Medical Sciences Campus

Universidad *de* Puerto Rico

Dr. Wanda T. Maldonado

Interim Chancellor

October 13, 2021

2020-2021
MSC Self-Study Report
for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education
Summary of Findings

Agenda

- **Middle States Commission on Higher Education Overview**

- **Self-Study Process Review**

- **Self-Study Report – Important Findings**

- **Self-Study Visit Process**

- **After the Self-Study Visit**

Background

01
The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that defines, maintains, and promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources.

02
Because MSCHE is an institutional accreditor, they examine institutions as a whole, rather than specific programs within institutions.

03
MSCHE accreditation is a pre-requirement to programmatic accreditation (i.e. one is dependent on the other).
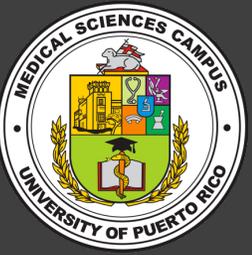
7 Standards & 15 Affiliation Requirements

- **Standard 1- Mission and Planning**
- **Standard 2- Ethics, Integrity, Diversity, Learning Environment**
- **Standard 3- Academic programs' coherence and rigor**
- **Standard 4- Student support systems**
- **Standard 5- Student and Academic Programs' assessment**
- **Standard 6- Finance, Budgeting, and Planning**
- **Standard 7- Governance**
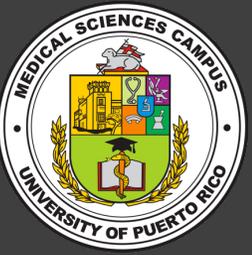
What is the goal of Institutional Accreditation?

✓ **Institutional improvement is the most important goal.**

✓ Achieve national recognition.

✓ Receive federal financial aid and grants.

What is needed to be accredited?

Meet the minimum requirements for each of the standards, requirements, and criteria.

It is better to meet all standards at a minimum than to be outstanding in some standards, but not meet others.

For most, but not all accreditation agencies, MSCHE included, the most important purpose of accreditation is **for the institution to achieve its mission.**

MSCHE: Mission-centered continuous improvement is what they are looking for.

Self-Study Process Review

Steps in the Self-Study Process

- ✓ Appoint the Self-Study Steering Committee

- ✓ Develop the Self-Study Design

- ✓ Host the Self-Study Preparation Visit

- ✓ Implement the Self-Study Process

- ✓ Write the Self-Study Report

- ✓ Host the Preliminary Visit

- ✓ Submit the Self-Study Report and Evidence Inventory

- ✓ Host the Self-Study Visit

MSCHE Self-Study Visit Orientation Webpage

https://rcm2.rcm.upr.edu/start/

Self-Study Report – Important Findings

Institutional Priorities

- **PRIORITY I. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY.**
  - **This priority area is highlighted in the strategic plan in Pillar IV: Fiscal Strengthening and Sustainability, Effectiveness in Administrative Management.**

- **PRIORITY 2. RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT.**
  - **This priority area is highlighted in the strategic plan in Pillar II: Research and Innovation Management and Pillar IV: Fiscal Strengthening and Sustainability, Effectiveness in Administrative Management.**

- **PRIORITY 3. ASSESSMENT CULTURE AND EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS.**
  - This priority area is highlighted in the strategic plan in **Pillar I: Academic Quality and Innovation.**

Standard I - Mission and Goals

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

- **Institution's mission statement provides a framework for prioritized budgeting and planning, and ongoing self-evaluation.**

  - The MSC Strategic Plan 2017-2022 was approved by the Academic Senate on June 19, 2017 **(S1C1.1 MSC Strategic Plan 2017-2022)**.

  - <u>**Mission**</u>: Prepare health professionals by offering professional, undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate, and continuing education academic programs to improve the health of those residing in Puerto Rico and abroad and strengthen patient care services through knowledge and innovation generated by the research activity.

  - <u>**Vision**</u>: A state-of-the art academic institution internationally recognized for its teaching, research, and service in the healthcare field.
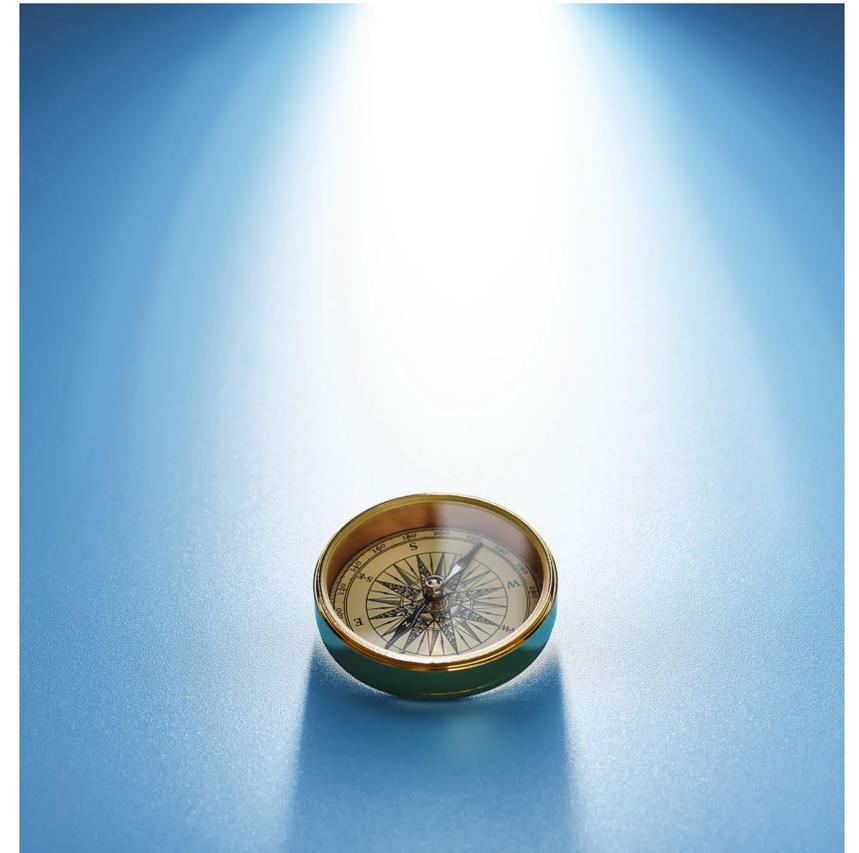
Standard I – Mission and Goals

- The Strategic Plan's goals are clearly stated and trace a roadmap for achievement of the mission.
  - **Pillar 1**: **Academic Quality and Innovation** aligned to Education Environment and Technological Culture.
  - **Pillar 2**: **Research and Innovation Management** aligned to Research and Creation.
  - **Pillar 3**: **Physical and Technological Infrastructure** aligned to Technological Culture and Sustainable Management
  - **Pillar 4**: **Fiscal Strengthening and Sustainability** aligned to Efficiency in Administrative Management.

