

Report of On-Site Evaluation

ACEJMC
Undergraduate program
2017-2018

Name of Institution: **Universidad del Turabo**
Name and Title of Chief Executive Officer: **Dennis Alicea, Chancellor**
Name of Unit: **Department of Communications**
Name and Title of Administrator: **Maria del Carmen Santos Gomez, Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Communications**
Date of 2017-2018 Accrediting Visit: **February 11-14, 2018**

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

Undergraduate Program Recommendation by 2017-2018 Visiting Team: **ACCREDITATION**

Prepared and submitted by:

Team Chair

Name and Title: **Heidi de Laubenfels, Chief Operating Officer**
Organization/School: **Nyhus Communications**

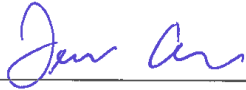
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Team Members

Name and Title: **Jerry Ceppos, Dean**
Organization/School: **Manship School of Mass Communication, Louisiana State University**

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Name and Title: **Marianne Barrett, Louise Solheim Professor**
Organization/School: **Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University**

Signature



PART I: General information

Name of Institution: Universidad del Turabo

Name of Unit: Department of Communications

Year of Visit: 2018

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

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

- Private
- Public
- Other (specify)

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.

The Institution is licensed by the Council on Higher Education of Puerto Rico. See attachment. GI. 1.

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

- Yes
- No

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

This is the unit's initial accreditation review.

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

The mission statement of the Department of Communications was adopted on August 2015.

Mission statement of the Department of Communications

News, information, and ideas are vital to democratic society and to the civic and economic well-being of Puerto Rico. The Department of Communication seeks to prepare students with the knowledge, skills

and integrity to contribute to the communication needs and wants of the communities they serve. The Department seeks particularly to represent in the industry and profession the experience, perspectives and aspirations of graduates from lower income groups in Puerto Rico, many of whom are first-generation college students.

7. What are the type and length of terms?

Semesters of 15 weeks

Quarters of _____ weeks

Summer sessions of _____ weeks

Intersessions of _____ 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.

a- General Communications

b- Film Production, Video and Multimedia

10. Credit hours required by the University for an Undergraduate Degree: (Specify semester-hour or quarter-hour credit.)

Semester hour

a- General Communications- 123 credit hours

b- Film Production, Video and Multimedia- 123 credit hours

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

The program does not have an internship, it has a practice. The numbers of hours are as follows:

a- General Communications – 3 credit hours, practice (130 hours)

b- Film Production, Video and Multimedia- 3 credit hours practice (130 hours)

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

Name of Sequence or Specialty

Sequence - General Communications

Sequence- Film Production, Videos and Multimedia

Sequence- Digital Journalism (*new)

Sequence- Public Relations and Advertising (*new)

Person in Charge

María Vera Hernández

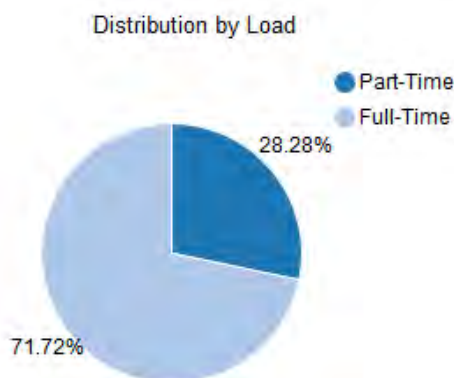
María Vera Hernández

María Vera Hernández

María Vera Hernández

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

In the fall semester 2017-2018, there were 10,554 full-time and 4,161 part-time students registered in Universidad del Turabo.



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):

Below is the information as of January 2018.

Name of Sequence or specialty	undergraduate majors
General Communications	97
Film Production, Video and Multimedia	70
Digital Journalism (*new)	11
Public Relations and Advertising (*new)	24
Total	202

15. Number of students in each section of all skills courses (news writing, 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.)

Skills courses	Students Enrolled August 2017	Students Enrolled January 2018
COMM 430- Journalism Workshop	15	
COMM 311- Photojournalism	20	
COMU 313- Cinematography and Camera Operation		19
COMM 380- Principles of Radio	14 / 7*	
COMM 385- Radio Production and Direction		4 / 12*
PROD 205- Audiovisual Production I	19	16
PROD 300- Film Direction I		9
PROD 303- Advanced Production and Direction for Audiovisual Media Communications III	20	
COMU 333- Editing Process		12
COMU 315 – Lighting for Audiovisual Media Communications		10/12*

* Two sections offered in the semester.

16. Total expenditures planned by the unit for the 2017 – 2018 academic year: \$926,036

Give percentage increase or decrease in three years:

YEAR	BUDGET	INCREASE/DECREASE %
2014-2015	\$875,942	—
2015-2016	\$944,099	Increase 7%
2016-2017	\$926,447	Decrease 2%
2017-2018	\$970,435.40 - EXPECTED	Increase 4.7%

Amount expected to be spent this year on full-time faculty salaries: \$152,640

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.

1. Víctor Manuel García Suárez, Ph.D.- Full Professor
2. Carlos Cordero Cancio, Ph. D.- Associate Professor
3. Luis Rosario Albert, Ph.D. - Assistant Professor
4. María Vera Hernández, M.A. - Instructor- Director
5. Ivette Soto Vélez, Ph.D.- Assistant Professor

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.)

Part time/adjunct faculty for Spring 2017

Carlos Acevedo Alvelo, Ph.D. - part-time
Pablo Impelluso Cortés – part-time

Part time/adjunct faculty for Fall 2017

Carlos Acevedo Alvelo, Ph.D. – part-time
Pablo Impelluso Cortés –part-time
Victor Rodríguez – part-time

Part time/adjunct faculty for Spring 2018

Víctor Rodríguez – part-time
Pablo Impelluso – adjunct faculty*

*The adjunct faculty members have a part-time contract for a term of ten (10) months in an academic year. This professor does not have academic rank and works twenty-five hours (25) per week. The workload is distributed among teaching or other academic functions; office hours for individual attention of students; course preparation; development of research or creative works; participation in committees and meetings; community or institutional services and other activities related to teaching.

