



FIRST DRAFT

Self Study Report

Submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education



October 6, 2022



October 6, 2022

Mrs. Melissa G. Hardin, PhD
Vice President, Institutional Field Relations
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680

Dear Dr. Hardin:

Greetings. Antillean Adventist University has completed the Self-Study Draft 2022 to be submitted to the chair of the visiting evaluation team. We are expecting an appraisal of readiness meeting with the chair in November and a site visit by the evaluation team in March 2023.

We have benefitted from the self-study process and expect an evaluation visit that is helpful and stimulates improvement. The Institution reaffirms its commitment to meet the Commission's standards of excellence.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Myrna Colon", is written over the typed name.

Myrna Colon, PhD
President

Enclosure



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Myrna Colón, PhD
President

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Acronyms

Acronym	Name/Title
AAA	Adventist Accreditation Association
AAU	Antillean Adventist University
ACT	American College Test
APT	Advanced Placement Test
CCNE	Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
CLTR	Center for Learning and Technology Resource
CoARC	Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care
DDE	Department of Distance Education
DRA	Department of Religious Affairs
ECP	Executive Committee of the President
ERE	Emergency Remote Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FH	Faculty Handbook
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HEERF	Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund
IP	Institutional Priorities
ITS	Department of Information Systems and Technology
MA	Master Degree
MPSD	Master Plan for Spiritual Development
MSCHE	Middle States Commission on Higher Education
NSSE	National Survey of Student Engagement
SAT	Scholastic Assessment Test

Acronym	Name/Title
SP	Strategic Plan
SPC	Strategic Planning Committee
SSD	Self-Study Design
SSS	Student Support Service
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TRP	Technological Resources Policy
UAC	University Administrative Council
VP	Vice-President

Executive Summary

Antillean Adventist University (AAU) is a liberal art, non-profit, privately owned institution supported by the membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the Puerto Rican Union of Seventh-day Adventists, its parent organization. Located near the heart of the city of Mayagüez, AAU serves approximately 843 students from Puerto Rico, the USA mainland, Central and South America, among other nations. The student population is about 90% Hispanic.

Our institution has been accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) since 1978, our last evaluation being in 2013. The current self-study report includes data from 2013 to 2022 and will be evaluated in 2023. As a requirement for our affirmation as an accredited institution, a self-study process was initiated in 2014 by a campus community with a sense of accountability and commitment to provide optimal service and quality education. What follows are major findings of the self-study process.

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

AAU's mission statement has been reviewed yearly, but the University believes the mission, as stated, defines its purpose and guiding principles. As such, it has not undergone any changes during the past 10 years. Through surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, AAU has found that its strength is in its mission.

There are seven institutional goals that are aligned with the institution's mission statement and strategic plan. Goal #4 was incorporated in 2022 to specifically address student learning experiences and support from different sources.

Opportunities to Improvement. Continue to increase and systematize the dissemination of its mission, goals, and core values.

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

AAU has a Christian foundation; therefore, moral and ethical principles are highly valued and emphasized. Integrity is one of the institution's core values. Both ethics and integrity permeate its policies, procedures, promotions, and publications. The Institution complies with federal and state government regulations, regional and professional accreditations, as well as denominational requirements.

Opportunities to Improvement. Engage in a systematic process to update the institution's policies and procedures to ensure accuracy and relevancy.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

AAU's mission states that it "promotes the holistic formation of competent professionals committed to serving God and humanity." Therefore, the institution provides learning experiences that develop students' knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to serve others. The institution regularly evaluates its academic programs and faculty to ensure excellence and to comply with its mission and goals. Faculty have the required credentials,

experience, and commitment to the institution's mission. Faculty are provided monthly professional development to ensure students receive a quality education especially in the use of technology in the teaching learning process. Students are evaluated using a variety of assessment methods to gather data on student achievement. The institution's strategic plan aligns mission, goals, objectives, and assessments to achieve institutional effectiveness.

Opportunities to Improvement: Review academic programs to reduce completion time. Evaluate market trends to provide offerings based on need; and evaluate the online learning experiences, as well as the use of technology in different programs.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

AAU regularly collects data on student satisfaction to be able to meet students' academic needs. The following offices support student experiences at AAU: Admissions, Registrar, Counseling, Student Affairs, and Student Welfare, among others. There are various programs, organizations, activities, and resources that also support student experiences, such as: Trio Programs, student associations and clubs, sports, spiritual, community service activities, chaplaincy, and the learning and technology resource center. The Institution promotes its mission as a value-added component of its program offerings. A retention officer follows up on students' academic progress and provides resources to meet their needs until they have completed their academic program. Currently, the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs supervises admissions, recruitment, Trio programs, sports activities, retention, student associations, etc., to ensure an integrated approach of different departments to support student experiences.

Opportunities to Improvement. Create an integrated student support services structure with an assessment of services. Offer orientation on career opportunities.

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

AAU has an effectiveness assessment system for programs and student learning, serving as a guide for the institution's planning and decision making. This system ensures that human, financial, and physical resources are used effectively to meet the organization's goals and sustain development. AAU's Guide for Institutional Effectiveness for 2017-2022 is organized into four sections: Section I - Institutional Effectiveness; Section II—Strategic Planning; Section III - Institutional Effectiveness; Section IV-Guide for the Effectiveness of Academic Programs. Every academic department has an Assessment Coordinator responsible for coordinating meetings with faculty to discuss findings and develop action plans. There is a budget allocating funds for services that include: faculty development, technology infrastructure, and tutoring services.

Opportunities to Improvement. Maintain the resources needed for faculty to be involved in the assessment process; develop mechanisms to further support, collect, organize, and disseminate research and assessment results; and promote faculty involvement in research based on assessment data.

Standard VI - Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

AAU's strategic plan integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. AAU's assessment system provides data that contributes to updated and relevant planning for academic and institutional improvement.

The Institution has been financially stable for the past five years. It has been able to comply with the strategic plan despite the economic crisis in our country. It has maintained an accounting transaction registration system that complies with all the standards of the regulatory institutions; this is evidenced by external audits demonstrating its commitment to integrity in financial management.

During the past years, AAU has been able to improve its infrastructure and services to meet student and personnel needs. Acquiring the latest technology for the teaching-learning process and services contributes to institutional satisfaction and achievement. The construction and remodeling of new buildings, including the simulation hospital, fitness center, guest house, and classrooms, among other structural improvements, have also contributed to institutional satisfaction.

Opportunities to Improvement. Create new programs to meet the needs of the current population and thus increase revenues for the University; design an aggressive recruitment plan that includes international students; and create a plan to tap on external resources for institutional improvement.

Standard VII – Governance, Leadership, and Administration

AAU has a clearly defined and transparent governance structure with a constitution, bylaws, and regulations that define roles and responsibilities at each level. Most of the Board of Trustees do not have any employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The governing body is transparent and clearly discloses required information to accrediting agencies, as well as the federal and state government. The Board of Trustees receives training regarding their responsibilities, the difference between governance and management, and the accreditation process. AAU's Board has sub-committees with specific responsibilities. These sub-committees are the following: Academic, Planning and Development, Student Services, Finances, Religious Affairs, and Audit. The Board of Trustees at large discusses recommendations of the sub-committees and casts their vote of approval.

Opportunities to Improvement: Review and revise an evaluation system for institutional management and governance effectiveness; and design a professional growth plan for departmental administrators and vice-presidents.

Self-Study Process

In early 2020, the President appointed a Chair and Co-chairs to lead the Steering Committee. They participated in the MSCHE Self-Study Institute held in September 2020. The updated Steering Committee consists of the following members:

- Dr. Myrna Colón, President
- Prof. Yolanda Pérez, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, MSCHE, AOL; Chair
- Dr. Digna Williams, Interim Vice President for Planning and Development; Co-Chair
- Prof. Luis Acobe, Vice President for Financial Affairs
- Dr. Sigfredo Morales, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Prof. Erick Mendieta, Director, Department of Theology

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- Dr. Franklin A. Marti, Professor, Department of Theology
 - Prof. Israel Torres, Coordinator, Social Sciences
 - Mrs. Johanna Rodríguez, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
 - Prof. Héctor Cosme, Professor, Mathematics
 - Prof. Omar Reyes, Professor, Mathematics
 - Dr. Javier Ruiz, Professor, History

Once the committee members were appointed, several meetings were held to provide guidance and clarify doubts regarding the self-study process. As a result of a thorough analysis of the institution's needs, and in line with the mission and the strategic issues defined in the Strategic Plan, the committee identified the following four Institutional Priorities (IP) to be addressed in the Self-Study Report:

A. Strengthen student learning through active and experiential learning methodologies

Challenge students through engaging, active, and experiential learning methodologies that develop specific competencies, characteristics, and commitments that portray students' excellent professional performance.

1. Development of a teaching and learning model based on active and experiential learning.
2. Improve faculty professional development and performance on active and experiential learning methodologies.
3. Increase the integration of educational technology in the classroom.

B. Restructure academic and support services

Provide a strong infrastructure of student and academic support services to strengthen the teaching-learning process.

1. Innovate academic support services.
2. Innovate student support services.

C. Increase the impact of the spiritual program initiatives on students and staff

Encourage the spiritual development of students through intentional strategies of integration of faith and values in the curriculum of each academic program, as well as providing a co-curricular environment in which the entire University community can live and share Christian values.

1. Integration of faith and values in the teaching-learning process within the classroom through intentional and consistent connections between course content and Christian and biblical values.
2. Development of co-curricular activities aimed at meeting spiritual needs of diverse populations of students and staff.
3. Evidence of the impact of the spiritual program initiatives on students and staff.

D. Emphasize the integration of community service experiences

AAU promotes a community and global service culture through the curriculum and co-curriculum opportunities. Therefore, students and employee participate in community and missionary service projects. Collaborative agreements and feedback develop students' competencies and improve academic offerings.

1. Increase participation in community and mission service projects.
2. Establish collaborative agreements with community representatives.
3. Integrate community service experiences into the curriculum.

Upon identifying the IPs, the Steering Committee began to work on the Self-Study Design (SSD), which was approved in August 2021. In September 2021, Dr. Hilda Corbett (former MSCHE staff liaison) and Dr. Melissa Hardin held an SSD virtual visit with the Steering Committee members, the President, and the Co-Chairs. The primary purpose of this visit was to provide feedback on the SSD document and clarify doubts about the next steps in the process.

Based on the Standards for Accreditation and RA, seven working groups were appointed to address the assigned tasks. Twenty-nine members representing AAU faculty, non-teaching staff, and students constituted these working groups. Each was coordinated by a member of the steering committee chosen for his/her expertise. The working groups were divided as follows:

Standard I- Mission and Goals

- Dr. Pedro Canales, Director and Professor, Department of Theology
- Prof. Erick Mendieta, Professor, Department of Theology
- Prof. Magda Hernández, Professor of Spanish
- Mrs. Ruth Lizardo, Chaplain

Standard II-Ethics and Integrity

- Dr. Franklin A. Marti, Professor, Department of Theology
- Mrs. Awilda Matos, Director, Office of Student Aid Assistance
- Miss Fabiola Falto, Director, TRIO SSS

Standard III-Design and Delivery of Student Learning

- Prof. Israel Torres, Coordinator of Social Science
- Prof. Mayra Soto, Director, Department of Distance Education
- Dr. Maritza Lamboy, Dean, School of Education, Humanities, and Psychology
- Prof. Yanitza Olivencia, Director, Business Administration
- Prof. Héctor González, Director, Department of Nursing

Standard IV-Support of the Student Experience

- Mrs. Johanna Rodríguez, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
- Mrs. Lynn Madera, Administrative Assistant, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Mrs. Ivette Santiago, Professor, Nursing
- Miss Mirialis Andino, Financial Aid Official

Standard V-Educational Effectiveness Assessment

- Prof. Héctor Cosme, Professor, Mathematics
- Prof. Marcia Crespo, Professor, Biology
- Prof. Lizaira Rodríguez, Director, Education Program
- Prof. Efraín González, Director, Cardiopulmonary Program

Standard VI-Planning, Resources and Institutional Improvement

- Prof. Omar Reyes, Professor, Mathematics
- Mrs. Aixa Vega, Director, Library
- Mrs. Giselle Rivera, Director, Office of Student Finances
- Dr. Ileanex Pérez, Dean, School of Education, Humanities, and Psychology
- Mrs. Legna Varela, Director, Environmental Affairs

Standard VII-Government, Leadership, and Administration

- Dr. Javier J. Ruiz, Professor, History
- Mrs. Mairim Acosta, Curriculum Specialist Distance Education
- Mrs. Frances Izquierdo, Director, Office for Human Resources
- Dr. Sylvia Schimpf, Director, Academic Research Department

Evidence Inventory

- Dr. Digna Williams, Interim Vice President for Planning and Development

Editor

- Dr. Yangtze Torres, External Collaborator

Graphic Design

- Prof. Eduardo Acosta, Professor, Graphic Design Program

All working group members analyzed and evaluated the available documents and evidence, as well as the statistical data provided by the Planning and Institutional Research Office. They were also responsible for writing the self-study first drafts in collaboration with their group coordinator. The first draft was reviewed by the steering committee. Recommendations were made and incorporated into the document. The entire campus community was informed of the self-study process and its importance through email and information posted on the Institution's webpage.

Introduction

Institutional Overview

AAU is a non-profit privately owned institution supported by the membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the Puerto Rican Union of Seventh-day Adventists. The Board of Post-Secondary Institutions of Puerto Rico previously known as the Puerto Rico Council of Education granted the institution the license to operate in Puerto Rico as a higher education institution. In 1978, MSCHE, granted initial accreditation and the last reaffirmation in 2013 complied with all 14 Characteristics of Excellence. In addition, AAU is accredited by the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA).