Standard I - Mission and Goals

- The mission and goals are still relevant, as demonstrated by the ongoing pursue of academic excellence, increased research and technology, and self-sustainability.

- Each of the six schools of the MSC have a Strategic Plan aligned to the MSC's Plan.

- Resources are allocated based on the schools' Strategic Plans.

Standard I - Mission and Goals

- **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT**

  - Strengthen the systematic collection of data and review of the MSC Strategic Plan through the development of a formal institutional Strategic Planning Committee.

  - Better dissemination of the achievements and strategic plan evaluation results to the campus community at large through the publication of yearly strategic plan status reports.

Standard II - Ethics and Integrity

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

- The MSC is faithful to its mission and assigns priority to a diverse and respectful campus climate.

- The MSC is committed to the practice of academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights.

- The policies and procedures provide for fair and impartial practices where conflicts of interest are not accepted.

- There is a clearly defined due process to handle misconduct and conflict.

- The institution complies with all local and federal regulations.

Standard II - Ethics and Integrity

- **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

  - ✓ Ombudsperson office annual reports: Further efforts should be made to provide specific data regarding how inquiries and complaints were resolved.

  - ✓ Diversity Goals: Although diversity is part of the MSC values and is supported through policies, processes, offices, and activities, with the purpose of further supporting MSC diversity, specific goals will be included as part of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan.

# Standard III- Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations

✓ The MSC has numerous and diverse academic offerings which are congruent and aligned with the institutional mission and characterized by academic rigor and coherence and with higher education expectations.
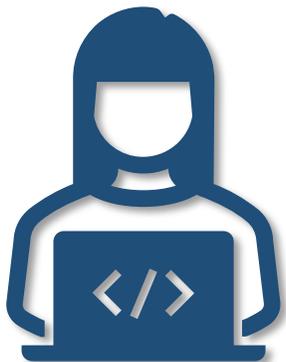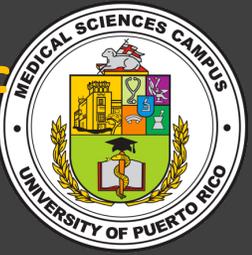
# Standard III- Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience
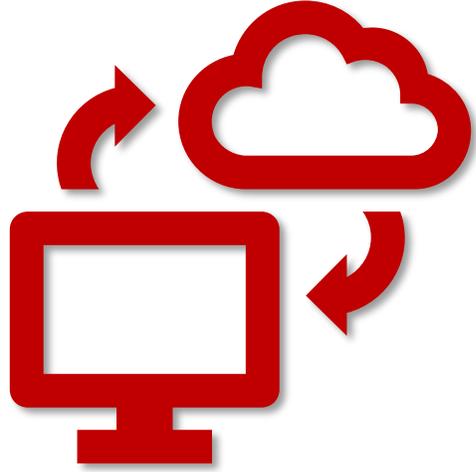
✓The UPR and the MSC requires that all programs be continuously monitored and evaluated through accreditation or through the continuous monitoring of educational effectiveness every 5 years.

✓Each school has a systematic plan of evaluation.

✓The schools' and programs' assessment plans are closely tied to the competencies expected of graduates.

✓Programs use assessment results for the continuous improvement of their academic offerings.
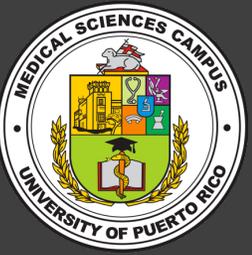
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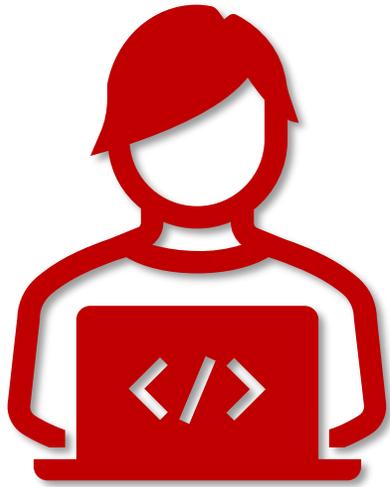
✓ Student learning experiences are designed, delivered, and assessed by competent and qualified faculty.

✓ Students at the MSC have ample opportunities to engage in research.
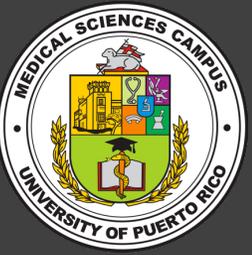
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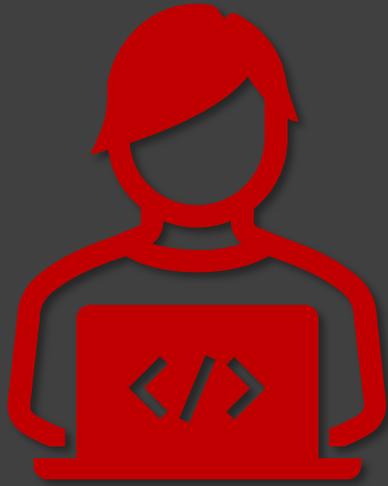
- **Areas of Improvement**

- All the official schools and academic programs are required to review and update their respective webpages.

- Restructuring of accreditation oversight by the Deanship of Academic Affairs of the different campuses.
    - Since July 1, 2021, the MSC has:
        - Restructured the Accreditation Division of the Deanship of Academic Affairs.
        - All programs have been reporting to the deanship all communication with accrediting agencies.
        - All programs submitted a status of accreditation, and this will continue to be requested yearly.
        - A risk assessment was requested from programs that have pending accreditation visits during this academic year with the purpose of implementing the necessary changes to be in compliance with accreditation requirements.
   - Central Administration has been informed of accreditation risks.
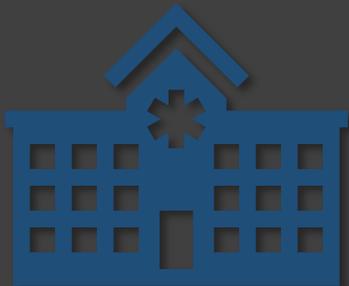
Standard IV - Support of the Student Experience

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

- The MSC has a recruitment program which provides multiple activities to attract the best and most qualified candidates.