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.

General Communications 72 or more semester hours
outside of journalism and mass communications

Year	Total Graduates	Number Complying	Percent
2016-2017 academic year	25	25	100%
2015-2016 academic year	25	22	86%*

Film Production, Video and Multimedia 72 or more semester hours
outside of journalism and mass communications

Year	Total Graduates	Number Complying	Percent
2016-2017 academic year	8	8	100%
2015-2016 academic year	5	5	100%

* In the academic year 2015-2016 compliance with 72 credits outside general communication major was 86% when compared to the academic year 2016-2017, the program complied with the requirement. After the pre-accreditation visit, the DC made a curriculum revision to require students to take 72 credits outside the major. It was approved by the faculty and the academic board in 2015. Also, adjustments in the enrollment process were made to ensure compliance with the requirement.

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:

- 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.**

Although some form of journalism and mass-communication education has existed at the Universidad del Turabo since 1993, last summer brought the university's most dramatic moments: On Sept. 5, a Category 5 hurricane, Irma, glancingly hit Puerto Rico, knocking out power for 1 million people. On Sept. 20, Hurricane Maria, another Category 5 storm, became the worst natural disaster ever to hit Puerto Rico, significantly damaging the main campus—and devastating much of the rest of the island. As one radio-station news director said during our visit, Maria changed everyone's life: "We talk about 'before Maria' and 'after Maria.'" (In fact, the power went out for hours while the team visited, almost five months after the hurricane struck and just weeks after many faculty members and administrators had electricity restored in their homes.)

Classes already had begun when Maria arrived but were suspended for a month. To make up the time, students attended classes through much of the ordinary holiday break and on weekends (ruining work plans for many students). The university helped students with food, clothing and grants of \$600 to pay off student debt. Students also helped each other, lending clothing, food and shelter to those who needed it. Students also broadcast information to the community, shot documentaries on camera phones and more sophisticated equipment, produced a polished video honoring the facilities staff and reported on Facebook Live and Twitter.

At the Department of Communications, four classrooms were destroyed, two others were significantly damaged and 23 fewer students registered for the spring than did so in the fall. Many probably moved to the mainland, joining family members who already had moved there. Migration to the mainland—about 500,000 people in the decade before the hurricane—and a persistent debt crisis were Puerto Rico's biggest problems before Maria, and they continue today. Compounding those problems, almost as many people are expected to emigrate in the immediate years after Maria.

That could be a problem for the university, which is part of the private, non-profit Ana G. Mendez University System, because almost 90 percent of its revenue comes from tuition. Almost 94 percent of those funds university-wide are in the form of Pell Grants or loans. The Mendez system focuses on serving underprivileged students and indeed the department says in its mission statement that it aims to recruit Hispanic students "from lower income groups in Puerto Rico, many of whom are first-generation college students" who can contribute to "communication needs and wants of the communities they serve." Teachers and professionals repeatedly said that students realize that college is a special opportunity, which accounts for the drive and professionalism that many of the students exhibit.

A strategic plan approved in August 2015 includes a goal of being accredited for the first time by ACEJMC. That goal is part of an aggressive university plan to pursue specialized accreditation in many

fields, which the university believes will increase visibility and prestige, thus attracting students despite emigration.

The university is unusual in several respects: classes are taught in Spanish (except, obviously, for English courses), though many students are bilingual; tenure has not been granted since 1986, and faculty members carry a 5/5 load for undergraduate classes (but may be granted course relief if they have special research or other projects).

The university was founded in 1972 to expand higher-education opportunities in eastern Puerto Rico. In 1994, the School of Social Sciences and Humanities created the bachelor of arts degree with a major in communications. In 2004, the degree was changed to a bachelor of arts in communications. Later, the school's name was changed and other degrees were added.

For the 2017-18 academic year, there were 10,554 full-time and 4,161 part-time students at the university. In January 2018, the department had 202 students in four sequences: general communications; film production, video and multimedia; digital journalism, and public relations and advertising. The first two are degree programs; the second two are new and will graduate their first students in three years. The department has five faculty members—one full professor, one associate professor, two assistant professors and an instructor who also is the director of the program. Two part-time faculty members also teach this semester.

The dean of the school supervises criminology, psychology and social work in addition to communications. Despite that load and despite the fact that her training is as a neuropsychologist, she gets high marks from faculty members for being deeply involved in the department. She gets credit for pushing the department toward accreditation and for including communication students and department courses in an institutional minor emphasizing innovation and entrepreneurship, both key goals for the university.

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

The school has a faculty manual and a student handbook. Faculty and students have representation and participation on the Academic Board and Administrative Council.

Academic Board faculty representatives “are empowered with voice and vote on all academic-related issues.” The department holds two regular faculty meetings each month.

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.

The director reports to the dean. She has been at the school since 2012 and has been chair since 2014. She holds instructor rank and is working on her doctorate. The dean is deeply involved in the school and is a strong representative of the school with the upper administration. Reporting to the director are a lab technician and a student services officer.

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

The recruitment process gives priority to internal candidates. The dean makes a recommendation to the human resources office. Administrators have annual contracts that are renewable every August. The director is evaluated both by the dean and by full-time professors.

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

The university has a complaints-resolution policy for faculty members. The complaint first must go to the supervisor but can be appealed to the vice president of human resources, who names an investigation committee. Student-vs.-student complaints go to the vice chancellor for student affairs, who may refer them to the Board of Discipline, composed of two representatives from administrative areas, two professors and a student. Student complaints against professors go to the Office of Academic Affairs. Grade appeals start with the registrar and can be appealed to the Grade Claims Committee, made up of the dean, a faculty member, a representative of the registrar, a student and a vice chancellor.

Overall evaluation: 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 2015-2016, compliance with the 72-hour rule was 86 percent. After a pre-accreditation visit, the department revised the curriculum to meet the requirement, and compliance has been 100 percent since 2016-17.