The Institution's roots are traced back to the first Adventist educational institution in Aibonito, Puerto Rico in 1920. College level degrees, in a Liberal Arts framework, for young people seeking an Adventist education, were first offered in Cuba. Due to the political situation on that island in 1961, the "Colegio de las Antillas," as it was then known, was relocated to the facilities of the "Colegio Adventista Puertorriqueño" in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, to serve the needs of the Antillean region (PR, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic). Initially only baccalaureate degrees in Theology and Education were offered. A year later (1962), as a result of the fusion of these two schools, and the addition of new areas of study, the new institution received the name of Antillean College. In 1989, the Puerto Rico Council for Higher Education approved the current name: "Antillean Adventist University," referred to as AAU throughout this document.

Located near the heart of the city of Mayagüez, AAU serves approximately 838 students of which 90% are Hispanic from Puerto Rico, the Mainland, the Caribbean, and South and Central America, representing 19 nationalities and more than 10 different religious groups. The student population also includes approximately 40% who are first generation university attendees and includes a high percentage of low-income students. During the fall semester of 2020, 91% of students received federal aid. Nearly 30% of students are 25 years or older. These data show the diversity and inclusiveness of AAU student population.

AAU is committed to providing high quality innovative education that integrates methods adapted to new educational trends. The institution focuses on providing highly qualified and competent human resources, as well as efficiency in support services. For this reason, the institution offers professional development to faculty members related to the integration of technology in face-to-face and distance learning modalities, teaching strategies, new trends in education, as well as other topics related to their functions and responsibilities. The Faculty Professional Development Plan cycle runs on a biannual basis. AAU faculty complete a professional portfolio with all the evidence demonstrating compliance with the Faculty Professional Development Plan and the 360-evaluation schedule. The evaluation of the faculty portfolios for the 2016-2019 period demonstrated 94% compliance.

Students evaluate faculty every semester to assess the quality of the teaching-learning process. The results are shared with faculty and program administrators to identify areas of improvement. Overall results are discussed in the annual faculty evaluation.

Since 2018, the Institution has participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement to assess student experiences in our institution. Student engagement represents two critical features of collegiate quality. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their

studies and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how institutional resources, courses, and other learning opportunities facilitate student participation in activities that matter to student learning. The institution uses the National Survey of Student Engagement as a resource to collect data from undergraduate students in their first and final year of study. Through this survey, AAU assesses levels of engagement and other information related to student learning experience at our Institution and compare it with other institutions.

In 2019, the institution was evaluated by the AAA for the years 2014-2019. The results of the evaluation were a reinstatement of the accreditation status with some recommendations. Two major recommendations related to the teaching-learning process are the following:

1. To prepare and implement a systematic research program for teachers and students.

To comply with this recommendation, the Research Plan 2019-2022 was developed and approved by the Board of Trustees to include the advancement of research projects that contribute to the Institution's mission and vision and integrate research methodology into the curricula. In the 2020-2021 academic year, a total of eight faculty members took part in the plan by taking a course in collaboration with the Universidad Adventista de Colombia, to train them in the integration of research as a teaching strategy.

2. To develop and implement a pedagogical model.

To comply with this recommendation, the institution should develop a pedagogical model that states the teaching strategies that framework the institutional teaching-learning process. The pedagogical model will focus on the active and experiential learning strategies that the institution envisions aligned to its mission and vision. The institutional pedagogical model will set the framework for a cohesive and comprehensive effort to provide all students an active learning environment.

The Institution has worked toward improving the teaching-learning experience by increasing the use of educational technology and distance and hybrid offerings. In 2018, AAU developed a Distance Education Department (DDE) that helped the Institution to increase the number of courses offered online or in the hybrid modality, providing more flexibility and accessibility to the academic programs. Also, the DDE increased professional development to faculty and non-faculty related to the integration of technology in teaching face-to-face and online. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the DDE, the Vice-presidency for Academic Affairs, the Vice-presidency for Finance and the Vice-presidency for Students Affairs increased their services, protocols, and procedures to facilitate emergency remote teaching for all the academic programs providing the necessary infrastructure to continue educating. The following student support services are being offered virtually: library, admission, financial aid, registrar, and student finances, among others. All these services are offered virtually as well as face-to-face by appointment, following all the safety protocols.

Using the federal funds from the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economy Security Act (2020), new technology was purchased to convert some teaching spaces into virtual classrooms. In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Institution received a second federal grant from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (2021) that is being used to increase online teaching and learning technology, as well as offering virtual student support services.

In order to increase and improve active and experiential learning in our health-related programs, the Institution participated in a Title V competition. A grant was approved in 2015, to be used between 2015 and 2020. A proposal was submitted to the United States Department of Education's Title V for the project titled *Expanding and Strengthening Health Sciences Degree Programs*. The project was designed to:

- Revise Nursing and Respiratory Care curricula for inclusion of high-definition simulation technology,
- Expand access of the Health Sciences Programs (HSP) via conversion to online/hybrid delivery,
- Enhance the infrastructure to support instruction via creation of a state-of-the-art Simulation Lab,
- Improve foundational skills in Math and English proficiency by developing a Math Resource Center, an English for the HSP courses and acquire instructional resources,
- Engage in and evaluate the Respiratory Care program to complete the Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) accreditation.

The AAU's Title V Part A grant: "*Expanding Capacity and Strengthening Health Sciences Degree Programs*" was committed to fulfilling the goals of the Title V legislation with the purpose of expanding opportunities for and improving the academic attainment of Hispanic students. In accordance with the project's initiatives, one of the major emphases of our Title V project was the renovation of an existing building to house the new healthcare Simulation Laboratory and Math Resource Center. AAU successfully completed the project in September 2020, despite the external factors that affected higher education in Puerto Rico.

At the core of AAU's philosophy is the goal to provide a high-quality Christian education within the context of the Seventh-day Adventist faith. It does not discriminate based on race, sex, nationality, creed or social position. Although AAU has a significant number of Adventist students, the majority, 65%, belong to different religious affiliations and creeds. The institution opens its doors and welcomes them, challenging them to develop the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of their character.

Although data related to spiritual development activities has been collected throughout the years, in 2019 information compiled included specific aspects about the impact that the spiritual program, as such, has on employees and students. The survey from graduating students, for example, showed that 70% of them perceived that their professors taught them how Christian faith and ethics relate to their field of study and 68% understood that the AAU had prepared them well to have a personal relationship with God. The findings also showed that 60% of students and staff had participated in some spiritual development activity outside of the classroom, 49% acknowledged that AAU's spiritual program had played an important role in their spiritual development, and 58% said they had grown spiritually at AAU. The institution has proposed to increase these results in the upcoming years.

The results of this assessment have made it possible to identify aspects that should be strengthened in order to influence a greater number of students, as well as to draw up action

plans to improve this important aspect of the Institution's mission. Some of the actions taken during the last two years include the following:

1. Developing a more uniform strategy for the effective integration of Christian faith and values across courses and programs,
2. Integrating strategies aimed at increasing the number of students impacted by the spiritual program, and
3. Integrating new co-curricular activities for commuter students, who represent the largest student population.

AAU also emphasizes the integration of community service as one of its priorities. For this reason, the vice-presidencies annually carry out various community service projects. In these community services projects staff, faculty, and students work together to promote a service-oriented culture and civic commitment. During 2015-2019, there were 35 social activities carried out including meal distribution, building a roof of a house, maintenance and repair of Sabana Grande's Adventist Academy, providing worship activities in an elderly home, offering orientations about employment opportunities, cleaning community yards, cleaning beaches, and delivering hygiene items to people in need, among others. Also, after the disaster caused by hurricanes Maria and Fiona, the institution supported the community by offering water and meals to those in need, health assistance, and emotional support in shelters, etc.

During the past four years, around eight new collaborative agreements have been established between entities and academic programs to guarantee students an effective development of their knowledge, skills, and dispositions in their fields of study. These collaborative agreements facilitate active learning in real scenarios.

AAU's graduate program has also provided opportunities for its students to work in the community. The graduate profile is based on educational principles that are essential to achieve comprehensive human development, including service. Therefore, each student performed at least 10 hours of community service individually or in group projects as part of the course titled HUSO 100-Philosophy of Service. This initiative prepares students to identify human needs and help promote a better quality of life. Students in different health programs also carry out around 120 hours of community service during the semester by performing activities like conducting health clinics, aiding in vaccination centers, educating communities about health and prevention of diseases, among other health related activities. AAU is prioritizing community service activities within the curricula to help develop student leadership skills, charisma, compassion, and values that will prepare them to become competent professionals that can use their acquired knowledge and skills to accomplish the Institution's mission to serve God and humanity.

AAU's programs and curricula are recognized by the Veteran's Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services of the United States of America. The University is also a member of the Association of Colleges and Universities of Puerto Rico, and the American Council on Education.

Currently, the Institution offers baccalaureate degrees in 28 concentrations, and six associate degrees. It offers a Master's Degree (MA) in Education (with concentrations in Administration & Supervision, Curriculum & Instruction, and Teaching Elementary & Secondary Schools with a specialization in English as a Second Language, Biology, History, School Health, and Spanish) approved by the Board of Post-Secondary Institutions of PR and accredited by MSCHE. It also

offers the Master's Degree in Nursing with three specializations: Critical Care, Care for Elderly People, and Anesthesia.

The Institution has several professional programs that have obtained their accreditation from other regulatory agencies. The Bachelor of Science in Nursing program is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Also, the Bachelor of Science in Cardiopulmonary program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) being the only accredited program on the Island, and the Baccalaureate Program in Pastoral Theology is accredited by the General Conference Adventist Accreditation Association (AAA).

AAU has a faculty consisting of 36 full-time and 65 part-time professors, in addition to 117 full-time and 37 part-time employees. General enrollment is distributed between two schools and three departments as follows: Department of Business Sciences with 61 students, Department of Science and Technology with 157 students, School of Education, Humanities and Psychology with 150 students, Department of Religion with 39 students and School of Health Sciences with 380 students, Graduates programs 42, and 9 special.

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's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the Institution fulfills said mission.

RA7: The Institution has a mission statement and related goals, approved by its governing board, that defines its purposes within the context of higher education.

RA10: Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and results from academic and institutional assessments.

This chapter addresses the following Institutional Priority (IP):

- C. Development of co-curricular activities aimed at meeting the spiritual needs of its diverse student population.

Analysis of Key Issues

AAU is a Christian institution. At the core of its philosophy is the goal to provide a quality Christian education within the context of the Seventh-day Adventist faith. We believe in the revelation of God through His Word and His Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Bible establishes that the human being is the supreme creation of God and that he/she depends on the Creator for his/her development and the full realization of his/her capacities. Because of this position, every person should be treated with equality, without distinction of age, gender, race, nationality, creed, or socio-economic position. Founded on the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the University offers education as a holistic process that covers all the facets of human development: spiritual, mental, physical, and social. Students are challenged to develop all the dimensions of their being to their utmost. This will prepare the individual to serve God and humanity.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission. Antillean Adventist University promotes the holistic formation of competent professionals committed to serving God and humanity.

Vision. Antillean Adventist University will be recognized for spirituality, excellence, and service.

Values. The following are the institution's core values:

- Love: Loving God and others as God loves them.
- Integrity: Being honest and truthful, consistent in what one says and does.
- Responsibility: Making conscious decisions and assuming their consequences.
- Justice: Being committed to equity, charity, and fair treatment.
- Diversity: Respecting and being sensitive to the socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural differences between people.

-
- Empathy: Putting oneself in the place of another.
 - Empowerment: Developing confidence in individual abilities and potential.
 - Compassion: Responding to the suffering and needs of others.

Major Themes of the Mission Reflected in AAU's Goals

AAU's mission harmonizes and responds to institutional purposes, its historical trajectory, its religious affiliation, its educational philosophy, and the context and needs of higher education in Puerto Rico. The key components that emerge from the mission are the following:

Service to God. This component seeks to integrate the teaching of faith and Adventist Christian values in the teaching and learning in an intentional and effective way. The Institution developed the Master Plan for Spiritual Development 2017-2022, which describes a variety of strategies and activities that contribute to the spiritual and service development of employees and students. Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan (SP) addresses this issue. More information on the development of this component is provided in the next section of this report, as well as in the Standard V report.

Holistic Training. Adventist Christian education considers, in addition to the intellectual aspect of the individual, the spiritual, moral, physical, and social aspects, as established in the Institution's educational philosophy. Goals 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7 are related to this aspect, and information on compliance with this component is provided in the report for Standard III.

Professional Competence. This aspect emphasizes the educational quality and institutional effectiveness that guides the success of students and is included in Goals 2, 3, 4, and 5. The reports of standards III, V, and VI explain how the Institution develops active and experiential learning for students, as part of one of its priorities.

Service to Humanity. Our goal is to develop a caring disposition among students and staff that contributes to a better quality of life for our community, the church, and the world. Goal 7 addresses this aspect. Details on the integration of this component in the curriculum are included in the reports for Standards II, III, and VII.

Development of Co-Curricular Activities Aimed at Meeting the Spiritual Needs of a Diverse Student and Staff Population

One of the priorities established by the institution is to increase the impact of spiritual program initiatives on students and staff. As part of this priority, the University develops and implements programs and activities aimed at meeting the needs of both the student population and its staff. The purpose is that everyone is spiritually enriched and experience a closer relationship with God.

Concerning this priority, the SP establishes in Goal 1 the interest of "providing an environment in which each student and employee have the opportunity to live and share Adventist Christian principles and values." To achieve this goal, the strategic plan details the objectives that guide towards its achievement, while the Department of Religious Affairs (DRA), as the Office responsible for defining the course for the fulfillment of the strategic objectives. This department implemented the Master Plan for Spiritual Development (MPSD), with the actions, programs, and activities that foster the spiritual growth of students, faculty, and staff (MPSD).

AAU's MPSD is aligned with the mission of the institution and with the Adventist educational philosophy, which, in turn, is based on the transmission of the knowledge of God as the source of all wisdom.

The programs implemented by the DRA include service to the different communities on the University campus and inviting them to participate in spiritual programs and ministries. The AAU Church, for example, serves the English and Spanish-speaking populations with programs in both languages. There are various ministries in which students and employees can participate, as well as multiple opportunities to develop the talents and leadership skills of students. These include services in the chapel and the residence halls. The MPSD contains specific actions and activities directed at non-Adventist students, off-campus students, and first-year students, among other groups.