- The MSC provides prospective and current students with accurate and most complete information. Consumer information can be found at the MSC webpage in the link "Información al Consumidor"

  - https://rcm2.rcm.upr.edu/

Standard IV- Support of the Student Experience

- The MSC has rigorous admission policies for graduate and undergraduate students and offers comprehensive support services to retain and graduate the best students.

- The MSC offers administrative and academic support to students from the application process, through the years of study, until graduation.
  - There are multiple support services for students including tutoring, academic counseling, mentoring, wellness activities, and personal counseling.

Standard IV - Support of the Student Experience

- **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT**

  - The hours of operations of student services offices could be extended to better serve the students enrolled in the academic programs offered in the evenings.

  - The MSC should identify additional sources of funding for the improvement and expansion of student services.
    - There is an approved plan to relocate all student services offices at the MSC Main Building.

Standard V - Educational Effectiveness Assessment

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

- The MSC has ongoing and relevant assessment of the achievements of institutional, school, and program educational goals in fulfilling the MSC's mission and vision as a specialized institution of higher education in the health sciences on the island of Puerto Rico.

- The institution has developed an assessment culture, with plans that have led to a full cycle of findings that have been used and continue to be used to standardize the decision-making processes
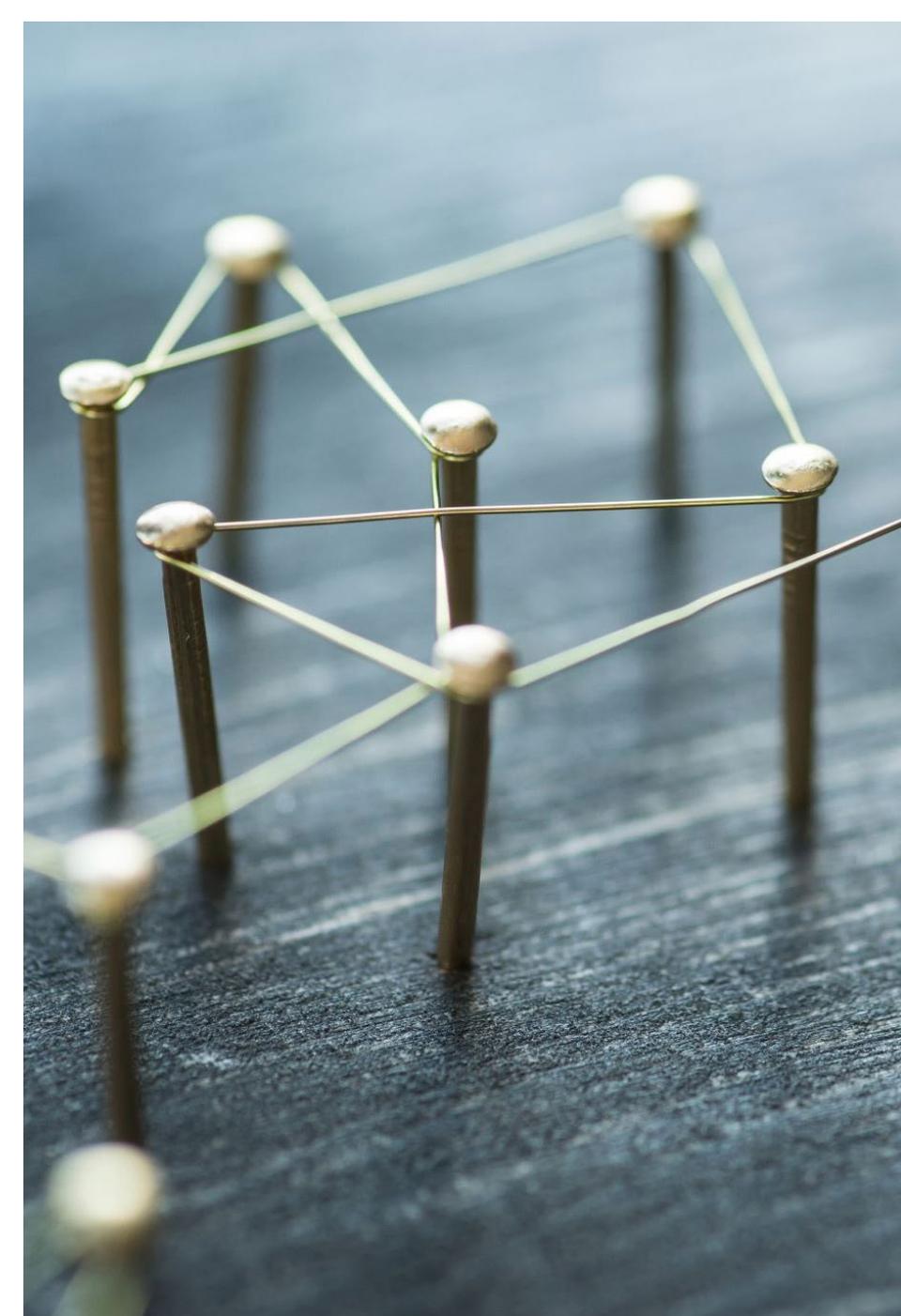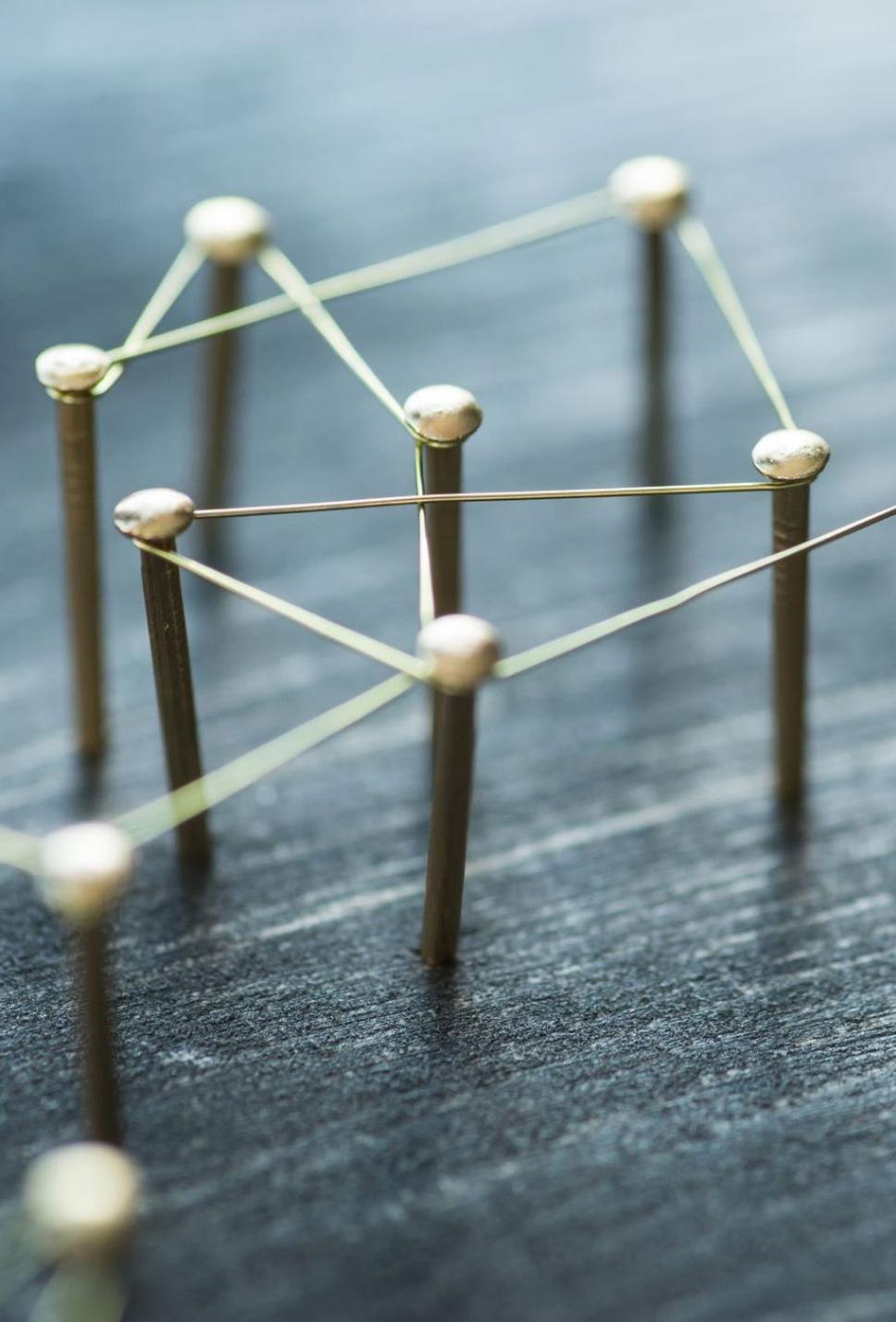
Standard V - Educational Effectiveness Assessment