- 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.**

The curriculum covers both theoretical and professional aspects of mass communication. Core courses are in communication theory; legal and ethical aspects of mass media; development and management of media enterprises; introduction to public relations; introduction to advertising, and introduction to TV principles.

As the department prepared for accreditation, the faculty revised the curriculum, aligning course objectives with ACEJMC professional values and competencies.

The curriculum is enriched with a required three-credit, semester-long “supervised practice,” something of an internship without pay but with greater supervision. Students can practice at radio stations, TV stations, national newspapers, advertising and public-relations agencies and film enterprises. The department prefers the supervised practice to an internship “because it guarantees that every student has a field experience in his/her area of interest.” The process is quite formal: There is an agreement letter with the media organization requiring that a supervisor meet with the professor, that a field professional supervise and evaluate the experience twice and that the student be exposed to actual experiences. The student also must meet with the professor three times during the semester.

Four student-media experiences supplement the curriculum: Turabon OnLine, a beautiful monthly online newspaper; Turabo Informa, audio-visual capsules supplementing the university’s social-media presence, and Radio Turabo, offering content produced by students and faculty.

All majors complete a core curriculum of 11 courses in social science and communication. Students complete a minimum of 123 credit hours to earn the Bachelor of Arts in Communication.

By sequence:

General Communications—Students take courses in the fundamentals of journalism, writing and style in journalism, writing for the communications media (meaning radio, TV and movies), photojournalism, principles of radio, radio production and direction, writing for public relations, an advanced-journalism workshop, a study of film and study of film production. The sequence appears to be a comprehensive sampling of everything that mass communication has to offer; students repeatedly said that they learn about every medium.

Film Production, Video and Multimedia—Students take courses in “film language”; writing for movie scripts; digital cinematography and camera operation; film, video and multimedia production; editing of movie images; lighting for filmmaking; film direction; advanced production and direction for film; design and publishing of web pages, and audio-visual sound design, editing and production. Although all students take core courses in English and Spanish related to writing, the department should consider some mass-communication writing course for this sequence in addition to the class that teaches writing for movie scripts.

Two new sequences are too new to evaluate.

Professionals who participate in the supervised practice praised the preparation of Turabo students. They are “very well-prepared,” “very perfectionist,” “they can do anything.” Several found Turabo students more polite, responsible and driven than students from other schools. “They know it’s a privilege” to attend a university, one professional said. “They talk to you with respect, they dress [for the supervised practice] like they are going to work, they are respectful.” One professional recalled that the whole family came to drop off one student, probably because the family had only one car. Another said that a father waited without complaint for six hours while his son worked, again probably because the family had only one car. A psychology professor shared a story about communications students who helped her produce a series of mental-health videos. She said she couldn’t distinguish between the students and the professionals.

Students repeatedly expressed warmth and appreciation toward their professors. “They help you get better,” one said. “They are a second family.” Another said, “They’re just the best.” Another said, “I love them.” Another said, “It’s a family experience.”

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.

A number of courses, such as “Design and Publishing of Electronic Pages,” deal with current technologies. Equipment—including a drone—appears to be up to date. The department says that the advisory board, practice supervisors and other professionals help in keeping the department up to date. All labs have software for radio, TV and film productions. Professionals evaluate capstone projects.

- 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.)**

No lab had more than 20 students.

- 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. Schools may award academic credit for internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications, but credit should not exceed six semester credits (or nine quarter credit hours).**

Students may take up to two semester courses (or their equivalent) at an appropriate professional organization where the unit can show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit's faculty and professionals. Students may take up to three semester courses (or their equivalent) at a professional media outlet owned and operated by the institution where full-time faculty are in charge and where the primary function of the media outlet is to instruct students.

The required three-credit supervised practice replaces internships.

Overall evaluation: 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 unit's written diversity plan was adopted in 2015. The plan, in addition to numerous conversations with students, faculty and administrators, makes it clear that, with a population in Puerto Rico that is classified as 99.3 percent Hispanic/Latino – of any race – Universidad del Turabo focuses more on class than on race in setting goals around diversity.

Students, faculty and staff emphasize that Puerto Ricans, while they have a wide range of skin tones, all identify as Hispanic. "We are all the same here," said one member of the unit's professional advisory group.

Universidad del Turabo is one of four institutions that comprise the Ana G. Mendez system, which is rooted in a mission to serve less-privileged Puerto Ricans. The unit's definition of diversity calls for acceptance and respect for individual differences, and an environment free from discrimination for reasons of race, gender, age, physical abilities, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, political beliefs or other ideologies.

With a unit student population that is 43 percent male and 57 percent female, recruitment and retention of male students is among the challenges the plan attempts to address through persistent individual outreach and support. Young men often face pressure to work, which can create conflicts with studies and schedules.

Explicit goals are to strengthen efforts to recruit, support and retain diverse students and female faculty, to improve socio-cultural understanding and to embrace diversity throughout the curriculum.

- 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.**

Students report that "diversity is everywhere." One student added that, "It's the norm. What makes you different is what makes it work."

The General Education component of the communications curriculum offers social science and humanities courses that are designed to expose students to social and economic impacts of globalization, differences among cultures, and individual, community, government and social responsibility. Examples include:

GEOG 205, Community and Global Resources; ECON 207, Economy of the New World Order; and SOSC 111 and 112, Individual, community, government and social responsibility I & II. Among core courses, the Social Communication Theory syllabus focuses on the cultivation of creativity, independence, ethics and impartiality. The Legal and Ethical Aspects of Mass Media Communications course covers diversity, pluralism and critical thinking in a media context. Advertising and Public Relations courses require that students demonstrate an understanding of race, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

The site team witnessed a lively conversation about diversity happening in the Social Communication Theory course (COMM 205). Students were discussing discrimination in Colombia – specifically depiction of native peoples in television commercials. This class also included two notably disabled students.

Multicultural issues around gender and disability show up in course syllabi and in student work. Diversity is among the themes that students are required to develop in the film direction class. One student in the current semester produced a video exploring a lesbian relationship.

The unit's radio laboratory promotes cultural diversity with programs such as La Tertulia, a student current-events discussion, and Turabo Nocturno, a playful take on social media trends.