AAU is a community with a high sense of mission; therefore, AAU promotes the development of various student ministries. As a result, a volunteer chaplaincy ministry was developed with the function of promoting spiritual development within residence halls. To promote discipleship, the DRA identifies ministerial students with church leadership gifts to assist in the planning and implementation of spiritual events and activities. The academic departments, in turn, develop their ministries to strengthen the spiritual life of their students. They carry out spiritual retreats directed by the students under the supervision of the professors of the individual departments. The emphasis of these retreats is to strengthen the spiritual life of students, through dynamic activities that are relevant to their age and need. Also, once a year, computer science and health sciences students together have camps and spiritual retreats (*List of active ministries in the period 2017-2022*).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some activities were limited because of the change to remote education. Despite the challenges, the DRA carried out several activities adjusted to fit the needs of the time. The strategy for spiritual development was restructured to offer more spiritual support. The DRA offered a lot of spiritual and emotional assistance individually as well as in groups. It developed more virtual activities to help maintain contact with, and provide additional support for, students and employees. During the 2020-2021 school year, for example, the weeks of prayers "SEARCH" and "REDO" were offered virtually. Other services included offering help to students with special needs caused by the pandemic, as well as spiritual and personal support for students who remained on campus. The spiritual activities carried out virtually allowed for a wider audience of students who were inside and outside of Puerto Rico.

With the return to face-to-face activities in 2021-2022, the development of the MPSD continued in a greater capacity. The weeks of spiritual emphasis, "SAVED" and "I am," were celebrated in person in the Fall of 2021 and the Spring of 2022. Employees, students, and the community, in general, came together for these events. During these weeks, the speaker visited students in their boarding rooms and took the time to listen to their needs and concerns. Many students still talk about the impactful memories and spiritual experiences they had that will last a lifetime. The Department of Institutional Effectiveness conducts yearly surveys to evaluate the programs on the weeks of spiritual emphasis.

At the beginning of each semester, the Department for Religious carries out different activities to strengthen the spiritual life of students and employees. One of them is the week of prayer for non-teaching staff and for the faculty, in which new and active employees receive spiritual encouragement in preparation for semester work. Weeks of Prayers for residential students and the University community, at large, are programmed for each semester.

Goals Clearly Aligned with the Mission Statement

AAU developed its goals on the 2017-2023 SP based on the key components of the mission and vision statements and the strategic initiatives. The strategic goals are:

- Goal 1 Provide an environment in which every student and employee has the opportunity to live and share Adventist Christian principles and values.
- Goal 2 Attract and retain students from different socio-economic levels, cultures, and nations.
- Goal 3 Develop the educational offer in various modalities that responds to quality standards, market demands, and student needs, framed in a culture of accountability, evidence, and teaching scholarship.
- Goal 4 Provide students with learning experiences that develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions which are evidenced by defined learning outcomes, with the support of the Institution's staff, programs, and services, to be competent professionals who serve humanity.
- Goal 5 Promote research and its application in the work of the academic community.
- Goal 6 Apply generally accepted best management practices for each unit.
- Goal 7 Develop strategies that provide opportunities for participation and integration in the community, through community and missionary service.

These goals encompass the holistic development of the student to be a competent professional equipped for service. This formation is aligned with the Institution's mission and vision. (*Strategic Plan 2017-2023.*)

Achievement of Each Aspect of the Mission

The University's mission is achieved with the participation of all the vice-presidencies and all the units (academic and non-academic). To follow up on compliance, the Institution established in the Institutional Effectiveness Guide 2017-2022, annual achievement reports, as well as the schedule for their delivery to the president and the Department of Institutional Effectiveness. Each academic and non-academic unit prepares a report of the achievements obtained concerning the annual plan. Similarly, the vice presidencies prepare a report that includes their achievements. Both reports present achievements in line with the goals and objectives of the Institution as described in the strategic plan (*Institutional Effectiveness Guide*).

The Department of Institutional Effectiveness prepares an overall achievement report that is also organized according to the goals and objectives of the SP. This report is presented for approval at the Institution's Administrative Council and processed to the Board of Trustees for its final approval. The report is eventually presented to the Institution's staff and faculty. The overall achievement report shows how the Institution is fulfilling its mission and also integrates statistical data related to key indicators. This report is also a tool used to identify areas for improvement; therefore, these findings become recommendations to strengthen the planning and assessment process. The vice presidents, deans, and directors are responsible for

incorporating the results and findings of the assessments into their plans for the new year. The general achievement report for each year, in addition to being shared with the entire staff, is made available on the website of the Department of Institutional Effectiveness.

AAU is intentional in addressing its mission and goals by requiring departments to review procedures and align them with the institution's mission and goals. AAU conducted a diagnostic of its organizational health in April of 2022, by EG Consulting Group. The study demonstrated that AAU's strength is in its mission. Personnel stated that the Institution adheres to its philosophy and achieves its mission of the holistic development of students' mental, spiritual, and physical dimensions. They also expressed that the Institution fosters and promotes the spiritual dimension of its personnel, providing spiritual reflective time. The study revealed that Christian values, such as empathy and caring for each other, were values practiced by both personnel and students. Faculty and staff also stated that the institution promotes its mission and demonstrates respect for diversity (*EG Consulting Group Report*).

The Office of Institutional Research conducts periodic surveys of personnel and students to detect perceptions about meeting mission and goals. These surveys consistently show that the institution is meeting its mission and goals. The yearly survey conducted on graduating students, for example, demonstrated the following results in the spring of 2022:

- In aspects related to the holistic formation component of the mission, 96% of the graduating students expressed that the University had prepared them a lot or enough to adopt a balanced lifestyle that includes time for intellectual, social, spiritual, and physical development.
- Concerning spiritual development, 93% indicated that the institution had helped them a lot or enough to develop a relationship with God. Another 94% responded that they had been helped a lot or enough to grow in their spiritual life. Ninety-eight percent understood that they were very or sufficiently prepared to apply Christian values in their career.
- Similarly, when this group of students were asked to assign a level to the quality of teaching at the institution, 92% selected the levels “good” and “excellent” (*Graduate Survey Results*).

The yearly Spiritual Life Survey administered to students, faculty, and staff in the Fall 2021 semester reflected that 79% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the activities carried out at the University reflect the beliefs and values of the Institution and are oriented towards the fulfillment of the mission. Another 81% agreed or strongly agreed that the academic programs integrate principles and values that make up the institutional mission (*Spiritual Life Survey Results from FA 21*).

As the main foundation of the strategic planning process, AAU's mission has been continuously updated and approved by the different institutional bodies. In 2011, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) developed the current declaration to be part of the strategic plan for the 2012-2017 cycle. In 2017, the President's Executive Committee (PEC), and the University Administrative Council (UAC) reviewed the mission statement, as part of the new planning cycle 2017-2022. The SPC, PEC, and UAC considered the mission statement relevant to the purposes of the University, so it was re-approved, without changes, by the Board of Trustees in 2017 and again in 2022.

There is a periodic assessment of the Institution's mission and goals. In September 2020, the vision descriptions were reviewed and amended, and in December 2021, some goals were amended, and new goals were added. On May 13, 2022, the Strategic Planning Committee met to review the Institution's mission, vision, and goals. On this occasion, core values were discussed, as well as a reaffirmation of its mission and vision. As previously stated, an academic goal was added concerning dealing with student learning outcomes. The goal reads as follows:

“Facilitate student learning experiences that develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions, evidenced in specific learning outcomes with the support of the institution's personnel, programs, and services to be competent professionals serving humanity.”

Core values were discussed and approved. On June 10, 2022, The Strategic Planning Committee further discussed the definitions of these values. They were reviewed and voted on in the President's Executive Committee meeting and the institution's Administrative Council. Finally, on June 29, 2022, the Board of Trustees approved the institution's mission, vision, and core values. The core values have been published and discussed in faculty assembly, personnel meetings, as well as students' assembly. This process ensures that the mission, goals, and core values are well-known to all our community (*Minutes Board of Trustees 2017 and 2021*).

Development, Review, and Update of the Mission and Goals

The Institution's mission and goals are initially developed in the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) with a representation of all sectors of the University community. Recommendations from the SPC are discussed in the University's Administrative Council with a representation of directors of departments, deans of schools, vice presidents, faculty, staff, and students. The Board of Trustees ultimately analyzes the mission and goals and takes a vote. The mission is published and presented frequently in meetings (*Strategic Planning Committee, and the CAU minutes*).

To communicate the mission and make it known to all members of the University community, the mission statement and goals are placed in all official documents. This is also true for other components of the institutional identity, such as its vision, values, and educational philosophy. Some of these official documents include The Catalog, Faculty Manual, Employee Handbook, General Student Regulations, Operating Handbook, and Strategic Plan. The mission statement can also be found at the University's website.

The mission, vision, and goals of the Institution are presented when conducting meetings or providing services externally, such as private and public schools, community centers, and churches. Internally, the mission, vision, and goals are presented in the President's Executive Committee, Faculty Assembly, Administrative Council, faculty and staff meetings, student activities, publications, and social media.

When the vice presidencies and units implement their operational and annual plans, data is gathered in regards to achieving the institution's mission. Each unit works on its annual plan in alignment with the operational plan of its vice presidency, which in turn is aligned with the strategic plan. In this way, the objectives of the operating plans and annual plans are articulated with the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. All the initiatives, projects, and activities worked in the units and the vice-presidencies aim at achieving the goals of the SP based on the

mission. Through this process, the entire University community is part of the achievements of SP (*Institutional Effectiveness Guide, Annual Plan Templates*).

Each year during the period for producing the annual plans and achievement reports, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness contacts the department directors and vice presidents to offer guidance on the preparation of their reports and plans. The Institutional Effectiveness Guide, which is available in electronic format for all departments and appears on the University's website, also contains detailed information on the entire planning cycle and the roles of the units.

Each year, the Department of Institutional Effectiveness verifies the achievement reports of the vice-presidencies and units, to ensure that achievements are related to the fulfillment of the goals and strategic objectives. These reports must reflect how the goals have been achieved through the strategies and activities implemented by the vice presidencies and their units.

Alignment of the Mission with the Strategic Plan and the Process used for its Development

AAU's SP serves as a guide to advance the Institution in fulfilling its mission of offering an excellent education for all its students. The educational foundations of spirituality, excellence, and service, derived from the mission and vision, provide the framework within which the goals and objectives of the SP are developed. They also serve as a basis for decision-making and continuous improvement.

During the last five years, the institution has been guided by the 2017-2023 Strategic Plan. Both the development of the plan and its updating are worked on by the SPC and the subcommittees, with the responsibility of reviewing the previous SP, carrying out an analysis of the internal and external context of the institution, describing the weaknesses and opportunities, identifying strengths and threats, and examining the extent to which the plan serves the accomplishment of the mission.

The subcommittees of the SPC, with representatives from all the units, gathered useful data for defining goals and objectives. Meanwhile, the institutional research office carried out multiple surveys to collect information from students, faculty, and staff for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Treats (SWOT) analysis. The SPC then spent time analyzing and synthesizing all the information into a draft plan that was presented to the President's Executive Council. The University Administrative Council with representatives from upper and middle management, as well as faculty, staff, and students, also played a leading role in reviewing and approving the SP draft. The Board of Trustees gave final and official approval to the SP in 2017 (*Minutes Board of Trustees*).

The PE 2017-2023 is based on the mission and vision: Spirituality, Excellence, and Service, followed by five strategic initiatives that originate from the seven goals of the plan and its 45 objectives. Figure 1.1 shows the components of the 2017-2023 Strategic Plan.

Figure 1.1

Strategic Plan Components 2017-2023



The initiatives of the Strategic Plan are as follows:

Spiritual Development. Effective integration of faith and values in learning, both within the Adventist academic community and in the external community.

Student Success. Recruitment, retention, enrollment management, and support of a diverse student body through service systems, facilities, and technology through the completion of their program of study.

Academic Quality. A learning environment that develops in students the necessary skills for a professional performance of excellence, with multicultural perspectives based on a high-quality educational offering supported by research, creative work, the assessment of learning, and the effectiveness of the programs.

Administrative Effectiveness. Emphasis on efficient administrative processes including planning and assessment of institutional effectiveness, human resource management, and sustainable development supported by financial stability.

Social Commitment and Collaborative Relationships. Analysis, projection, and response to changing social needs.

Information on how the University, in fulfilling its mission, supports the development of academic research and the advances that have been made in this area is included in the report for Standard V.

The Mission Guides, Decision-Making, and Governing Process

The General Education Component, embedded in each program at the undergraduate level, is strong evidence that decision-making processes at AAU are mission-driven. Based on the Institution's mission of providing a "holistic formation that prepares competent professionals, committed to the service of God and humanity," the curriculum is rigorous for students to develop the required knowledge, skills and professional dispositions.

The curriculum for general education is the responsibility of each department to which the courses belong and the faculty concerned. The competencies required are reflected in graduates' institutional profile, defining the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that each student must

develop through each student's experience. The current general education component was approved by the Board of Trustees in 2015.

The General Education Committee, among other functions, plans and directs the general education program, develops a framework for assessing student learning outcomes/objectives in general education courses, reviews formal and informal assessment strategies used in general education courses, and provides a summary of results to the Unit Assessment Committee and faculty for their review. The Committee also provides recommendations for changes and improvements in the program. According to the need for changes or improvements in the program, the necessary resources are allocated for an operation per the fulfillment of the mission.

