) With the fiscal challenges facing UPR, the institution could develop partnerships with organizations such as the Puerto Rico Science, Technology, and Research Trust (PRSTRT) to use its infrastructure to promote innovation. While the PRSTRT focuses on science and technology, using a memorandum of understanding (i.e., shared indirect cost), the PRSTRT could manage non-STEM grants. Implementing administrative practices could streamline operations and facilitate research at all campuses.

b) Incentivize research productivity among professors

i) Tenured/Tenure-track

- (1) A model to incentivize obtaining grants could be adopted to reward research productivity. This can be in the form of a stipend.

ii) Professors under contract

- (1) Like many campuses on the mainland, the number of professors under contract is increasing at UPR. Many professors under contract have a doctorate degree and, thus, are trained to do research. Similarly to the tenured/tenure-track faculty, UPR could adopt an incentive program for this group of faculty.

iii) Promote collaborations among UPR campuses and non-UPR campuses

- (1) A challenge at many universities is that we tend to work in silos. In collaboration with the PRSTRT, convening can be organized to promote collaborations among faculty from all disciplines. For example, in addressing students' success, social sciences, education, and STEM groups could collaborate on grants.

3) Community Well-being

Puerto Rico has been challenged by natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes, which are traumatic events. One thing I appreciate about my people is their resilience. By community well-being, I refer to creating a space for teaching and

non-teaching personnel to feel they belong. A small gesture of appreciation can go a long way.

Actions

- a) Awards events
 - i) Staff excellence awards
 - (1) Events celebrating the contributions of non-teaching staff in UPR
 - ii) Faculty excellence awards
 - (1) Events celebrating the contributions of teaching staff in UPR
- b) Conducting a climate survey can reveal what professional growth opportunities could be made available to non-teaching personnel.

4) Philanthropic Initiatives

UPR has helped thousands of Puerto Ricans advance in their careers. Thus, UPR has a compelling story to pursue philanthropy, and I am comfortable and have experience in this area. Philanthropy can be pursued from the private sector and Puerto Ricans on the mainland. A strategy could be used to engage a company with fundraising expertise. Its cost is based on a percentage of the raised funds.

Actions

- a) Share compelling impact stories demonstrating the tangible difference donations could make, such as stories of students.
- b) Recognize donors publicly (when appropriate) and privately to show appreciation
- c) Create opportunities for involvement beyond financial contributions. This approach can help develop productive relationships in the future.
- d) Make sure that the donor's interests are considered
- e) Create giving opportunities that align with donor values and passions, such as non-cash donations that could generate income in the future.
- f) When possible, establish personal connections between donors and beneficiaries. For example, the students could write letters to the donors.
 - i) Demonstrate impact and transparency by providing transparent reporting on how funds are used
- g) Host events that educate and inspire rather than solicit