- Programs use assessment results to improve and modify the curricula and the students' learning experiences.

- Continuous monitoring of outcomes is a priority to assure that all the programs stay focused on the implementation, evaluation, and success indicators of their plans.

- Every year, the MSC provides professional development activities through the DAA and other units as well as through each school.

Standard V - Educational Effectiveness Assessment

- **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- There is a need to further systematize data gathering, recording, and reporting for institutional and student learning assessments throughout the campus.

- The importance of the annual report updates for assessment should be emphasized and further review of data requested in alignment with the MSC and student learning assessment plans.

Standard VII - Governance, Leadership, and Administration

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

- The UPR has a clearly articulated governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision making by each constituency, including the governing body, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

- The Board of Governors is responsible for the fulfillment of the institutional mission and goals, has a fiduciary responsibility toward the institution, and is ultimately accountable for the academic quality, planning, and fiscal well-being of the institution.

- There are numerous participatory mechanisms in the institutional governance that provide opportunities for the faculty and students to elect representatives at the different decision-making levels of the MSC and the UPR system.

Standard VII - Governance, Leadership, and Administration

- **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

  - The mechanisms for finding all the institutional policies and regulations should be simplified.

  - There is a need to systematize the evaluation of all academic administrators.

# Standard VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

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

- The planning processes and resources are aligned and have demonstrated to be sufficient to achieve and support the institutional goals, objectives, and strategies while also allowing the campus to respond to opportunities and challenges, such as, the COVID-19 Pandemic.

    - An example of alignment of planning and budgeting is the enhanced information services and technology infrastructures, both of which are up-to-date and adequately support the academic and administrative operations as well as distance education.

- As one of the institutional priorities, to adjust for both the reduction of local government funds allocated to the UPR system and the critical financial scenario that the island is experiencing, the MSC has implemented various cost containment measures and increased external funding sources.

# Standard VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

- The MSC continues to be successful and competitive in securing external funding, both through grant awards and increase number of clinical services sites where faculty provides services, along with new sales of services, such as, online non-degree granting academic programs, which together account for 70% of the institution's total budget for FY 2021.