The university has an international affairs office with a growing focus on drawing students from other countries. Two international students are currently registered in the Department of Communications – one from Guatemala and another from Colombia.

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.

Gender diversity on the faculty is a stated goal. Two members of the pool of five full-time faculty are Hispanic females. One was promoted from a part-time position in 2016-17, and the other is the department director.

The university is supporting the director – both financially and with time – in her pursuit of a doctoral degree. The previous full-time faculty hire was a Hispanic male in 2014-15. Two of the five part-time faculty members are female. One professor is from Cuba, and one part-time adjunct is from Argentina.

The unit promoted a part-time female lecturer to full-time assistant professor in 2016. While no opportunities to hire full-time professors have arisen since the 2016 addition, the majority of part-time/adjuncts hired since 2014 have been women. The director and dean report that cultivating strong relationships with women in the profession, as well as with the Association of Puerto Rico Journalists and Overseas Press Club, provides a pool of referrals and candidates.

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.

The unit hosts high school students who visit several times per semester (as part of a program coordinated by the university's marketing department), and its faculty occasionally visit high schools to speak. During the semester of the site visit, a department technician took Communications students and equipment to an

area high school for a multimedia demonstration. The unit's emphasis is on public schools that draw from socio-economically disadvantaged areas. The university hosts an annual open house for thousands of high school students, and attendees tour the Communications facilities and meet with students and faculty. One member of the Student Association noted that this was how she became interested in joining the department.

A majority of students represents the first generation in their families to attend college, and many have low enough incomes to qualify for federal grants to help cover the \$5,000 annual tuition. Most students work to cover their expenses and support their households. Ninety-eight percent of Communications students receive Pell Grant funds. Many also receive support in the form of scholarships, other grants, low-interest loans and work-study programs.

Scholarships are a key tool to ensure students with socio-economic challenges come to – and stay in – the program. The university awarded \$15,638 to Department of Communications undergraduate students in 2015-16, and \$16,263 in 2016-17.

The dean and chancellor both reported that the university started the 2017 academic year with higher-than anticipated enrollment, while enrollment is down at other Puerto Rican institutions. Hurricane Maria intervened, however, and hundreds of students across the university left with their families after the storm to pursue jobs and shelter in mainland states. The Department of Communications lost 30 students, seven of whom were able to graduate. That led to a total loss of 23 students.

Emigration to the mainland in the wake of Hurricane Maria and a broad economic crisis makes student retention a challenge across the island. That, combined with the university's focus on serving low-income populations, has spurred a remarkable student-support effort that includes services to provide food, clothing, housing, psychological assistance, academic counseling and general encouragement. Students rave about their professors' availability and flexibility, and the students themselves have clearly created a network of support for each other.

Retention in the Department of Communications has hovered around 75 percent since 2011 but leapt to 90.1 percent in 2016. Noticeably, the department retained male students at 88.9 percent from August 2016 to August 2017.

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. Accreditation site visit teams will apply this standard in compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations, as well as the laws of the countries in which non-U.S. institutions are located.

The department – and the university in general – has fostered a culture of collaboration and support that spurs students, faculty, alumni and professional partners to consistently describe it as a family. Students exhibit genuine respect for each other. Faculty and Student Association leadership spoke to the site team with evident sadness about how hard they worked to keep a student whose family insisted on leaving Puerto Rico after they lost everything in Hurricane Maria. Their efforts were unsuccessful, and the student left with just a semester remaining toward her degree.

One female faculty member noted that it's a pleasure to work with "gentlemen who respect me" and said she is extremely happy and supported – by peers and by leadership.

Accommodating students with disabilities is an area of focus. The president of the Student Association noted that she has been a beneficiary of services that support students who struggle with dyslexia and attention deficit disorder.

The campus is ADA-compliant and complies with Puerto Rico's Law of Integrated Educational Services for People with Disabilities. All buildings have elevators and ramps. Dean Santos reports that 400 students across the university have physical disabilities, some of them in her school. If a course includes a student who needs an elevator, she says, the class will be moved to a location closer to the lift. During the site team visit, the campus lost power. A team member witnessed a student in a wheelchair being carried down the stairs by a team of security staff because the elevators weren't functioning.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

Academic year: 2016 – 2017 Full-time faculty

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African American				
White				
American Indian/Alaskan native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	2	40%	3	60%
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander				
Two or more races				
Other race				
International (any race)				

Academic year: 2016 – 2017 Part-time/adjunct faculty

Group	Female	% of total faculty	Male	% of total faculty
Black/African American				
White				
American Indian/Alaskan native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	2	50%	2	50%
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.

When recruiting faculty, the Department of Communications follows the policies and procedures detailed in the Ana G. Mendez University System Faculty Manual. A doctorate from an accredited university with a specialization in the area to be taught is a preferred qualification for candidates who are applying to teach at the undergraduate level. A master's degree is required.

Because the university weights teaching heavily--a typical course load for a full-time faculty member is five courses--university teaching experience is a preferred qualification.

A department search committee is charged with developing three required activities that are recognized by members of the discipline as the appropriate methods for evaluating job candidates in that specialization. Typically, these activities include an interview, a written essay and a short presentation.

Appointments to full-time positions are approved by the dean of School of Social Science and Communications, the vice-chancellor and chancellor. New hires attend a required orientation that includes seminars and workshops on the university's history, its policies, student profiles, learning management systems and copyright law.

The university has not granted tenure since 1986. There are approximately 36 tenured faculty members at the university. None are in the Department of Communication.

Faculty initially are hired on a one-year contract that can be renewed first for three years and subsequently for five. The five-year contracts are renewable in perpetuity.

In addition to the renewable multi-year contract, faculty may pursue rank promotion after three years. The criteria for rank promotion are delineated in the faculty manual and center on the faculty member's teaching performance.

The department's faculty is quite stable. Over the last six years, there were two openings for full-time faculty members. The department held an open search for the multi-year appointment and filled the second position by promoting one of its part-time instructors.