Other tools that function as evidence that the mission guides the decision-making processes are the plans of the vice presidencies and the annual plans of the units, which show how the decisions made are in harmony with the mission and strategic planning. It is in the units where the strategic goals and objectives are implemented and guided by the annual plans. The Department of Institutional Effectiveness prepares the templates for the annual plans of all the units, which include the strategic goals and objectives. In this way, the strategies and activities included in the annual plans and then carried out are framed and aligned with the mission. *(Example of annual plans of the units).*

Conclusion

This chapter shows that AAU has a mission statement that clearly defines its purpose and intent to provide higher education at the undergraduate level, primarily to the rural community of the west of Puerto Rico. It also, describes how the institution advances its mission through strategic goals to ensure that they are relevant and achievable. Based on the self-assessment of Standard I, the Institution has identified the following strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement:

Strengths

- AAU has a mission and vision that guides the Institution's operations, as well as a defined and organized process for its effective fulfillment. The Institution has developed a strategic planning and improvement process that clearly articulates the mission and vision with the goals and objectives of the SP.
- The University has a clear process that allows all units to report their achievements annually, per the fulfillment of the mission.
- To integrate the entire University community in the planning and decision-making processes, AAU includes representatives of the faculty, support staff, and students in the main committees.

Challenges

- Socio-Economic changes on the island may be redefining the profile of the students served.

Opportunities for Improvement

- AAU continues to work to strengthen and systematize the communication and dissemination processes of the mission statement, especially among the student population.

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.

- RA 5: The Institution complies with all applicable government (usually federal and state) laws and regulations.
- RA 8: The Institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it accomplishes its purposes.
- RA 11: The Institution has documented financial resources, funding base, and plans for financial development, including those from any related entities (without limitation systems, religious sponsorship, and corporate ownership) adequate to support its educational purposes and programs and to ensure financial stability. The Institution demonstrates a record of responsible fiscal management, has a prepared budget for the current year, and undergoes an external financial audit on an annual basis.
- RA 12: The Institution fully discloses its legally constituted governance structure(s), including any related entities (without limitation systems, religious sponsorship, and corporate ownership). The Institution's governing body is responsible for the quality and integrity of the Institution and for ensuring to accomplish the Institution's mission.
- RA 14: The Institution and its governing body/bodies ensure that accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the Institution and its operations are available for the Commission. The governing body/bodies ensure that the Institution describes itself in comparable and consistent terms to all its accrediting and regulatory agencies, communicates any changes in accredited status, and agrees to disclose information (including levels of governing body compensation, if any) required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities.

This chapter addresses the following IP:

- D. Emphasize the integration of community services experiences.

Analysis of Key Issues

AAU has a Christian foundation; as such, it highly emphasizes its ethical principles and values. They permeate all policies and are integrated into all levels and areas of the Institution. Through the establishment of different policies and procedures, the University defines its ethics and integrity, guaranteeing, at the same time, that all its operations and interactions are framed within the ethical, moral, and Christian values that characterize it.

The recruitment materials, the information published on the institutional website, the employee and faculty manuals, the institutional catalog, the policies, and the guidelines of the units consistently show that AAU fosters respect and ethical conduct among the diversity of its members, students, faculty, and staff. The Institution also demonstrates its commitment to ethics and integrity through its statements on academic freedom, intellectual property rights, academic honesty, fair and impartial human resource practices, conflict of interest, and information for students regarding funding sources, among others.

AAU’s Consistency in Following Through its Stated Policies in Communicating with Students, Faculty, and Staff.

AAU communicates all policies and procedures to the University community. There are different means used for such communication. These include the following:

- The Faculty Handbook 2020 which contains “the rules, rights, and duties of the teaching personnel” (ii, iii);
- Employee Handbook 2021, which contains “references about essential issues of working conditions” (7);
- Electronic mail (facultad@uaa.edu, employees@uaa.edu, alluaa@uaa.edu) used to send general messages pertaining to faculty, staff, and students;
- Monthly faculty meetings;
- Circular letters; and
- General meetings with the Administration.

There are also Executive Committees within each vice presidency and meetings within each school or department. Each concern or complaint that emerges in these meetings or at the personal level is channeled up to the different levels of command and, if necessary, the presidency. In some instances, they might be presented to the Board of Trustees. Decisions or guidelines established by the Board of Trustees are communicated to the University community by the President, either in writing or at town hall meetings.

Regarding students, there are several means which are effective in communicating with them. These include the following:

- The Student Handbook 2022, which describes the services offered, social rules, religious norms, behavior norms, and general conduct rules. It also includes penalties that could be applied when these are violated. The purpose of the Student Handbook is to communicate the principles, norms, and rules that operate in the Institution. They will help, therefore, to protect students’ rights and duties during their stay at AAU;
- The Residence Hall Handbook 2022 establishes the general rules for those living at any of the residence halls on campus;

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- The general assembly is another opportunity to offer information and guidance to the students. Each Tuesday, a class period is devoted to this assembly, and the last Tuesday of the month is separated for the academic departments (*Student Handbook, 2014, 18*).

AAU is committed to continuous monitoring and correct application of established institutional policies, rules, and procedures. The academic and non-academic units, the vice presidencies, and the presidency are the originators of all policies, and they are published on the Institution's website and available to students and staff. The Catalog 2019-2022, for example, one of the most widely used documents, overseen by the Vice Presidency for Academic Affairs, works as a tool that communicates broad and important information for students and employees alike. The Catalog is published on the webpage. The catalog is reviewed every three years by the academic units that propose the updates or amendments to the Academic Executive Committee that approves changes. Then the changes are processed for approval by the President's Executive Committee, the University Administrative Council, and finally the Board of Trustees. The minutes of the Academic Executive Committee are evidence of the consistency of the Institution in following the norms established in the catalog (*Minutes of the Board of Trustees*).

The admissions policy fosters access and inclusiveness to educational services by an increasingly diverse student population, thus not discriminating because of religious affiliation, race, age, gender, physical handicap, or nationality (*Sub Graduate Catalog 2019-2022*). Due to the application of this policy, the Institution has a diverse student population.

The University is committed to providing students and employees with a safe environment, characterized by respectful treatment, free from bullying, harassment, and intimidation, whether in person or through electronic means, thus promoting the comprehensive development of the entire University community. A lot of the daily communication, especially between professors and students takes place through student/faculty portals (E-cams and Moodle) which provide the means for sharing academic work, tests, and grades, among others. This type of communication is regulated by the Policy on Harassment and Intimidation (Bullying and Cyberbullying, 2017), which establishes, on the institutional webpage, that it is the responsibility of each member of the University to ensure that no situation of harassment occurs during activities. In addition, the institution has a code of behavior for students and personnel. The Vice President for Student Affairs is responsible for handling cases of bullying, harassment, and intimidation, for which he has a Disciplinary Committee in which cases are heard. This committee sends the vice president a report with the decision made regarding the case, and the vice president communicates the decision to the concerned parties (*Bullying and Cyberbullying Policies and Behavior Code*).

To motivate the practice of the rules of respect, integrity, and honesty among employees, the Department of Human Resources, in the Employee Handbook, 2022, establishes a policy to avoid the practice of sexual harassment at work, in any of its forms, since it violates the human being's dignity and it constitutes clear discrimination against its victim, whether male or female. The handbook defines sexual harassment as “the unwelcome imposition of sexual requirements in the context of an employee's relationship that affects employment opportunities, the employment itself, its terms and conditions, or the company's work environment” (*Sexual Harassment and Harassment in Employment Policies*).

Adherence to Principles of Academic Freedom

The Declaration of Academic Freedom is included in the AAU *Faculty Handbook*, 2020, 46. This principle reflects a belief in freedom as an essential right in a democratic society, with a special focus on the academic community. It is a guarantee that both professors and students will be able to perform their functions of learning, research, and teaching with minimal restrictions. In this case, professors have the freedom to teach the class that has been assigned to them, understanding that they always must be respectful of their students and the Institution they represent. It also relates to the atmosphere of openness for research in an academic community if learning is to be honest and incisive. In this case, academic freedom is defined as "the right of a responsible and self-disciplined scholar to inquire, teach, and publish within his area of academic specialty. In the proper exercise of that right, the Administration assumes the task of protecting the faculty from situations that hinder the search for knowledge and its adequate and proper dissemination." Academic freedom at AAU is not limited to the faculty and is not limited to scholarly work; there is autonomy to assign grades within the limits of objectivity, justice, and ethical responsibility. They have due freedom to select teaching materials and present their classes following the requirements of the course and the syllabus, under the aforementioned ethical standards.

Also, on pages 95-97, there is a declaration of academic freedom which establishes that Adventist institutions are based on that principle as an essential part to accomplish their objectives. This principle is linked to the belief that practicing freedom in an academic environment will benefit the Adventist Church. Academic freedom, properly implemented, places AAU's scholars in charge of being self-disciplined and responsible Christian professors with the maturity to conduct research, teach, and publish within the area of their academic expertise. Furthermore, this charge seeks to emphasize that professors are responsible to look for truth and guide their students in their intellectual and spiritual needs. It means that academic freedom is not only a privilege but also a responsibility. Thus, knowing that, Adventist scholars will be respectful in giving their opinion but also respectful of the opinion of others, and clarify when they are giving a personal point of view that is not supported by the institution in which they teach.

Adventist scholars are expected to be free in their research and teaching; but they must conduct themselves based on Christian ethics, considering public decency, and avoiding controversial topics that do not belong to their area of expertise. This does not mean that professors are unprotected and disqualified when they come up with new ideas that seem to confront what is taught in Adventist academic institutions, but that they will have the opportunity to explain their findings to their peers. This considers that when the truth is examined, it shines in a better way. As a result, Adventist professors will look for truth to spread it, and in this journey, they will also look for advice, be ready to express and write the point of view accepted by AAU and reject those positions which are contrary to Adventist teachings. (*Academic Freedom Policy*).

In the case of students, the Institution makes a provision in the General Student Regulations, 2022, establishing that "all AAU students have the right to respectful public expression and discussion. The AAU gives the student the opportunity to express their opinions in the appropriate forum, without fear of reprisals." Through their participation in different associations, organizations, and clubs, as well as in administrative committees and bodies, students are provided with spaces for expression and to bring up their issues of concern or interest.

Curricular Improvement Based on the Needs of all the Constituencies

Curriculum development is part of AAU's commitment to offering programs, courses, and activities that prepare students to be competent and relevant in the place where they have to exercise their professional practice. At AAU, the process of change is continuous and applies to both programs and courses; whether it is a new modality, a new concentration, or a new program, the departments are the originators of the process. In general, the proposed changes seek to meet the needs of students or the market, provide greater accessibility and opportunities, or improve the quality of the student experience. However, other changes that respond to faculty development improve the teaching-learning process which leads to curriculum improvement.

Each department and school have a departmental committee that is responsible for reviewing and proposing changes to the curriculum, according to internal requirements and the expectations of external constituents. Recommendations from this committee go to the Executive Committee of Academic Affairs for approval and then to the President's Executive Committee, University Administrative Council, and on to the Board of Trustees, where final approval is given, as required. The Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for updating the catalog and monitoring policy compliance. Figure 2.1 shows the curricular revision process of the Institution.

Figure 2.1

Curricular Revision Process



Over the past five years, departments and schools have initiated new courses, programs, concentrations, and modalities for a variety of reasons, including providing opportunities for a diverse population, as well as addressing students' needs.

The Institution has been working on ways to improve the teaching and learning experience by using more educational technology and distance/hybrid offerings. In 2018, AAU developed the DDE which helped the Institution increase the number of courses offered in the online/hybrid mode, making academic programs more flexible and accessible. The DED also increased opportunities for faculty and staff to learn how to use technology to combine face-to-face and online education. The DDE, Vice-presidency for Academic Affairs, Vice-presidency for Finance, and Vice-presidency for Students Affairs increased services, protocols, and procedures to facilitate emergency remote teaching for all the academic programs. The following student support services are currently offered virtually: library, admission, financial aid, registrar, and

student finance, among others. All these services are offered virtually and face-to-face by appointment, following all the safety protocols.

New technology was purchased to convert some face-to-face spaces to virtual classrooms using the federal funds of The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (2020). In this fiscal year 2020-21, the Institution received a second federal grant Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (2021) that is being used to increase online teaching and learning technology and to offer virtual student support services.

To increase and improve active and experiential learning in our health-related programs, the institution participated in a Title V competition. A Title V grant was approved by the Department of Education in 2015, for the academic years 2015-2020. This grant was geared towards Expanding Capacity and Strengthening Health Sciences Degree Programs. The project was designed to:

- Revise the Nursing and Respiratory Care curriculum for inclusion of high-definition simulation technology,
- Expand access to Health Sciences Programs (HSP) via conversion to online/hybrid delivery,
- Enhance infrastructure to support instruction via the creation of a state-of-the-art Simulation Lab,
- Improve foundational skills in Math and English proficiency by developing a Math Resource Center, an English for HSP course, and acquire instructional resources,
- Engage in Respiratory Care curriculum and program evaluation to complete Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) accreditation.

AAU's Title V Part A grant: "*Expanding Capacity and Strengthening Health Sciences Degree Programs*" was committed to fulfilling the goals of the Title V legislation to expand opportunities for and improve the academic attainment of Hispanic students. Per the project initiatives, one of the major emphases of our Title V project was the renovation of an existing building to house the new healthcare simulation laboratory and Math Resource Center. AAU successfully completed the project in September 2020, despite the external factors that have affected higher education in Puerto Rico.

Policy and Procedures that AAU Uses to Address Student and Staff Grievances

The University has specific procedures for the presentation of complaints by faculty, support staff, and students, which guarantee the investigation of the facts and a fair and impartial decision-making process on any complaint.

Complaint policies and procedures for students, faculty, and staff are published in detail in the 2019-2022 Undergraduate Catalog, page 80, the Graduate Catalog 2021-2023, page 29, the Student Handbook 2022, page 23, and the Employee Handbook 2021, page 41, as well as the Institution's website. Through official procedures, the Institution seeks to ensure that each complaint or grievance is handled appropriately, avoiding any type of discrimination.