- For the Self-Study year, 2020-2021, the MCS had a financial base that was adequate to support the institutional purpose and programs and ensure financial stability.
  - This AY the budget decrease has presented a challenge, but the MSC is working with UPR Central Administration to ensure sufficient budget to continue running all its operations.
  - At the same time, the MSC is implementing more sustainable projects including that all DECEP units within the MSC must ensure at least one course that will bring moneys.
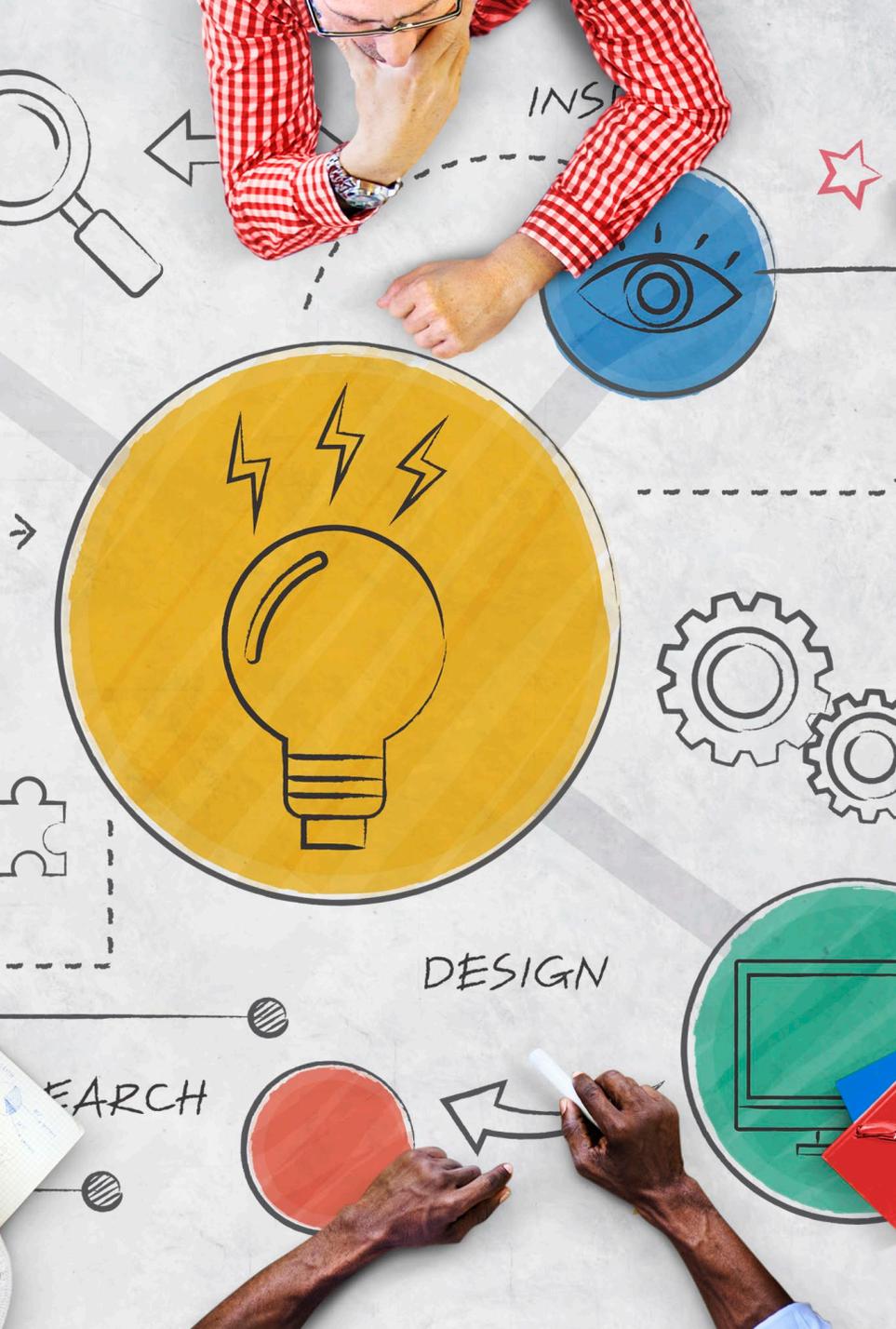
Standard VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

- The MSCHE action after the Monitoring Report stated that the MSC must provide further evidence of the **sufficiency of planning and budgeting** processes to fulfill its mission and goals, and to support its educational purposes and programs, thus the MSC has implemented the following:
    - Restructuring of the Assessment Cycle at the MSC utilizing a **Plan-Do-Study-Act** model so that the **Institutional Assessment Committee** works towards operationalizing the Strategic Plan into an Institutional Effectiveness Plan, and it is communicated to the Stakeholders and outcomes are compiled yearly.
        - This committee will also revise the Institutional Effectiveness and the Student Learning Assessment Plan yearly to ensure the objectives are up to date and continue to be relevant and change accordingly.

    - Development and Implementation of a **Strategic Planning Committee** so that the outcomes of the plan, provided by the Institutional Assessment Committee, can be analyzed by the members of the academic community, and decisions about priorities of the Plan and action plans for those areas found underperforming can be made.