The Department of Communications' full- and part-time faculty are evaluated on their teaching, research and creative work and service according to policies and procedures specified in the faculty manual. The frequency of the evaluation depends on the type of appointment—one, three or five years and the performance of the person during the previous evaluation.

Two types of evaluation are used to assess the performance of full-time faculty: formative and summative. Both use a five-point scale with a score of 2.99 or less triggering an additional level of evaluation.

The formative evaluation, which includes self-assessment, uses data to identify the person's strengths and weakness and to create a continual professional development plan. The summative evaluation is used to identify the most competent faculty to be retained or promoted and is based on feedback from students, the dean and peers in addition to a self-evaluation. The process is overseen by a school's scrutiny committee, which reports to the dean.

Part-time faculty, which includes lecturers and adjuncts, are evaluated by students and the dean during the term of the faculty member's contract.

The department's faculty typically earns scores between 4 and 5 on both the dean's and students' evaluations. In one case, a faculty member struggled a bit during the first year and was given a second one-year appointment rather than a three-year contract. The dean worked with the faculty member to develop a plan to address the issues, which resulted in a significant improvement. The faculty member subsequently was awarded a three-year contract and applied for promotion during the 2017-18 academic year. The dean expects the promotion will be granted.

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

The Department of Communications' five full-time faculty members have primary responsibility for teaching, research/creative activity and service. As per the university's faculty manual, each full-time faculty member teaches 12 to 15 credit hours per semester, depending on whether the courses are undergraduate or graduate. Faculty members, including the department chair, who have administrative responsibilities receive a course release each semester. Other faculty members have applied for and received course reductions to conduct research or to work on projects.

The department also employs two or three part-time faculty members each semester, depending on the number and types of courses being taught. In January 2018 the department promoted a long-time lecturer to adjunct. As an adjunct, the faculty member teaches 12 credit hours per semester.

Seventy-three percent of the department's courses were taught by full-time faculty in 2015; 64 percent of classes were taught by full-time faculty in 2016 and 77 percent were in 2017.

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.

Four of the five full-time faculty members hold the Ph.D. and the fifth, who currently is serving as department chair, is pursuing hers. Each faculty member has extensive professional experience, which ranges from 12 to 32 years, and at least five years of teaching experience.

On average, part-time faculty members have 20 years of experience in the media and approximately 10 years' experience teaching.

The university has a Faculty Development Institute through which it offers numerous seminars and workshops on assessment, its learning management system (Blackboard), and distance education. Annually there are two Faculty Forums and a university-wide researchers' meeting.

The Department of Communications' faculty members have taken full advantage of these opportunities. For example, two faculty members are certified as specialists in the development of bilingual modules for online teaching.

The department's faculty also are active members in professional media organizations and interact regularly with industry practitioners, especially those who supervise students' required practice experience. Additionally, many faculty members continue to do professional work, often collaborating with students.

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

The unit uses multiple processes to evaluate instruction. These include a self-evaluation, a dean's evaluation and student evaluations. The self-evaluation addresses three primary areas: teaching/learning, research and creative work and service to the external community.

If the faculty member's performance during the last contract period fell below a 3 on a five-point scale, a peer evaluation of teaching will take place and the faculty member may receive a one-year versus a multi-year contract. The faculty member also will work with the dean to develop an improvement plan.

Because the university weights teaching so heavily, student evaluations are an integral part of the department's assessment process. Students in at least three of the faculty member's courses or sections during the contract period will complete an evaluation. The evaluations assess the instructor's knowledge of the content, her teaching strategies, instructional design and whether the professor links his research to his teaching.

The results are analyzed by members of the school's scrutiny committee and submitted to a university administrator—usually an assistant or associate vice chancellor. They become part of the faculty member's file and are used when determining rank promotion. Over the last six years, two of the department's faculty members have been promoted—one to professor and one to associate professor.

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

The Department of Communications' faculty is well-respected by its peers and by the university administration. Both groups lauded the faculty for their excellent work and contributions to the community, especially in the wake of Hurricane Maria. Their colleagues said the department's faculty were always available to help, were up-to-date in the use of emerging media and technologies and are doing work that fills a void left by media that were damaged or destroyed by the hurricane.

The chancellor said the Department of Communications is among the strongest on campus and is on track to become one of the top two programs in Puerto Rico.

Overall evaluation: 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.

As noted elsewhere, the University of Turabo has not granted tenure since 1986 and teaching is paramount. Full-time faculty members teach five classes per semester and their performance in the classroom is evaluated on a regular basis.

As a university with aspirations of becoming one of Puerto Rico's premier institutions, there also is the expectation full-time faculty members will engage in intellectual pursuits. The university and the department support and reward those efforts in a number of ways.

The associate vice chancellor of the graduate studies and research office sponsors an annual researchers conference in which several of the department's faculty members have participated.

Two faculty members applied for and received course reductions to work on creative projects and the university provides economic assistance to faculty who are pursuing an advanced degree. The department also has provided funding to enable faculty to travel to conferences.

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

Although the University of Turabo no longer grants tenure, full-time faculty members hired as assistant professors can apply for promotion to associate professor after three years and for promotion to professor after an additional five years. Rank promotion is competitive. At the beginning of each academic year, the chancellor announces how many spots are available and invites eligible faculty to apply.

The Department of Communications follows the university's policies and procedures for promotion, which are broad enough to allow for a variety of research/creative approaches. The faculty manual defines research and creative work as "activities carried out by the faculty that discovers, builds or creates new knowledge associated with their specialization and with their teaching and learning processes."

Faculty members who apply for promotion and are declined receive detailed feedback on their portfolios and may apply again the following year.

The Department of Communications has one full professor, who described the promotion process as rigorous, but clear. Another plans to apply for promotion during the next academic year.

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

As noted above, the Department of Communications uses the criteria detailed in the university's faculty manual when considering faculty for reappointment and promotion. Creative activity and contributions to the profession, as well as scholarly works are acknowledged and valued.