Concerning the procedure for student complaints, the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs is responsible for addressing them. There are several procedures related to the types of complaints or grievances of students. These depend on whether it is an academic complaint, in which the student considers that their academic rights have been violated or a complaint against a student or teacher. If for any reason, a student feels that they have been treated unfairly or unethically, or that they have been the victim of discrimination by any person or act of AAU, they can confidently express their complaint or problem to the Office of Student Affairs. The Student Handbook (2014) establishes that "any appeal or complaint must be submitted in writing to the Student Affairs Executive Committee" (6). The Committee is responsible for interviewing those involved before deciding and documenting the entire process.

Regarding grievances within faculty or staff, the 2021 Employee Handbook provides a resource that allows these bodies to express complaints regarding academic policies, concerns about any aspect, or dissatisfaction with a decision made by their supervisor. The procedure provides employees with steps to follow to resolve their complaints. AAU addresses them through the Grievance Committee, which must "analyze, evaluate, and make recommendations to the President's Executive Council." In April 2021, the Office of Human Resources (HR) reviewed AAU's response to faculty or staff grievances, to provide guidance and support to faculty and staff in matters of employment. The HR office supervises the complaint filing process, as well as due compliance with the guidelines established for employees and faculty. (*Grievance Procedure, Policy to Prohibit Sexual Harassment in Employment, Policy, and Protocol on Handling Domestic Violence in the Workplace*).

Integration of Ethics and Integrity into Policies, Procedures, and Activities as it Innovates Planning for a Technological Future

Technological development recently took giant steps favoring access to educational services by students, as well as teacher training. In its role of ensuring that ethics and integrity are the operating norms in the activities of all areas, the Institution developed procedures and policies that inform employees and students how to use the institutional technological resources in ethical manner. The Technological Resources Policy that appears in the Employee Manual (2022), establishes: "These resources include data, files, equipment, programming, networks, email, 'Online chat' and any other. The Institution recognizes that these technologies contribute to increasing the productivity of its employees. Therefore, it values their use, recognizing that the use of technological advances will harmonize with ethical values, Christian principles and in accordance with federal laws or regulations, and to Institutional policies."

The Institution provides, free of charge, computer services and information resources to all employees and faculty, registered students, and authorized visitors. However, "the university monitors and restricts, in accordance with applicable law, the content of its information technology resources and reserves the right to prohibit or limit access when federal laws or regulations are violated."

The Technological Resources Policy (TRP) has the purpose of promoting the ethical use of information resources, providing privacy and security to all users, as well as disseminating guidelines for the appropriate use of information systems and facilities. The institution "reserves the right to inspect the use of its technological resources if there is suspicion of violations of the rules that regulate them, an emergency or a threat to the integrity and security of the computer system."

The TRP also provides for the observance of copyright rules when it comes to information or programs that appear on the Internet. It provides guidance on ethical procedures for their use, promotes the rights of all users, prohibits abusive behavior and/or bullying, and encourages respect for the needs of other users.

On page 20, the TRP establishes the rules for the use of information resources, as well as the possible disciplinary measures related to the violation of these rules. These are based on ethical behavior and responsible use of resources. The Department of Information Technology System (ITS) is responsible for supervising compliance with this policy by students and employees. The provisions of this policy required by students appear in the syllabi of all AAU courses.

As part of the review of the Employee Handbook in 2021, the TRP was reviewed and updated by the Department of Information and Technology System, per the development of institutional infrastructure and with the expansion of assisted teaching modalities (*Technological Resources Policy*).

Conflict of Interest

AAU considers a conflict of commitment "in situations when the employee performs in a manner contrary to the values and ethics outlined in the organization's statement of foundations and ethical conduct or when an employee performs in a manner contrary to the ethical codes of conduct established for employees in particular professions." The employment policy includes that, at the start of employment, the employee will sign a statement indicating their acceptance of the conditions of employment, as indicated in the organization's Employee Handbook. This acceptance will constitute the person's declaration of compliance with the regulations on conflict of interest or commitments, and his or her resolve to continue to abide by them. The employer will annually provide its employees with a copy of the statement of ethical foundations. In addition, the employer will provide its employees with a copy of the regulation on conflict of interest or commitment. The employer will also inform its employees about the duty to disclose potential conflicts of interest or commitment (Employee Handbook, 2021, 101).

In the case of administrators, deans, directors of departments, and members of the teaching staff, the policy establishes that they will annually submit "a declaration of acceptance and compliance with the regulation on conflict of interest or commitment. The delivery of the declaration, signed by the persons indicated above, will constitute their declaration of compliance with the regulations and will place the person under the obligation to disclose potential conflicts of interest and commitment that could arise during the following year" (*Conflict of Interest Policy*).

Commitment to Practices and Policies Related to Hiring, Evaluation, Promotion, Grievances, Discipline, and Separation, along with Personnel Practices that are fair, Impartial, Avoid Conflict of Interest or its Appearance, and Allow for Prompt and Equitable Action

The 2021 Employee Handbook establishes that AAU is firmly committed to providing equal employment opportunities to applicants or employees without establishing any discrimination based on age, sex, race, color, social condition, political ideas, national origin, disability qualified by law, veteran status, being a victim or perceived to be a victim of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault, or any other reason or cause protected by the law. However, the Institution, being one of a religious nature, affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, reserves the

right to hire candidates who are members of the Adventist Church, except for positions of difficult recruitment. It is clarified that management positions will be exclusive to members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This policy is applicable for recruitment, selection, promotions, evaluations, transfers, salary changes, training and development opportunities, licenses, and benefits.

Likewise, it is the policy of AAU to provide qualified persons with disabilities the same employment opportunities and benefits as non-disabled persons. In consideration of the foregoing, AAU prohibits discrimination against a person with a disability, qualified for the position for which he or she applies, due to his or her physical or mental disability. This policy governs all aspects of employment, including selection, job assignment, compensation, discipline, termination, and access to benefits and training. AAU complies with the provisions of the American Act of 1990 that protects people with physical disabilities (better known in English as the ADA, or Americans with Disabilities Act) and other applicable legislation that prohibits employment discrimination against qualified disabled individuals (*Equal Employment Opportunity Policy; Policy Prohibiting Unlawful Employment Discrimination; Policy on Equal Employment Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities*).

Participation in Missionary and Community Service Projects Related to the Fulfillment of the Mission

The mission of AAU “promotes the holistic formation of competent professionals, committed to serving God and humanity.” To accomplish this, AAU places a strong emphasis on community service through various means:

The first effort is made through General Education components with two courses offered in all academic programs: EDUC 098/099 Introduction to University Life and HUSO 100 Philosophy of Service. Every student must take both courses in their first year of study. These courses provide the theoretical foundation and practical experience for understanding human needs and how to meet them. Through contact with people, students are encouraged to develop spiritual and human sensitivity. These courses also provide students early in their university careers with knowledge on how to treat others with kindness and professionalism.

Secondly, the Institution encourages the integration of service activities into the course curriculum. The nursing program exemplifies the incorporation of service activities in several of its baccalaureate courses. Eleven (11) concentration courses have service activities as a requirement. Also, there are education and religion courses that have the service component. Table 2.1 presents a summary of courses containing service activities.

Table 2.1*Service Activities as Course Requirements*

Nursing	Education/ Humanities	Religion
NURS 120 Fundamentals of Nursing II: a) Collection and distribution of essential personal items; b) community house cleaning.	ART 210 Arts and Crafts	RELB 101 Life and Teaching Jesus
NURS 220, 221 Medical Surgical I and II: a) House cleaning and painting; b) health clinics; c) emotional, social and spiritual help	EDUC 339 Parent and Community Rel.	RELP 291, 292 Pastoral Practice I and II
NURS 230 Physical Estimate and Primary Care: a) Health clinics; b) guidance on lifestyle.	EDUC 342 Integration of Faith, Values and Learning	RELP 391, 392 Int. Pastoral Practice I and II
NURS 300 Spiritual Care: Emotional, social and spiritual assistance for mothers, children, adults and elderly.	HUSO 100 Philosophy of Service	RELP 491, 492 Advanced Pastoral Practice I and II
NURS 320, 321 Maternity and Pediatrics: a) Arrangement and cleaning of houses of pregnant women; b) childcare; c) home health education for parents and children; d) health clinics for mothers and children; e) educational conferences in schools.		
NURS 322 Psychiatry and Mental Health: a) Mental health counseling; b) health clinics; c) help service for homeless people and people and people with addictions.		
NURS 323 Nursing Process Applied to the Elderly Client: a) House cleaning; b) collection and distribution of essential items; c) health guidance for the elderly; d) visit to nursing homes.		
NURS 380 Seminar: a) Help to homeless; b) cleaning inside and outside houses (cleaning yards and painting); c) health clinics; d) educational talks; e) visit to nursing homes.		

Nursing	Education/ Humanities	Religion
<p>NURS 421 Nursing and Community Health: a) Health fairs; b) cleaning houses and community; c) health orientation to the family and community; d) health clinics in a community (schools, groups, others); e) home visits; f) educational conferences in schools; g) biblical walks; h) workshops on natural remedies in public residential and nursing homes.</p>		

Finally, AAU provides a variety of opportunities for students and staff to voluntarily participate in community projects and services. As established in the Operational Plans, the vice presidencies must carry out a service activity each year that involves all their employees, while the Department for Religious Affairs annually plans a series of service activities that allow students and staff to participate voluntarily. The academic units also develop service activities that integrate the students. Table 2.2 shows an example of some of the service activities that were recently carried out.

Table 2.2

Examples of Community Service Activities in Recent Years

Area	Service Activities			
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Religious Affairs	Reconstruction of the roof and other interior repairs to a family home in the community.	Educational services center for the family and the community in Mayagüez.	During the semester, visits were made every month to provide chaplaincy services to the ladies of Posada Corazón in the city of Mayagüez, a place that offers support to women who are victims of abuse.	Organization of various activities that included employees and students to give food, personal

Service Activities

Area	2018	2019	2020	2021
			belongings and water, among others, to earthquake victims.	
Academic Units	Implementation of a tutoring program for students in the community and guidance for teachers.	Health clinic in Mayagüez involving students and staff. Support to the communities of Guánica and Yabucoa after the tremors with donations of personal belongings and food. Workshop on the use and management of the Excel program for the employees of the Mayor's Office of Mayagüez.	Food delivery for Summer Program students. Free tutorials for students from 1st to 6th grade, English, Spanish and mathematics. Free College Board review for community students. Summer camps inviting students island-wide.	
Vice-presidency	Fundraising for students with financial need and supplies of items for personal use, food, medical prescriptions, clothing, footwear, nursing uniforms.	Four Fridays in a row offering sports support to Adventist academies and encouraging exercise during quarantine.	Giving Tuesday that sought to attract funds from students and staff to offer scholarships to students in need.	

The Institution is interested in increasing the number of service activities, as a course requirement, as well as having regular community service activities carried out in all units by

personnel and students. Ultimately, AAU seeks to create a culture of service and thus fulfill its mission.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that AAU is successfully achieving the goals and initiatives relevant to Standard II on Ethics and Integrity. The Institution publishes and adheres to policies and procedures enacted by its Board of Trustees, as well as policies and procedures found in other publications including, but not limited to, the Faculty Handbook, Catalogs, and the Employee Handbook.

Strengths

- Ethics and integrity are reflected in the statements of all institutional policies and guidelines and are integrated into the daily activities of the Institution at all levels.
- It was observed that the different units follow the policies as they are established.
- The Institution is characterized as an institution that offers equal employment opportunities and its practices are non-discriminatory.

Challenges

- Engage in an organized and systematic process to update policies and procedures to reflect changes and to ensure accuracy about the process.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Develop a procedure for updating institutional policies which allows greater regularity in their revision.
- Design a plan for systematic participation in service activities by all units. This plan will include measurable objectives aligned with assessments thus verifying the fulfillment of the mission with greater objectivity.

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.

- RA8: The Institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes.
- RA9: The Institution's student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievement throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate or degree level as well as delivery and instructional modality.
- RA10: Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.
- RA15: The institution has a core of faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the Institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's educational programs.

This chapter addresses the following IPs:

- A. Strengthen student learning through active and experiential learning methodologies
- B. Restructure academic and support services
- C. Increase the impact of the spiritual program initiatives for students and staff
- D. Emphasize the integration of community service experiences

Analysis of Key Issues

AAU is committed to providing an education of excellence through its academic programs. Consistent with the institutional mission, the development of competent professionals is promoted through various learning experiences. During the past years, the Institution has improved student learning experiences by strengthening the academic offerings through the implementation of technology, the creation of new study programs, and the development of proposals. AAU supports faculty and staff that are part of the learning environment by offering professional development activities each year in various areas such as philosophy, teaching methods, and technology integration, among others. The Institution has been implementing these initiatives as part of the institutional goals according to the 2017-2023 SP.

Navigating Academic Offerings

AAU offers 6 associates, 26 bachelor's degrees, 12 master's degrees and 3 graduate certificates. Regarding the curriculum, associates contain a minimum of 23 general education credits, based on a minimum of 60 credits in the program. Bachelor's degrees require a minimum of 51 general

education credits, based on a minimum of 120 credits. Table 3.1 shows programs of study offered at the Institution.