    - Yearly Planning and Budgeting meetings with the Chancellors Executive Committee and the Finance and Budgeting Task Force to revise and approve the allocation of funding to the strategic planning pillars.
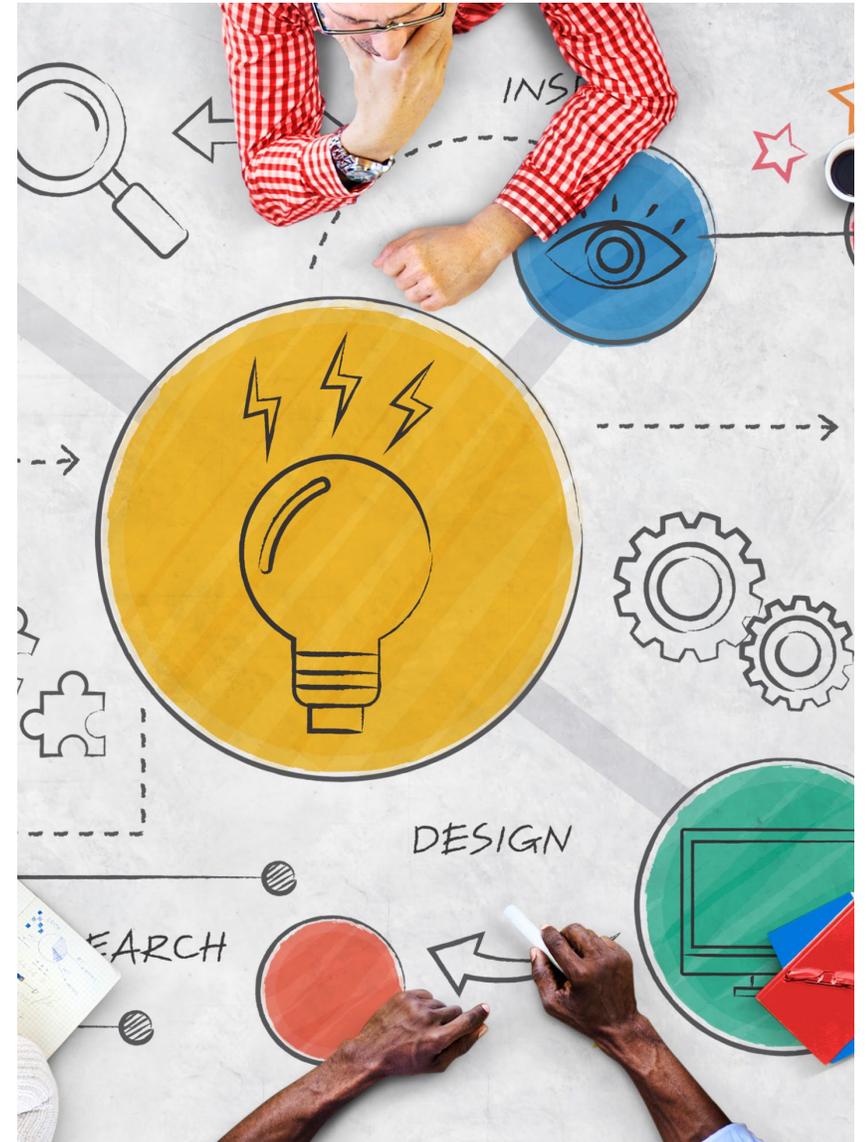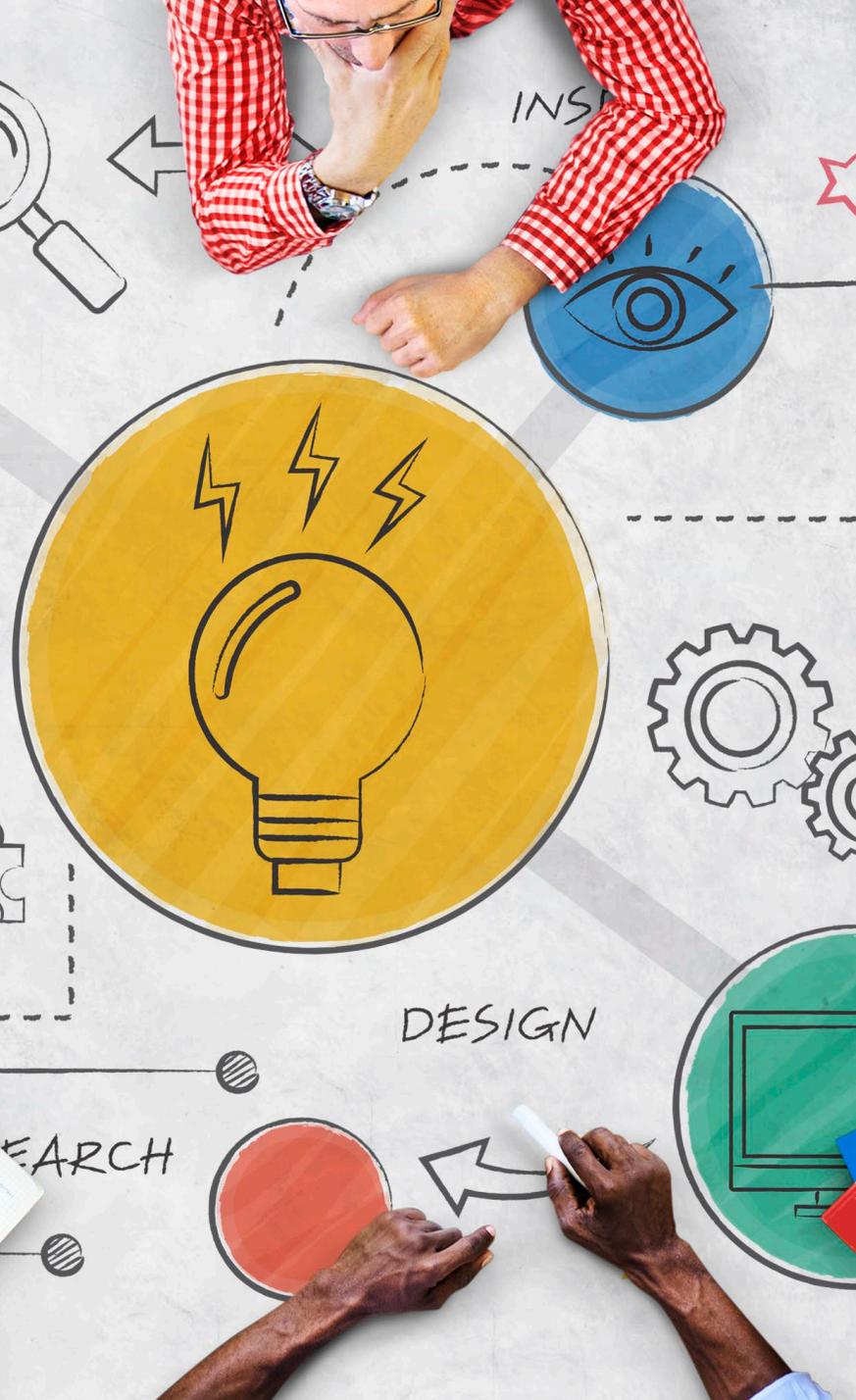
# Standard VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

- The 2020 Financial Audit stated that the accounting and financial reporting operations of certain units of the University, specifically the Medical Sciences Campus and the Mayaguez Campus, are not able to detect or prevent accounting errors effectively nor efficiently which resulted in multiple audit adjustments.