The department's faculty members are frequent contributors to professional publications, have produced documentaries, have had their work selected for photographic exhibitions and their films shown at international festivals. In many cases, the creative works are a collaboration between the faculty member and his or her students.

When asked about this approach, the chancellor noted the university recognizes both student and faculty-driven work when considering faculty for reappointment or rank promotion.

In support of their efforts, department faculty have received course reductions to develop projects that tap into their professional backgrounds and further the university's strategic initiatives. These projects include web radio, Turabo Informa (University Media) and the department's television studio.

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.

The Department of Communications' faculty are active researchers, and many continue to produce professional work. They have written scholarly books, published articles in refereed journals, presented refereed conference papers, produced award-winning documentaries and exhibited photographs.

Several participated as presenters and hosts when the International Communication Association's conference was held in Puerto Rico. Assistant professors in particular have served as conference session chairs and respondents and have given talks and book presentations.

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

As noted above, the Department of Communications' faculty produce a variety of research and creative work that present numerous points of view. The department supports these efforts through course reductions and small travel grants. The department's faculty are remarkably adept at integrating their teaching, scholarship and service, often collaborating with students on projects for other university departments and the local community.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

Table 5.3
Breakdown of Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	Total					Totals (10)
		Full Professor (1)	Associate Professor (1)	Assistant Professors (3)	Other Faculty** (5)	
Awards and Honors	9	5		4	3	12
Grants Received Internal	2	1	1			2
Grants Received External	1			1		1
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored	2		1	1		2
Textbooks, Sole- or Co- authored						
Books Edited						
Book Chapters	2			2		2
Monographs						
Articles in Refereed Journals	4	1		3		4
Articles in Non-Refereed Journals	20	9	8	3		20
Refereed Conference Papers	18	6	3	9	8	26
Non-Refereed Conference Papers	6	1	2	3		6
Invited Academic Papers						
Encyclopedia Entries						
Book Reviews						
Articles in Non-refereed Publications	19	11	8		1	20
Juried Creative Works	5		2	4		6
Non-juried Creative Works	14		11	3	30	44
Articles in Refereed Publications	2		1	1*		2
Talks, Book Presentations, Conference Session Chair, Respondent	23	2	8	16	2	28
Reviewer in Refereed Journals	2	2				2
Reviewer in Refereed	4			4		4

Conference Papers						
Professional Works (Consultant, Reviewer, Mentor, Writer)	13	3		12	6	21
Management in Creative Works	58	3	1	55	22	81
Ph.D. Dissertations Director or Committee Member *	11	11	1*			12
Master Dissertations Director or Committee Member	11	11				11

Co-authored work should be counted as a single publication in the unit totals. However if, for example, two members of the faculty were co-authors on the same journal article, it would be reported as a publication for both authors. ** Includes all full-time faculty who do not hold listed ranks, such as instructors and others on term appointments. Many faculty in this category may hold teaching appointments without significant scholarship, research or creative requirements.

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.

Unit performance with regard to indicators:

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.

A “student service officer” dedicated to the department serves students from the departmental office. Students know her well and joked about how much she knows about required courses. A focus group of students found that they were happy with their advising—and visited her at least once a week. Two other student service officers are available in the school office. A retention specialist, called an “academic adviser,” also is based in the school office. An optional “First Year Seminar” course focuses on providing direction in university life. A student handbook defines and describes student rights to receive information about academic programs and other issues.

Communications faculty play a key role in identifying practice opportunities for students and are a career resource for alumni long after they have graduated.

b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.

Faculty members must commit six hours a week to student assistance. Students talked about faculty members responding in the middle of the night to e-mail messages, and they were effusive in their praise for faculty flexibility and availability.

“They’re just always there with open arms,” one student said. Faculty members also communicate with students through Blackboard.

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

At the beginning of each academic year, the school meets with new students to assist them with their programs and to introduce the staff. The student service officer contacts students if they have not enrolled in the required courses or are not complying with the 72-hour rule. A university portal publishes the curricula, required sequence and syllabi for each major.

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.

Students participated in 10 forums last year with industry professionals. They also write for the Turabon Online website, contribute to the Sistema TV PBS affiliate, produce audio-visual capsules for Turabo Informa, produce programs for the web radio station and manage social-media accounts with Turabo Communications. The department and the Student Communicators Association produced the first University Media Convention in 2016-17, with forums on three contemporary media issues. The

association also takes the initiative to raise funds (through sales of food and T-shirts) and applies those to skills-building workshops, student competitions and showcases of student work.

- 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 annually publishes retention and graduation information on its website.**

The university maintains a platform that continuously updates enrollment and retention data. Each semester a university office compiles retention information. The department's retention rate was 72.4 percent in 2015 vs. 73.3 percent for the school and 71.2 percent for the university.

Overall evaluation: 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.

A detailed budget from 2014-2018 maps to the unit's strategic plan, which calls for investments in audio-visual technology and labs. Overall spending has increased modestly, although Puerto Rico's economic crisis contributed to a reduction in spending from 2015-16 to 2016-17.

Salaries, databases and library resources comprise 90 percent of the total operating budget, and that spending is flat over the four years. But increases in spending on equipment since 2015 reflect persuasive work on the part of the dean, who has successfully (and persistently) lobbied the chancellor for special allocations from his discretionary fund.

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 equipment budget has gone from \$4,372 in the 2014-15 academic year to \$51,634 in 2015-16, \$24,011 in 2016-17 and \$35,670 in 2017-18. Students pay a technology fee of \$450 per semester, and that helps sustain ongoing investment in current hardware and software.

An assessment of budgets from four departments indicates that the Department of Communications receives more money per student than do the Department of Social Work, Department of Physical Education (Education School) and Department of Industrial Engineering (Engineering School). The chancellor, vice chancellor and budget director all profess their admiration for the unit and their clear intention to provide for its needs.

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

The unit's building was constructed in the 1980s and remodeled in 2005. Wifi is available all over campus. Over the past five years, the university has worked to upgrade classrooms. Most are "smart" spaces equipped with air conditioning, a computer with Internet connection, a robust audio system, a screen and a projector. Students and faculty say that it's easy to plug in and use a variety of equipment.