Table 3.1

Programs of Studies

Educational Offerings
Associate Degree in Religion
Associate Degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting
Associate Degree in Computer Science
Associate Degree in Science in Office Administration with the option as Office Secretary
Associate Degree in Science in Office Administration with the option as Accounting Secretary
Associate Degree in Science in Respiratory Therapy
Associate Degree in Nursing
Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Pastoral Theology
Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in Elementary Education
Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration
Bachelor of Arts in Biology
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education with a concentration in English (K-6)
Bachelor of Arts in Special Education with an Emphasis in Learning Disabilities
Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education with a concentration in Religion
Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education with a concentration in Biology
Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education with a concentration in Spanish
Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education with a concentration in History
Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education with a concentration in English
Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education with a concentration in Mathematics
Bachelor of Arts in History
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in Social Work
Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design
Bachelor of Science in Cardiopulmonary
Bachelor of Science with a concentration in Biology
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in Management
Bachelor of Science in Office Administration with concentration in Bilingual
Bachelor of Science in Office Administration with concentration Not Bilingual
Bachelor of Science in Computer Science
Bachelor of Science in Nursing
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education with a concentration in Physical Education (K-6)
Bachelor of Science with a concentration in Computerized Systems of Information
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education with a concentration in Primary Education (K-3)
Master of Arts in Education with a specialty in Administration and Supervision
Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction at the Elementary Level
Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction at the Secondary Level
Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialty in Teaching English as a Second Language at the Elementary Level
Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialty in Teaching English as a Second Language at the Secondary Level
Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction with specialty in Biology
Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialty in Spanish
Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction with specialty in History
Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction with specialty in School Health Education and Community
Master of Arts in Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialty in Special Education

Educational Offerings
Master in Medical Surgical Nursing with specialties in Critical Care and Elderly Person Care
Master in Nursing with specialty in Anesthesia
Post Baccalaureate Certification in Special Education
Post Baccalaureate Certification in Bilingual Education
Post Baccalaureate Certification in Autism

Source: Academic Affairs Office

The economic compensation factor has made it difficult for the Master’s Program in Nursing with a Specialty in Anesthesia to hire doctors with the credentials needed to continue offering the program. For this reason, the Board of Trustees agreed to close the program as of October 2022. Currently, the Institution is working on the closure process in compliance with the regulatory agency. The Institution has already notified the program moratorium before the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Education. According to the 2017-2023 SP, the design and delivery of the student learning experience are among its top priorities. One of the main strategic goals to strengthen academic programs is to expand the academic offer so that it is flexible, updated, and responsive to the various modalities and quality standards, following market demand and innovative educational trends. This goal is achieved by producing highly competent graduates. During the past few years, five new study programs have been created, two of which are in the distance modality and respond to market trends. The Institution is working on the creation of new study programs in various modalities based on the Study Program Development Plan 2022-2024. There are various areas in which training is provided to faculty, such as distance learning, and teaching based on active learning, among others. During each faculty meeting, hours of training are provided in response to the professional development plan to keep faculty updated on the trends of higher education and their areas of specialty. Furthermore, we have 30 classrooms with digital screens, which has allowed us to increase the integration of technology in the classroom and strengthen the technological infrastructure of the Institution.

Another initiative is to obtain new professional accreditations for academic programs and maintain the existing ones. Recently, nursing programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels were re-accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. As for the professional accreditation for the teacher education program, it has been initiated by institution with the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation.

AAU is committed to guaranteeing academic rigor in all its programs of study; therefore, the programs are designed to foster coherent learning experiences and promote learning synthesis. The periodic review of academic programs, as well as the creation or modification of courses and proposals for new programs, must go through a series of constituents and approvals to guarantee compliance with accrediting and regulatory agencies. In the Institution, the development of new study programs is initiated by each academic dependency who, after evaluating the trends in the market and the viability of the program, recommends it to the Academic Affairs Commission. This Committee evaluates it according to the Procedures Guide for the Viability of New Academic Offers. If the requirements are met, it is recommended to the Executive Committee of the President, who in turn recommends it to the University Administrative Council, and finally, the Board of Trustees who issues the final action.

The degree requirements are available in the Institution’s Catalogs, the Academic Website, and advising sheets in each department. All degree requirements are presented similarly. Courses are organized by academic year, and each academic year is divided by semester/trimester. Also, the student is oriented about the ways to access the Catalog and is assigned to an academic

adviser for the planning of his/her study program. This format helps the student select the courses and number of credits needed to complete the degree on time. Each semester, the Institution schedules an academic advising period in which students meet with an academic adviser to discuss their academic progress before the enrollment process.

Pedagogical Development

AAU has a competent faculty, committed to the Adventist educational philosophy that endeavors to develop “the faculties of mind, body, and soul” as stated by White (1952) in her classic book *Education* (11). The Faculty at AAU also agree with the following philosophical statement:

The true teacher is not satisfied with second-rate work. He is not satisfied with directing his students to a standard lower than the highest which it is possible for them to attain. He cannot be content with imparting to them only technical knowledge, with making them merely clever accountants, skillful artisans, successful tradesmen. It is his ambition to inspire them with principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity-- principles that will make them a positive force for the stability and uplifting of society. He desires them, above all else, to learn life's great lesson of unselfish service (29).

Faculty Profile. Antillean is committed to providing the highest quality instruction. As shown in Table 3.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) student-to-faculty ratio, the number of faculty members is sufficient to serve the student population. All faculty and instructional staff have numerous opportunities to develop their teaching skills and strategies in their departments.

Table 3.2

Full Time Equivalent Student-to-Faculty-Ratio

Academic Year	FTE Student-to-Faculty Ratio
2018-2019	19:1
2019-2020	16:1
2020-2021	17:1
2021-2022	16:1

Source: Registrar Office

Furthermore, the faculty is characterized by its excellence in teaching. This statement is evidenced in the results of student and department chair evaluations. For the 2018-2022 academic years, for example, 90% of professors scored 92% or higher in student evaluations.

Also, Full-time faculty members are granted the following academic ranks: Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor (*Faculty Handbook, 2020, 17-19*). They are expected to teach, provide academic advising, conduct research, publish, engage in curriculum planning, assess students' academic performance, and be a member of at least one university committee.

In the fall of 2022, AAU had 40 full-time professors and 62 part-time professors. Tables 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 show the demographic categories in which faculty classified.

Table 3.3

Type of Work Contracts for Faculty at AAU

Academic Year	Types	
	<i>Full Time</i>	<i>Part Time</i>
2011-2019	44	82
2019-2020	42	98
2020-2021p	42	98
2021-2022	40	62

Source: Institutional Research Office

Table 3.4

AAU Full-time Faculty Classified by Gender

Academic Year	Gender	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
2018-2019	21	23
2019-2020	20	22
2020-2021	21	21
2021-2022	20	20

Source: Institutional Research Office

Table 3.5

Highest Degree Attained by Faculty at AAU

Academic Year	Degrees		
	<i>Bachelors</i>	<i>Master's</i>	<i>Doctorate</i>
2018-2019	0	30	14
2019-2020	0	29	13
2020-2021	0	29	13
2021-2022	0	29	11

Source: Institutional Research Office

Also, Table 3.6 presents other findings related to various aspects of the quality of teaching, assessment, and service.

Table 3.6

Quality of Teaching

Measure	2022 Graduating Students Survey	Three-Year Average Graduating Students
Student satisfaction	92%	93%
Use of technology	91%	89%
Evaluation methods	89%	89%
Individual support	87%	96%

Source: Institutional Effectiveness Office

Faculty Involvement in Curricular Development, Assessment, and Professional Development

To achieve the overall objectives of the academic departments and the University, the faculty must be involved in all the processes that require their expertise and support. In the organizational structure, teachers have direct access to their program coordinators, directors, and deans. Their ideas and recommendations for curricular improvement are supported and considered. Most academic departments or schools have monthly meetings. During these meetings, faculty can collaborate in matters dealing with curriculum improvement and assessment. Some actions taken at the departmental level are channeled through the Academic Affairs Executive Committee and may continue to the University Administrative Council and the Board of Trustees.

The Institution has established a plan for faculty professional development that is comprehensive in scope (See Faculty Handbook, 2020, 28-29). Under this plan, each faculty should reach, within three years, the goals required for professional development. The plan targets four areas: (1) philosophical base and religious influence, (2) effective techniques of teaching-learning, (3) a broad knowledge of his/her teaching field, and (4) technology integration in the classroom. To reach these goals, faculty participate and attend professional seminars, workshops, and conventions. As a result of the implemented initiatives, the integration of technology in the classroom has increased.

The Department of Distance Education was created as part of the plan to offer programs in different ways. It provides support for the expansion of technologies integration as teaching-learning tools. Also, the offerings have been expanded to include distance and hybrid modalities at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Faculty and support staff were offered various professional development activities to continue providing excellent service to the university community. Many of the faculty needs to be identified by the Director are related to distance education. For this reason, many workshops have been coordinated with the DED.

The 2020 Faculty Handbook describes the evaluation process, including the roles of responsible officers and entities, faculty rights, and evaluation procedures. The University has a rigorous

evaluation process for its teaching staff, which enables it to ensure both high-quality professional performance, as well as personal growth and individual contribution. It applies to all University teaching staff, whether full-time or part-time. The Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for developing and implementing the evaluation process and applying the criteria for promotion and permanence of the teaching staff.

Academic programs at AAU promote a holistic learning approach and encourage student participation in activities. The following programs require students to engage in a practicum and hands-on learning experience: Education, Business Administration, Nursing, Office Administration, and Theology. They use various facilities such as hospitals, schools, businesses, and offices as centers of practice. In this manner, students acquire real-life experiences in the workplace while providing direct service to the community. We include other learning opportunities offered in different installations such as laboratories and computer centers, technology systems, smart classrooms, libraries, and sports facilities. We add other academic learning opportunities directly related to the Spiritual Life program, like youth programs, religious services, concerts, and camps.

As for continued education, professional certifications offer opportunities to professionals who need to be up to date in their profession. These programs meet the appropriate standards specified by the different organizations (health-related occupations, teaching, church-related, etc.).

Commitment to Provide Programs and Services for Underprepared Students

AAU strives to provide programs and educational activities that consider the needs of the students, especially those who are underprepared. These programs and activities are publicly available and are widely disseminated through media such as the Catalog, flyers, and the AAU website. They are also available through the schools or academic departments. Among them, we offer:

Courses for Students with Deficiencies in the Areas of Spanish, Math, and English. Students who enter AAU must have a minimum established grade in the subjects of Spanish, Math, and English. Those with deficiencies in these areas are enrolled in remedial courses that aim at increasing their knowledge and skills before they enroll in regular courses. We use the scores obtained either in the College Entrance Examination, SAT, ACT, or placement tests developed at AAU to determine the students' level of proficiency. AAU also offers tutoring in all the basic courses and in some major courses in the academic programs through the Office of Guidance and Counseling.

TRIO SSS programs. Two federal TRIO programs are in place to help those students at risk to achieve their academic objectives. One program has a regular focus, and the other has an English as a Second Language (ESL) focus. These programs are supervised by the Vice Presidency for Student Affairs. Matching the federal funds awarded, AAU provided three rooms and office space for these projects, so the students could receive adequate services according to their expectations and needs. Students with low achievement or with financial needs are referred to the TRIO offices for advice and support, including tutoring in specific subjects. The main objectives for the TRIO programs are to increase retention and graduation levels among students who participate in the programs, and to motivate students who come from low-income families, who are first generation college students, or who have disabilities to achieve their academic goals.

Among the activities and services rendered by this program are:

- Supplemental instruction, academic counseling, seminars and workshops, and study and time management skills
- Tutoring services with emphasis in mathematics, English, Spanish, health, and education
- Vocational counseling
- Individual consulting and course selection
- Financial advisory and planning
- Information about financial aid and awards
- Mentoring
- Visits to universities who offer graduate studies

Library. The library is an excellent learning and research community that converges physical and virtual spaces, services, technology, programs, and information resources to strengthen the curriculum and support the teaching-learning process and research. It offers high-quality individualized and group services aimed at the development of information skills for the formation of graduates capable of lifelong independent learning.

Distance Education Department. The Department is composed of a director and two faculty members in charge of coordinating workshops offered to faculty and students. It is also composed of a committee that includes faculty representation and the Vice-president for Academic Affairs. Some of the main duties of the department are the following:

- Coordinate workshops for faculty members and students on topics such as distance education and educational technology.
- Guide faculty members in the design of online and/or hybrid courses.
- Manage the Moodle online platform.
- Develop rubrics for the evaluation of course modules.

General Education Courses

The General Education component at AAU meets the credit hours required to achieve the knowledge that will allow the students to join the workforce as professionals of excellence, offering selfless service to humanity in general and to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It also stimulates the disposition of students to acquire and demonstrate their ability in core competencies, such as: oral and written communication in Spanish and English, scientific and quantitative reasoning, analysis and critical thinking, technological competence, and understanding of the values and ethics. Table 3.7 shows the graduate profile.