- **To resolve this, the MSC has done as follows**: Evaluate the accounting closing process to make it more agile, responsive and less time-consuming, identify areas of strengths and vulnerabilities, develop short and long-term action plans to resolve the vulnerabilities and implement the necessary changes. Examples of actions taken by the Taskforce include:
  - Update software services to communicate with ORACLE.
  - The Office Information Services new director has ample knowledge with the Oracle programs (Financing Platform at the UPR) and one of the immediate plans is to maximize its use to minimize paper transactions.
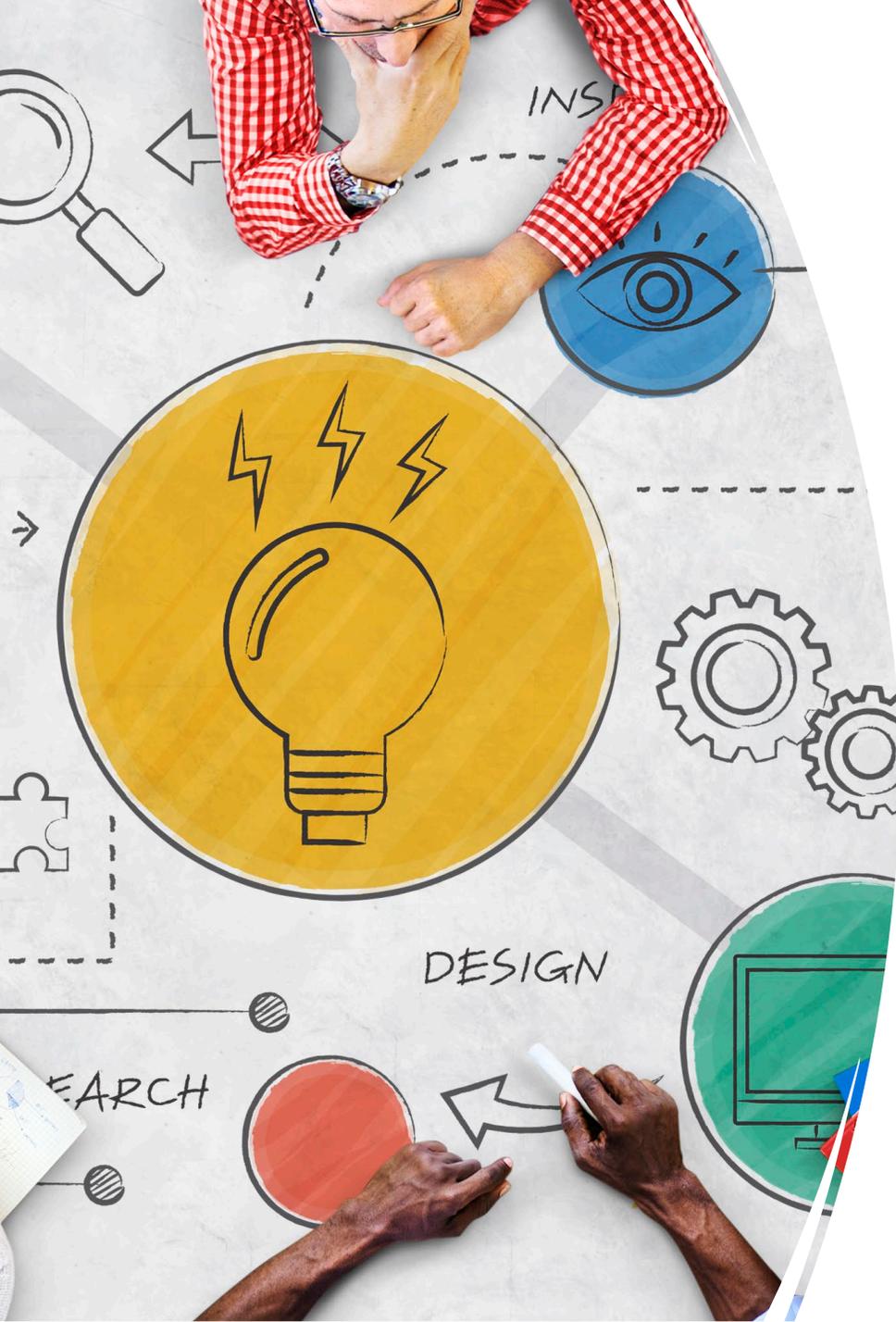
Standard VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

- Develop and implement a "lines of communication" flowchart to improve communication within the MSC budget-finance-accounting areas.

- Develop training for administrators with the first one scheduled for November 2021.

- Develop flowcharts of each of the processes within the accounting closing process which include deadlines and responsible individuals.
  - These flowcharts will be contained in an Operational Manual of the Financial Closing Cycle.
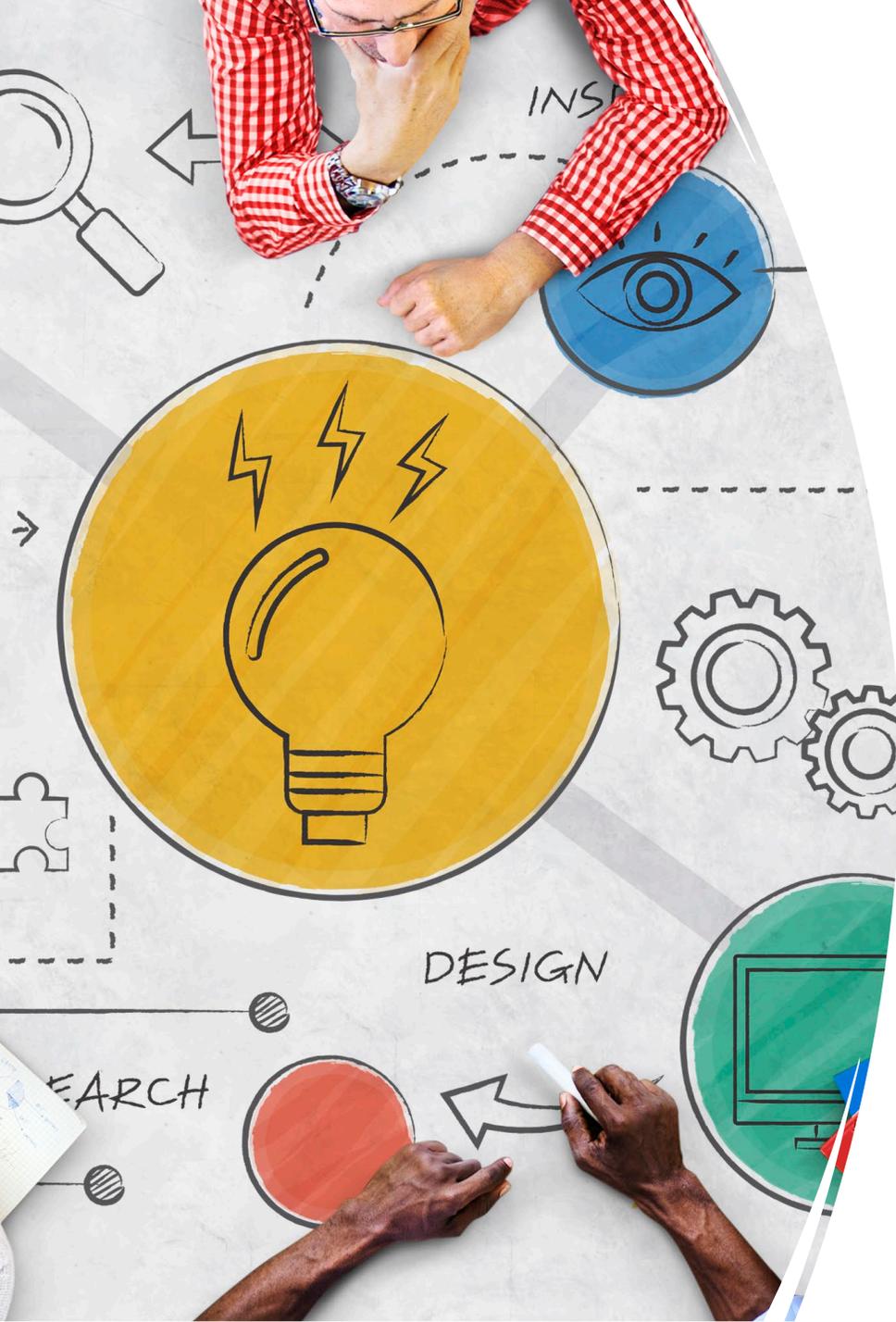
Standard VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

- Use the Planner Microsoft App as a project management tool.