At least one professor was especially resourceful during a power outage that occurred while the site team was on campus. He had planned to show the students some videos. He asked the students to move the tables and chairs to create a circle so that he could use his tablet to show them the material, and they continued the class without missing a beat.

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 department's communications lab, which features 20 fully equipped iMacs and a well-stocked equipment cabinet and editing room, is the heart of the school. Many students describe it as their home away from home. Gear available to students includes professional DSLR and video cameras, lighting kits and even a drone.

The radio lab occupies a highly visible location in a standalone structure near a popular outdoor café, and nearly \$100,000 to double its capacity and update audio equipment has been raised through university allocations and grants.

The department recently constructed its own TV studio to supplement one that's available to all university students. Capital spending is growing in the unit, with new equipment expected for the TV studio and communications lab. The site team reviewed shipping details for cameras, lenses, teleprompters, lighting accessories, mics and more – including acoustical treatments for the new TV studio – all scheduled to arrive shortly after the site visit, on Feb. 16.

Students consistently report that they have the tools they need, and that they have no trouble accessing labs when they need to.

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

Library resources comprise roughly one-third of the department's overall budget, and spending has remained consistent since 2014.

Students and faculty have access to numerous quiet and private study locations, as well as separate rooms that house special collections and meeting space. At the time of the site team visit, several of these collections spaces were being repaired after water damaged the library building during Hurricane Maria. The vice chancellor of information resources reported that no collections were damaged.

The university subscribes to numerous databases and journals, all of them available in the Virtual Library. Services include GALE Academic OneFile, ProQuest Central, Sage Premier, and OmniFile Full Text Mega. Films on demand makes thousands of titles available to students, and Communications and Mass Media Complete provides for more than 770 titles.

Overall evaluation: 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 department stays connected with alumni using its own social media channels and the university's alumni program and portal. Alumni – some of whom graduated many years ago – note that they are still in frequent touch with faculty via text, email and social. Faculty members reach out to check on them, and they regularly turn to faculty for support and ideas. Several graduates of the bachelor's degree program signed up for the new master's program, based largely on their ongoing relationship with the department and its people.

Alumni are among members of a departmental advisory board that was formed in 2016 to counsel on curriculum and tools, review student feedback, employ students and ensure that the unit's practices are current and relevant.

The department has collaborated with alumni on several projects, including a Todos por los Niños (2017), a TV program for children. From 2015-17, an alumni group used the unit's radio lab to produce a sports program called Sports Town in partnership with faculty and staff technicians. In 2016-17, faculty mentored Pazos Media Group alumni in the making of a multimedia entrepreneurship project that promoted human values.

Innovation and entrepreneurship are growing elements of programs across the university. The Department of Communications has supported entrepreneurial alumni efforts such as GeekZpot, a multimedia project aimed at the tech community (<https://geekzpot.net>).

- 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 Department of Communications hosted more than 50 on-site professional and public-service activities between 2010 and 2016. Among those were filmmaking, scriptwriting, radio and editing workshops; and hosting cartoonists, public-relations executives, journalists, authors and photographers as guest speakers.

Faculty from other schools on campus noted what a point of pride it is for students across the university to have regular exposure to journalists they see on TV all the time. This is a source of both inspiration and prestige for the institution, they said.

- 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.**

Since 2010, one faculty member has served as a visiting professor in Ecuador and Mexico; consulted for institutes in Cuba; spoken at the Caguas Military Academy; and served as a panelist at the annual conference of the Association of Puerto Rican Journalists. Other faculty members regularly judge competitions and have evaluated curriculum at other communications schools. Unit faculty participate in five of the eight committees in the School of Social Sciences and Communication.

- 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.**

Student course work embraces public service in a number of ways. Public relations students, for example, support area nonprofits with campaign work to build awareness and engagement. Documentary filmmaking has exposed community issues such as human trafficking, domestic violence, natural disasters and emergency preparedness.

In 2016, the newspaper Metro published *La Voz Joven* (The Young Voice), a series of eight articles – each with its own audio-visual piece – written by communications students. The same year, nine students covered Puerto Rico's general elections for the newspaper *El Vocero*. The newspaper's editorial director, Juan Miguel Muñiz Guzmán, said before the Nov. 8 elections that the students were bringing important digital skills to *El Vocero*'s reporting.

"For us it is an honor to have the support of this group of talented young students from Turabo," Muñiz Guzmán said, calling their participation "an important part of our ambitious coverage."

In 2016, communications students joined a university-wide effort to "adopt" the nearby community of San Lorenzo, a neighborhood in nearby Navarro. Students from health, engineering and social work areas offered services to improve the community's wellness and structures. Communications students documented these efforts in multiple media.

Faculty are active in professional associations, including the International Communication Association, Directors Guild of America, Association for Hispanic Media and Marketing Communication Research, the Association of Puerto Rico Journalists, and the Overseas Press Club of Puerto Rico. Prof. Luis Rosario Albert serves as secretary of the board of the Latino Public Radio Consortium.

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

Unit Director María Vera Hernández hosts high school students most Fridays to offer them a glimpse into communications careers and the benefits of this program. Since 2010, several members of the faculty have spoken at area high schools. And the department sometimes includes high school students in film festivals and photo exhibitions that it hosts. Among those were the Cine Turabo Festival UT with Gautier Benítez High School in 2011-12 and 2013-14.

At least one student attributed her enrollment in the program to the department's participation in the university's annual Open House Day, which provides prospective students the chance to review the University of Turabo and the Department of Communications facilities while interacting with faculty and students.

Overall evaluation: 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:

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)?*

The Department of Communications’ assessment plan incorporates the University of Turabo’s assessment plan and the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies. The department’s two assessment coordinators work with the director to administer the assessments and to analyze and prepare reports of the results.

The department’s faculty participate in the process by completing the university’s mandated course-level assessment reports, administering entry and exit exams that focus on the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies and surveying practice (internship) supervisors on the degree to which students demonstrate each of the 12 values and competencies.