Table 3.7*Graduate Profile*

Area	Profile	Courses	Credits	Learning Outcomes
Spirituality				
Religious and Healthy Lifestyle	Will value the knowledge of God according to the sacred writings as Creator and Sustainer of all things and restorer of humanity.	You will select (12) credits from the following courses:		Demonstrates knowledge of biblical truths and the ministry of Christ.
		RELB 101-Life and Teachings of Jesus or RELB 102-Introduction to the Gospels	3	It examines the ways in which the human being is involved in the message of the Bible.
		RELT 201-Christian Beliefs or RELT 202-Christian Living		It examines the ethical dimensions of his personal life and circumstances.
		RELB 100-General Introduction to the Bible or RELB 103-Introduction to the Bible+ or RELB 223-Introduction to Daniel and Revelation or RELB 300-Biblical Perspective on Spiritual Care#	3	Demonstrates knowledge of healthy living principles and discusses implications for physical, mental, and spiritual health.
		RELT 317-Christian Home or RELT 412-Christian Ethics HEPE 100-Healthy Living Principles	3	
	Demonstrate understanding of Adventist Christian and ethical values and make applications to personal contexts and issues.		3	
	Recognize the importance of a healthy lifestyle, attending to the body, mind and spirit, according to the Adventist legacy.		3	
Sub-Total			15	
Excellence				
Scientific Reasoning and Problem Solving	Critically analyze the relationship between science and Adventist faith and how the Bible agrees or disagrees with traditional scientific theories.	BIOL 100-Introduction to Biological Sciences or BIOL 101-Faith and Sciences+	3	Demonstrates knowledge of scientific principles within the biological sciences.
		MATH 231-Statistics I	3	Makes observations, collects, analyzes, and interprets data to test hypotheses. Use quantitative methods to test hypotheses and to construct solutions to problems.
Sub-Total			6	
Humanities	Critically understand the changing modes of human	MUCT 101-Introduction to Music or MUFA 105-Fine Arts Appreciation	3	Interprets and critically responds to work from various

Area	Profile	Courses	Credits	Learning Outcomes
	expression and their systems of thought. Appreciates the aesthetic in the arts and humanities. Values cultural and intellectual diversity and the ability to function in a multicultural environment.	MUHL 104-Music Appreciation or MUPF ____ Applied Music or ART 104-Introduction to Drawing or ART 210-Arts and Crafts HUMA 101-Western Culture or HUSO 101-Introduction to Social Sciences HUHI 200-PR Historical Process	0-3 3	cultures in the arts and humanities. Articulates an informed personal reaction to work in the arts and humanities. Examines and analyzes social institutions and processes in the context of historical periods or cultures. Develops and communicates solution explanations for historical or social discussion topics.
Sub-Total			9	
Oral and Writing Communication	Effectively master the Spanish language and develop skills to function fluently in English as a second language.	HUSP 111-Basic Spanish I HUSP 122-Basic Spanish II HUCO 223-Communication and Expression HUEN 123-ESL Academic II HUEN 215-Grammar, Composition ESL HUEN 231-Composition in English	3 3 3 6-12	Demonstrates and applies knowledge of the writing process and expression, using creativity, organization, composition, revision, editing, and presentation, when appropriate for specific tasks and audiences. Locate, evaluate, and synthesize material from diverse sources and multiple viewpoints.
Sub-Total			21	
Information Literacy and Technology	1. Research topics using a variety of resources.	COMP 101-Introduction to Computers and Information Systems/ OFAD 234-Computer Applications	3	Use various technological tools to create professional documents and make presentations.
Critical Thinking	Recognize, apply and critically evaluate reasoning.	EDUC 098-University Life or EDUC 099-Seminar on University Life	1 .5	
Logical-Mathematical Thinking	Apply mathematics to analyze number relationships, solve problems, explain processes, and interpret results.	MATH 110-College Mathematics MATH 112-Mathematics for Health Sciences	3	Demonstrates knowledge of the basic theories and methods of mathematics Applies mathematical skills and knowledge in their academic discipline.
Sub-Total			7	
Service				

Area	Profile	Courses	Credits	Learning Outcomes
Service	Value service to God and humanity.	HUSO 100-Philosophy Service	1	Actively participates in service activities, showing attitudes of respect, courtesy and consideration. Demonstrates knowledge about the meaning and importance of service. Evaluate ways in which conditions in the community can be improved through service.
Collaborative Work	Collaborates with others to bring together diverse sources of skills, resources, and knowledge to achieve collaborative results	HEPE 101-116-Physical Education	1	Participates effectively in different group settings, listening, thinking critically and creatively, reflecting and responding appropriately to group relationships. Demonstrates ability to reach group agreements, create a shared vision and join forces with a common goal.
Sustainability and Citizenship	Recognize their commitment to the responsible use of natural, financial and human resources.	BUAD 101-Management of Natural and Financial Resources	1	Proposes and evaluates solutions to environmental problems, including the main aspects of sustainability. Articulate and defend actions you would take in relation to various environmental issues.
Sub-Total			3	
TOTAL CREDITS			61	

+Only for Theologians

#Only for students of health programs

*Does not apply to Nursing students

^Not required for students in the following programs: Biology, Cardiopulmonary and Nursing.

Graduate Profile. The profile of the AAU graduate is based on the educational principles that are essential to achieving comprehensive human development. This profile describes the professional with the skills that allow him to successfully deploy his abilities in the work, social, and religious environment. Such attributes are found in the three focus pillars chosen by the AAU as part of its vision: spirituality, excellence, and service. In Table 3.7 subsections 1 and 12, the courses of the curriculum that seek a life of witness and service are presented. Also, in sections 8, 9, 10, and 11, the courses that are common to all study programs

are detailed, in which high-level thinking, analysis, decision-making, reflective thinking, and innovation are emphasized. In sections 1, 2, 12, 13, and 14, the courses that contribute to the formation of character are presented. In addition, each of the syllabi of the core and concentration/specialty courses includes a section on the integration of faith and values. This section includes the biblical concept that will be highlighted in the course as a strategy to integrate the knowledge of God into the academic curriculum. The Student Learning Assessment Plan is used by the Institution to demonstrate the student's development of these skills at the end of their studies.

Conclusion

The analysis and evidence presented in this chapter shows that AAU has academic programs of study that are rigorous, coherent, and aligned with its mission. Academic programs are offered by faculty members who are qualified and committed to student success. In addition, the institution offers support services that enhance student academic experiences.

Strengths

- The Institution's educational offering demonstrates academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to its higher education mission.
- AAU provides a wide range of programs, initiatives, and services to support its academic programs and students' academic progress (including advising, psychological and counseling services, support for specific student needs, and academic support, among others).

Challenges

- Review the internal process for academic program development to reduce the time for completion and become more agile in responding to market needs.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Evaluate all programs to address effective teaching, student learning, and student satisfaction with the online learning experience.

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.

RA 8: Systematic evaluation and dissemination of findings—addressed particularly through the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on student satisfaction that is shared at all levels of the organization and guide programmatic and budgeting decisions.

RA 10: Institutional planning linked to institutional effectiveness thorough assessment—addressed particularly by the development and implementation of retention plans, strategies to improve student satisfaction, and the re-engineering of admission and recruitment processes.

This chapter addresses the following IP:

- B. Restructure academic and support services.

Analysis of Key Issues

AAU recruits and admits students whose interests, skills, experiences, and goals are consistent with its mission and educational offerings. It also provides an environment that supports and enhances the student experience, as stated in the 2017-2023 SP. The Institution also empowers students and improves the teaching-learning process to promote student success in achieving academic goals. In addition, it provides opportunities for student participation in various extracurricular and spiritual activities.

Providing Students with Orientation and Information Needed

The Marketing and Recruitment Office aims to market and promote academic programs, as well as recruit students to become part of our learning community, maintaining the philosophy of Adventist Education, ethics, and professionalism in all activities. That is why its efforts are focused on using different means to guide and impact prospective students, intending to enroll and complete an academic degree at our Institution. AAU contacts students from public schools, private schools, homeschoolers, active in other institutions (transfers), and work scenarios, among others, for which various activities are carried out aimed at making the prospective student aware of the university. Through orientations in public and private schools, College Day, educational and health fairs, Open Houses, and Campus Tours, prospective students acquire initial information about the Institution. Once a lead is obtained from a prospect, either through these activities or when the interested person starts the application process, a formal interaction begins, providing them with enough information to make an informed decision when enrolling. Tools such as regular mail, follow-up calls, text messages, and emails are used during the contact process.

Admissions

The Admissions Office reviews prospective student applications to ensure that the student has the requirements to be admitted to the programs of study. In addition, the Admissions Office identifies those applicants who are not adequately prepared but can be successful with the appropriate support. The University has several resources to help these students. One such resource includes placement tests. All incoming undergraduates take the Mathematics, Spanish, and English placement exams to determine students' appropriate course levels, including preparatory or remedial courses in Math, Spanish, and English. Conditional admission is another resource that makes it easier for students who do not have the required average to provisionally enroll in another program that requires a lower average.

During their first semester, their academic advisor will follow up on these students, so they can raise their GPA and be accepted into the program of their choice. To impact a higher number of students, the Admissions Office has created a friendly and flexible policy where it offers students different options for enrollment. High school seniors are offered the option of being provisionally admitted and enrolling through Early Admission (Dual enrollment). The purpose is to attract prospective students who are motivated to start their university career, so they can experience the university environment and advance their career while completing their senior year. The admission policy makes provision for interested students to be allowed to apply and be accepted, even if they have not taken standardized admissions tests, such as the College Board, ACT, or SAT. These students are offered placement exams in the basic subjects that require them. This option speeds up the admissions process and also encourages students to apply earlier. It also benefits international students who cannot take the standardized exams in their home countries.

Home school students may be admitted by submitting evidence of having completed a study program equivalent to a Puerto Rico High School, as long as it is certified by the Puerto Rico Department of Education. In case a student is not able to present it, they can present a sworn statement by the parents and/or umbrella school together with the results of standardized admission tests, such as the College Board, ACT, or SAT.

New students admitted to AAU can opt for university credit when they have obtained 3 or more points on a 5-point scale, on the Advanced Placement Tests (APT). For each exam, up to 6 credits will be awarded (*Admission Policy*).

During the admission process, the Vice-Presidency for Student Affairs provides individual assistance to international students to manage their student visas while they are outside the United States and the necessary guidance once they are in Puerto Rico. The Vice-Presidency for Student Affairs provides international students with a guide with information related to university life, and everything related to their rights and responsibilities following immigration regulations.

The students expressed their satisfaction with the quality of service offered by the admissions office staff in the survey given in the Spring 2021 orientation, admission, and registration processes. Seventy-six percent (76%) of students stated that the information offered by the team answered all their questions, and (86%) stated that the staff was well-trained to assist students. Eighty-six percent (86%) also reported receiving quality treatment on calls and perceived staff's willingness to help.

Financial Aid

Regardless of where the student is in the admissions process, they can contact the Financial Aid Office for information on the application process for financial aid. The Financial Aid Office website is the most comprehensive source of financial information for students, with specific information for undergraduate, graduate, international, and veteran students. Each section has information on costs, payment options, and financial aid.

Financial aid policies and procedures are outlined in detail, as well as the importance of maintaining satisfactory academic progress. The Net Price Calculator can be used to see an early indication of the cost of a college education. The prospective student is asked to provide biographical and financial details as well as information about their high school education and placement test scores. Then they are provided with estimated information regarding Merit Aid eligibility and estimated costs for the first academic year.

The 2019-2022 university catalog contains all the information students need to know about the costs of the Institution's educational services and about the scholarships, grants, and loans available, whether federal, state, or institutional. It also includes application procedures, eligibility requirements, and duties and responsibilities for students. AAU is committed to educating students about the federal financial aid system before they begin to receive awards. Each student must take the BUAD 101-Resource Management course in their first semester to understand the federal financial aid system. This course provides instruction aimed at educating students about planning and paying for postsecondary education, providing tools to help them understand their financial responsibilities.

A large portion of the financial aid AAU students receive comes from the US Federal Department of Education, in the form of Pell Grants, Direct Loans, Supplemental Grants, and Work-Study funds. To determine if a student is eligible for these financial aid programs, students are strongly encouraged to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, known as the FAFSA. When the University processes a student's FAFSA application, it contacts the student if additional documentation must be submitted.

During the fall of 2020 and the spring of 2022, 78% and 81% of first-time freshmen students, respectively, stated in the survey regarding orientation, admission, and enrollment processes that they were satisfied with the orientations and the remote service offered by the Financial Aid Office. For the spring of 2021, 84% of regular students were satisfied with virtual Financial Aid services, as indicated in the Satisfaction Survey.

Student Welfare Office

AAU established the Office of Orientation and Counseling to offer students the help they need in utilizing their resources and opportunities. This office assists students concerning available services and resources of an academic, social, financial, professional, and personal nature. As part of the strategies of this office, an orientation program is held each semester for new students, including transfer students, veterans, and international students. According to the admissions policy, this orientation is required. The orientation sessions introduce students to the campus and provide advice on financial aid, student health and well-being, safety, and academic experiences. The orientation program also provides an important opportunity for students to begin making friends and become part of the AAU Family.

The use of the Institutional Catalog is emphasized during the orientation program since it is one of the main sources of official information for all students. The Undergraduate and Graduate academic catalogs provide information on the University's tuition and fee structure and financial aid policies. The catalogs also include comprehensive breakdowns of the cost of tuition by semester/quarter and academic year, as well as information on tuition discounts and scholarships.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, this program was carried out in person, before the start of the semester. Since 2020, this program has been carried out both in person and via digital channels. The purpose of this program is to ensure that the student is aware of the services offered by the Institution, its academic advisers, the use of exam tools and learning platforms such as Moodle, and other aspects that support student integration into university life and retention. As part of the August 2021 orientation process, an Integrated Services Officer was hired to guide a student from the moment he or she is admitted to the Institution until he/she completes his/her first year.

Efforts During the Pandemic

Despite the pandemic restrictions, AAU arranged free review sessions to prepare high school students taking the College Board. On two Sundays in October, AAU conducted reviews of the academic areas of Spanish, English, and mathematics through Facebook Live and YouTube. Approximately 270 people registered, plus those who logged in without registering. It was used to promote the University at the Puerto Rico level. Many prospective students called to ask for information after watching the AAU promotional videos during review breaks.

Posts were created for school pages to complement the orientations for prospective students, whether face-to-face or virtual. They were sent to school counselors who have Facebook pages since the counselors share it on their pages and promote the University among their students. Before the semester began, the staff from the service offices were recorded offering an orientation to students. The University presented these videos in Virtual Orientation meetings. During new student orientations, important topics such as student life, financial aid, campus policies, student accounts, and standards of behavior were covered.

One of the most innovative initiatives is the option of allowing the prospective student to make video calls with a AAU officer by appointment. The integration of video calls into the recruitment process works to create a closer link with the potential student and their families. It also allows students and families to identify the person who is remotely working on their case. The prospective student is directly guided to fill out the online application from our website, www.uaa.edu. They are given the option of making a call through WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Meet, or a direct video call from their cell phone (*Marketing and Recruitment Achievement Report 2020-2021*).

Students were surveyed on their satisfaction with the services offered during COVID-19. The results reflected in the SP 2020, that 73% of students agreed that the Institution had maintained good communication with them and had used various means to guide and inform them about the different methods, available help, and processes to follow. Likewise, 75% expressed that the communication of instructions and steps to follow for the change from face-to-face modality to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERE) reached everyone clearly and quickly.

Concerning new students, on the survey on the orientation, admission, and registration processes of the fall of 2021, 84% of students expressed that the information offered by the different offices was clear, and 80% felt that the orientation program was well organized.