- The outcomes that will be measured include:
  - Timeliness of the financial reports submitted from each of the administrators.
  - Accuracy of these reports.
  - Measurement of number of errors and description of the types of errors.
  - Timeliness and accuracy of the information submitted to the Central Administration Budget and Finance Offices for the development of the Single Audit.
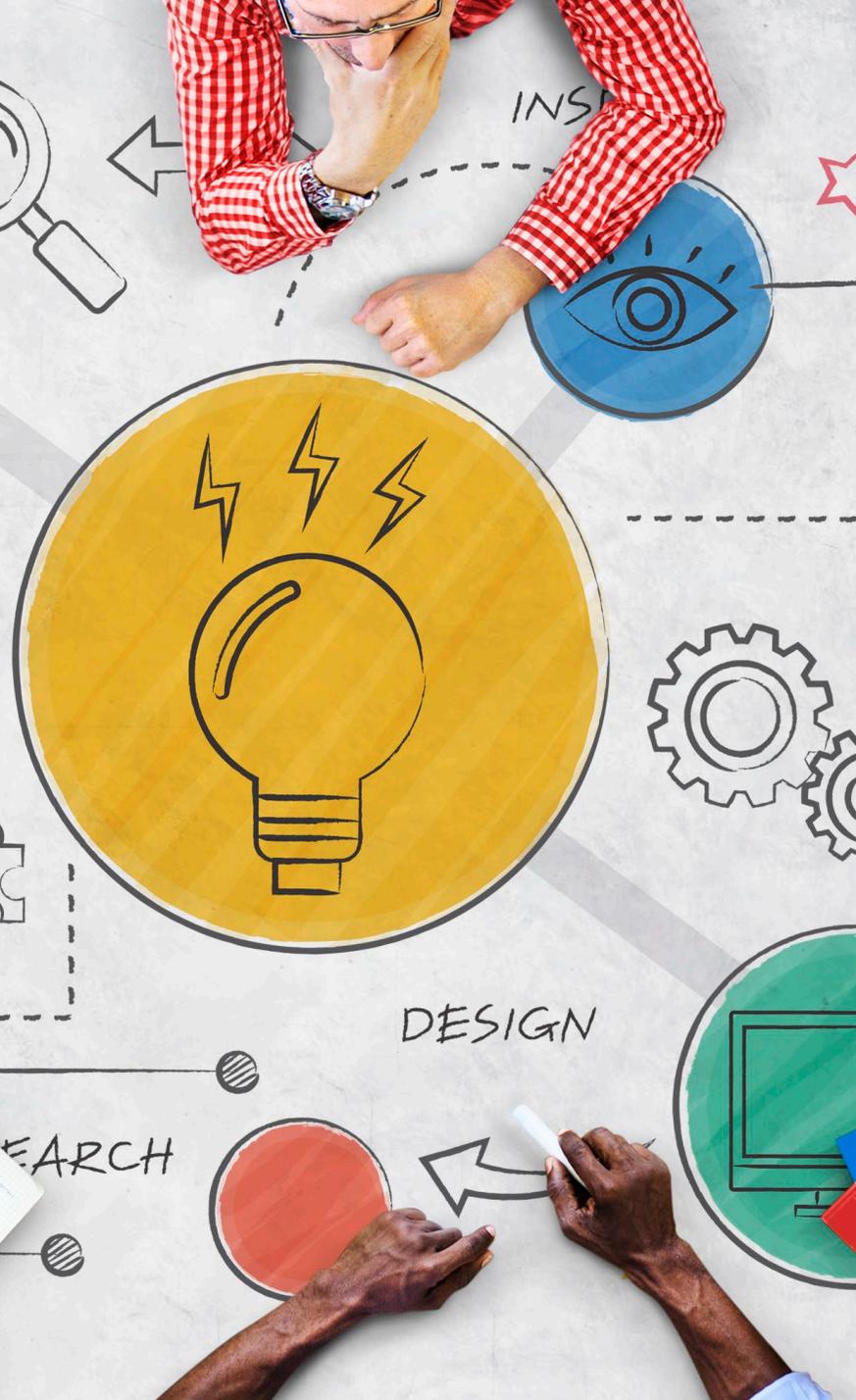
Standard VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

- **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

  - Expand sources of external funds to ensure financial stability of the MSC.

  - Request that university authorities redesign and expedite the special permission process for hiring of core faculty and essential non-teaching employees to comply with the MSC mission and goals.

  - Continue with the plan to improve accounting and financial operations and continue the use of an online project management tool for improvement of communication.

Summary

At the moment, the MSC complies with the 7 standards for accreditation and 15 requirements for affiliation.

The current financial situation due to the UPR budget cuts by the Fiscal Control Board is the one vulnerability.

The UPR Central Administration has been informed of the situation and are working diligently to resolve the issue.

The UPR Central Administration and Board of Governors representatives will be the ones that will need to assure the MSCHE that funding will be sufficient to continue all operations.

Self-Study Visit Process

Self-Study Visit Process

- The Self-Study Visit will take place on **November 7-10** through the Zoom platform.

- Team of Peer Evaluators will revise the Self-Study Report and all the evidence submitted.

- The Team meets with the academic community representatives and will ask questions to confirm that the MSC complies with each of the accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation.

- The Team will develop an exit report for the MSC regarding the MSC reaffirmation based on the documents provided before the visit, during the visit, and the responses received.

- The Team will read the exit report to the Chancellor and those participating in the Self-Study Visit.

After the Self-Study Visit

After the Self-Study Visit Process

- The Team writes a full report on its findings.

- This report will be sent to the MSC for evaluation and response to findings.

- Both, the report and the MSC response, will be submitted to the MSCHE for final evaluation and appropriate action.

- The Commission has the final decision-making authority regarding reaffirmation of accreditation.

Questions?