A program-level assessment report is prepared by the department director and submitted to the dean. The latter report is used to make curricular changes and is part of a process of continual improvement.

- *How has the unit verified that core and required courses cover all 12 of ACEJMC’s professional values and competencies?*

The Department of Communications’ program-level assessment report maps each of the department’s courses to one or more of the 12 values and competencies and provides information on course and program goals, objectives and competencies, assessment tools, expected and actual results and recommendations for improvement. The report also addresses whether curricular changes yielded the desired outcomes.

- *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 addition to mapping each of the department’s courses to one or more of the 12 values and competencies, the syllabus for each course incorporates as learning objectives one or more appropriate values or competencies. For example, among the learning objectives in the required course, COMM 205 Communication Theory are “Understand and apply the national and international principles and laws of freedom of speech and freedom of the press” and “Think critically, creatively and independently.”

Each semester each of the department’s faculty members is required to submit a plan for the semester. The plan includes a syllabus that is reviewed by the department director.

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?*

The Department of Communication uses four direct measures to assess the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies.

A multiple choice entry-level test is administered in the required course COMM 205 Communications Theory at the beginning of a student's academic career and a similar instrument is administered at the end of the program in the required course COMM 450 Practicum.

In the practicum course, students' supervisors complete two evaluations—one midway through the semester and another at the end of the semester. The supervisors use a five-point scale to evaluate students on each of the 12 ACEJMC competencies. The results of the evaluations are compiled and analyzed by the department director and dean and are used to make curricular changes.

Every two years, a faculty committee evaluates portfolios produced by students in their practicum. Although it does not specifically mention the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies, the form used by the evaluators has items related to writing quality and whether the portfolio materials indicate that the student demonstrates an understanding of core journalism values.

Work produced in capstone courses also is evaluated by industry professionals. Although the instrument does not use the values and competencies language verbatim, it does assess the student's ability to apply current tools and technologies, think creatively and independently, write correctly and clearly in a style appropriate to the medium and demonstrate an understanding of diversity and professional ethics and principles.

- *What indirect measures does it use, where and when?*

The Department of Communications uses the results of a focus group convened by the university's Office of Assessment to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the program, whether it effectively communicated important deadlines, activities and opportunities and whether the students felt they were being prepared to enter the profession.

The department also uses retention and graduation data to assess its performance and areas in which it needs to improve.

- *Are these measures effective for assessing ACEJMC's professional values and competencies?*

With these multiple direct and indirect measures, the Department of Communications is effectively assessing each of the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies.

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?*

The department director and two assessment coordinators are responsible for collecting and analyzing the results of each of the instruments used in the process. Each measure has an expected outcome threshold. When that threshold is not met, the faculty use the results to make changes to the curriculum and/or the instrument to make it easier for evaluators to accurately assess whether students have demonstrated each of the values or competencies.

For example, the radio capstone evaluators said the students needed to improve their pronunciation and delivery. In consultation with the department's advisory board, the course instructor added assignments that would help students improve their locution.

- *What specific values and competencies had graduating classes not mastered satisfactorily?*

Because 100 percent of the students attained a passing grade on the exit exam, 37 percent more than the percentage of students who did so on the entry exam, it was difficult to determine which values and competencies the students had not mastered.

Additionally, 100 percent of the students earned an A or a B in their practicum and their supervisors were satisfied or very satisfied with the students' performance and did not identify a specific area the students had not mastered.

- *How does the unit decide how to address these areas of concern and what actions did it take to do so?*

The Department of Communications takes assessment seriously. It is conscientious not only in the collection of data but also in its analysis, using it to continually improve its course offerings.

Each of the department's full-time faculty members actively participates in the assessment process and makes adjustments to his or her classes strengthening areas that need work.

- *How does the unit evaluate whether its actions overcame the weaknesses in student learning and what were the results?*

Because the Department of Communications routinely assesses student performance on each of the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies, evaluating whether its actions to overcome weaknesses were effective is a straightforward process. The department compares the assessment results of one period to the results in the next and quickly ascertains whether the actions it took were effective.

- *Was the program of data analysis and action effective for identifying and overcoming unsatisfactory student learning?*

The program of data analysis and action was effective in identifying and overcoming unsatisfactory student learning.

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

Department alumni are active members of the department's advisory board, which meets at least once a semester. Alumni also serve as practice (internship) supervisors and provide suggestions for improving the curriculum and instruction.

Additionally, every two years, the department surveys its alumni, using an instrument includes the 12 values and competencies and asks whether the person felt the program prepared them for their career.

In both 2015 and 2017 the results of the alumni survey indicated at least 90 percent of the participants felt they were well-prepared on each of the values and competencies.

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

The Department of Communications includes members of the journalism and mass communication professions in several of its assessments—practicum evaluation, portfolio evaluation and alumni survey. The department also routinely taps members of the professions to teach courses and offer suggestions for improving the curriculum.

Overall evaluation: COMPLIANCE

PART III: Summary by site visit team

1) Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the unit.

Strengths

- A culture of respect, collaboration, caring and mutual support – “a family”
- Highly motivated, committed students – many of them bilingual
- Hard-working faculty with a strong mix of experience and a deep and genuine affection for their students
- Strong leadership from a caring dean and director
- Support of top administrators at the university
- Remarkable resilience

Weaknesses

- Minimal writing program for film students

Opportunities

- Numerous people, from the chancellor to faculty from other schools to alumni, suggested that Universidad del Turabo’s Department of Communications is on a path to surpass the larger and more established programs at other Puerto Rican institutions (University of Puerto Rico and Sagrado Corazon were both mentioned). Embracing that competition and “winning” are clear opportunities.
- Become a center for original programming that could be of value throughout Latin America. Faculty from other programs expressed great anticipation for the department’s new TV lab, and the potential for powerful stories that can spring from Universidad del Turabo.
- Continue growing and investing in Puerto Rico’s under-privileged but highly motivated populations.

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

N/A

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

N/A

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

N/A

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

N/A

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.

N/A

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 adequate. The site team appreciated the format with executive summaries.