Functions and Impact of the Student Support Services and Metrics Used to Assess Impacts

Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office is responsible for ensuring the privacy and protection of student records according to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The University took steps to protect the privacy of student records and correspondence, and all official electronic messages were sent to the student via the institutional email account. Students were asked to submit the "Consent for Access to Educational Records" form to grant access to records to a third party. Student records may be released only with the written consent of the student. Information Technologies System (ITS) manages network and system security to ensure all student data and information about employees, alumni, and others are private and secure. The Vice-Presidency for Academic Affairs is the data owner for student academic records.

Transfer applicants and current students receive comprehensive information to help facilitate the process of transferring credits to AAU. The 2019-2022 catalog contains the policy that regulates the transfer of credits to the Institution. Students can access the application for this process on the institutional website. Students who have studied in other accredited universities can receive academic credit under this policy. The Registrar's Office is the primary contact regarding the posting and initial evaluation of transfer credits, but the final determination of course equivalency rests with individual academic departments in coordination with the official validations of the Registrar's Office.

Students who have satisfactorily completed at least 12 semester credit hours at AAU may apply for Credit by Experience, by submitting a portfolio and a nonrefundable evaluation fee. This is for adult students ages 24 and up that would like tangible recognition through academic credit for their achievements and skills. Credit can be awarded for knowledge gained in the areas of a specific course through job training, community service, courses without credit, and/or special achievement.

AAU recognizes that students can independently gain skills at the university level from professional labor or study. These students, by challenging and passing an exam, may receive academic credit for this previously acquired knowledge, provided the University offers comparable courses.

AAU is approved for students with educational benefits under the different "GI Bill" programs. Veterans, as well as their eligible family members, are entitled to enjoy the available educational benefits. They must submit an application to the Registrar's Office.

In 2019, AAU hired a company to work with the virtualization of the degree audit, improving course registration, evaluation, and validation processes. This process improved the enrollment of students in the E-Cams system as well as the academic evaluation of prerequisite courses. The Registrar's Office digitalized forms to make it easier for students to register. Currently, the forms are available on the University's website so that students can complete them and send them electronically. In the spring of 2021, the Distance Services Satisfaction Survey

demonstrated that 75% of students were satisfied with the University's remote registration services.

Student Welfare Office. This office strives to ensure the well-being of each student, helping them to resolve personal issues and encouraging them to get involved in University activities. The student support services staff developed a wide range of services and extracurricular activities to promote the retention and success of students at the University. These include education, health, and human behavior with staff possessing the proper academic preparation and licensing to exercise their profession. Furthermore, to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, we process the requests from students who require reasonable accommodation. Students who require other specialized services are referred to external resources, such as psychological and psychiatric services as well as vocational rehabilitation.

In 2020, the Office of Student Welfare conducted a survey to learn about the needs and interests of the student population and employees, in terms of mental health. Based on the results, the Office prepared a series of educational brochures released through the media on topics such as managing panic attacks, stress management, self-control techniques, exercises to manage emotions, how to reduce anxiety due to social isolation, and others. These workshops have continued repeatedly each semester.

During the same year, the University reached a collaborative agreement with Carlos Albizu University, through which the services of interns were obtained who worked with students in the areas of clinical psychology, individual psychotherapy, and others. Also, interns were hired to conduct evaluations. We utilize psychometric tests on campus and refer students for other types of testing, if necessary. The group of practitioners also offered workshops, educational talks, and support talks to AAU employees and students. The practitioners continued to hold workshops and talks for AAU employees and students after the earthquakes of January 2020. To get help with continuing therapies, referred students could call the PAS Hotline. For the following semester, the interns at Carlos Albizu University continued to offer the same services in person and online.

During the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institution was also able to efficiently meet the emotional health needs of students. A full-time licensed psychological counselor, a part-time psychologist, a social worker, an academic counselor, and coordination of services were provided by the funds granted by the second edition of HEERF. In the fall of 2021 and spring of 2022, a total of 52 students who had been directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic received psychological services. Nine students received services from the Social Worker. The services needed to innovate to continue giving attention to the students, so the Virtual Office was created using a video chat. Students could access the announced link through email and social media, and services were offered on this platform during regular business hours. Using Podcasts, the Office created and offered several podcasts containing academic and mental health content. Among them were: "Caring for your emotional health during final exams," and "Either you organize, or you die." These were about time management and mental health, all published on the social networks of the university and the office.

The Health Services Office is responsible for maintaining student health records, as well as promoting healthy living. It provides the University community a variety of activities and guidance on healthy habits. The office has full-time nursing and part-time medical services integrated into a consortium with Bella Vista Hospital, which began in 2018. The Office of Health Services provides first aid to students in need, over-the-counter medications, educational

talks, and guidance on health-related issues. It also helps with advising on the procedures for obtaining a medical plan.

Counseling. The counseling services are aimed at promoting and contributing to the achievement of students' personal and professional goals through direct interventions in all areas. Interventions are provided in the academic, personal, vocational, and social areas, as well as to promote greater integration and participation in the University community. As an overall goal, the department wants to help students know themselves, their skills, their interests, and their limitations. It provides experiences designed to facilitate their holistic development for their benefit and for the benefit of the society in which they live.

The Counseling Office has a Facebook page (UAA Counseling), through which students may request guidance. The student can stay connected to a live chat to receive services and make inquiries during working hours. Similarly, the Office's Instagram page (consejeriauaa) promotes emotional support brochures made by the Student Welfare office, important announcements from other University departments, and AAU promotions. In addition, direct contact with students is achieved and doubts are clarified by direct messaging during working hours.

The Prevention Program holds prevention fairs, celebrates Prevention Week, and has a calendar of educational talks. The Counseling Office guides faculty and staff on reasonable accommodation policies and assists students who require this service. Academic counseling services include guidance and orientation during the enrollment process, tutoring for students with learning needs, and monitoring of academic progress. In the last four years, over 200 students have attended tutoring sessions in subjects like Spanish, English, Biology, Mathematics, Chemistry, Microcomputers, Hebrew, and Greek. For the spring 2020 semester, 88% of students expressed that the subjects offered by the program met their needs and that the prevailing environment stimulated study and learning. When students need help exploring careers, preparing to find jobs or internships, contacting employers, or getting help preparing their resumes, they can ask for help in the Counseling Office. In vocational counseling, vocational interest inventory tests are administered, job fairs are held, and employment opportunities are sent to the emails of the alumni. More than 70% of students were satisfied with the services offered remotely by the Student Welfare Office, according to a Student Satisfaction Survey. During the 2021-2022 academic year, 748 students benefited from some of the services offered by the Student Welfare Office.

Residence Halls

If students prefer to live on campus, AAU pledges to provide them with a comfortable and supportive environment. The objective of these facilities is to promote the social, moral, and intellectual development of the residents. The Institution strives to create an atmosphere that stimulates academic study and good human relations, to achieve the academic objectives of the students. There are students from diverse cultures residing on campus, which contribute to cultural and educational enrichment.

The residence halls at AAU are much more than just physical structures - they are a community where students learn to live in a group and respect individual differences. Group interaction should be characterized by order and mutual respect. Student life in the residences is regulated by the Student Residence Manual, which establishes the norms and rules for healthy group

coexistence. Students who request to use these facilities are required to know and accept the rules, to maintain a welcoming and pleasant environment (Student Residence Manual).

Student Associations

The Institution offers its students multiple opportunities to develop leadership and teamwork skills. The Vice-Presidency for Student Affairs operates the General Student Council, with representation from the different areas that coordinate student activities. This body is one of the main bodies that ensure that all concerns and opinions of students are heard. It also serves to keep the student population informed and to make recommendations on the use of best practices related to services. There are other additional student life clubs and associations lead by students, such as Campus Ministries, which bring together the leaders of all other associations. Academic units also have clubs, such as the Business Club and the Science Club, among others.

Sports Activities

The Institution offers its students the opportunity to practice sports in its facilities and have time and place for recreation. We have, among them, a gym, swimming pool, tennis court, volleyball court, and basketball courts. These facilities are enjoyed by both students and the community at large. Students participate in fitness activities and recreational sports, either as a team or individually. The official sporting events celebrated each year that appear in the academic calendar are the intramural games, with basketball, volleyball, softball, and soccer teams; the Olympics with teams formed by schools or departments in the sports of basketball, softball, soccer, swimming, track and field, table tennis and court tennis, and volleyball; and tournaments.

Commitment of the Institution to Student Retention, Persistence, Completion, and Success Through a Coherent and Effective Support System

AAU is committed to student retention; for this reason, the University hired a part-time Retention Coordinator in 2016. In 2018, this position became full-time. The purpose of this Office is to support students throughout their university experience. Furthermore, it aims to facilitate students' adaptation to university life. This support begins in their first year through early identification of their needs, coordination of support services, and continuous and intensive monitoring of their academic performance, until graduation. This commitment is essential for AAU to achieve its retention, persistence, and graduation goals, and it ensures that each student is exposed to an environment that promotes excellence.

Among the initiatives carried out by the Office, aimed at retaining first-year students, is the Summer Bridge program, a summer camp that allows students to become familiar with the Institution and acquire life skills that support them in their college life. This program has been running since 2017 and typically includes 13-15 eligible students each summer based on financial need, disability, and need for academic support. Five years into the program, of the 2017 cohort of 13 students, six successfully graduated from the Institution, and five transferred to other universities. Of the 2018 cohort, 27% graduated, and 40% are still active in the Institution. The Retention Office also offers workshops. It provides spiritual, recreational, and academic activities geared toward the freshmen group. As a result of these efforts, in the Fall

2021 New Student Orientation, Admissions, and Enrollment Survey, 87% of students said they were satisfied with their experience as a freshman.

In 2017, to work directly with these students, identify their needs, and motivate them, the Office created a procedure for monitoring absences and academic achievement. The Office stresses the importance for faculty to keep a record of students who have missed more than two classes in a row and refer them to the Retention Coordinator. The faculty also refers underperforming students to the Retention Office so they receive the appropriate attention, based on their needs.

Other services of the Retention Office include mentoring. During the spring of 2020, we had five mentors, and they referred 38 underachieving students for mentoring services. Since the University closed, the mentors worked remotely to ensure that the students continued to receive services. The Office offered these services on various platforms, including Google Meet, Zoom, telephone, video calls, and WhatsApp. Each student was attended to weekly by appointment. Of the 38 students referred to the mentoring services, 25 responded positively to the appointment messages and received the services. Beginning in the fall of 2021, the Office continued offering mentorships in person and virtually. The Table 4.1 shows the retention and persistence percent.

Table 4.1

Retention and Persistence

Description	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Retention	79.74%	79.47%	81.56%
Persistence	83.60%	82.97%	84.93%

Source: Retention Office

Student Learning Experiences

Library. The Dennis Soto Library is a center for learning and discovery. The collections are used to meet the teaching, learning, and research needs of the faculty. The library staff help bring the collections to life in the classroom and offer instructional sessions as well as individual consultations. These are designed to help students in the development of lifelong learning, critical thinking, and analytical skills.

The library subscribes to 26 online databases, providing access to over 200,000 electronic books and over 10,000 electronic magazines and newspapers. These resources are available from anywhere on any computer or device with an Internet connection. Most databases are subscribed to through the Adventist Virtual Library Consortium, which is part of the Inter-American Division. Other resources include a variety of open-access research and links to other libraries. Academic support is also provided to help students achieve their academic goals. All these resources can be found on our library page.

Librarians offer individual and group guidance to teachers on the use of library resources, including the use of databases, search strategies, the electronic catalog, and the different

collections. They also provide support for students who have difficulty with word-processing software and our computer center's software.

The library offers a virtual reference service through a chat, which is attended to in real time. This service provides students with the opportunity to ask questions about library services or the use of available resources, including, for example, the use of databases or data. Furthermore, the chat option allows for videoconferences to clarify any doubts from customers. Seminars are offered to the faculty at the request of the Academic Vice Presidency and in coordination with the schools and departments. These seminars are aimed at improving the use of library resources. The library also emphasizes the importance of ethical use of information, encouraging students to correctly cite sources and provide bibliographic information about them.

Learning Center and Technology Resources. The Learning and Technology Resource Center is located on the first floor of the Dennis Soto Library. There are more than 30 computers where students can do their language and science labs. They can also use word processors to print their academic papers and carry out their searches on the Internet.

In the spring of 2020, 71% of the students expressed satisfaction with the library's resources, 76% were satisfied with the staff's accessibility to help them and clarify their doubts, and 70% were satisfied with the services offered by the staff. In the spring of 2021, 74% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the library's virtual services.

TRIO Programs. AAU submitted and was awarded two proposals for federal projects that provide support services to students deemed potential dropouts (SSS TRIO and TRIO ESL). These programs originated with federal funds but demanded the Institution's internal funds to provide the facilities needed for their development. Through these TRIO Student Support Service (SSS) programs, the department sought to establish a project on the AAU campus that could provide SSS participants with the necessary academic support systems, guidance, tools, and resources to complete a baccalaureate degree and pursue graduate-level education.

Equipped with these tools and resources, and ultimately with baccalaureate and advanced degrees, students will be better able to navigate through difficult economic times. Two TRIO SSS programs were approved in 2010: the regular program and one with an emphasis on ESL. TRIO programs are attached to the Vice-Presidency for Student Affairs. The TRIO SSS program aims to: (a) Increase retention and graduation among students that meet the requirements of the program, and (b) Encourage students who have low income, are first-generation, and are individuals with disabilities to achieve their academic goals. Activities and services offered by the program include the following: supplemental instruction, academic counseling, seminars and workshops, study and time management skills, vocational counseling, individual academic advice and course selection, financial advising and planning, information on financial aid and rewards, cultural and academic exhibition, health and education, mentoring, and tutoring services with an emphasis on mathematics; English; and Spanish. The Table 4.2 shows the TRIO activities to support students in the Institution.

Table 4.2*TRIO Activities to Support Students*

Activities	2017	2018	2019	2020
Tutorial	1,227	1,752	1,591	1,061
Academic advice	837	660	1,070	985
Mentoring and other Services	179	392	500	493
Number of students served	280	280	280	280
Extra-curricular activities	25	13	28	22

The program supports and enriches students academically, culturally, and socially from admission through graduation, through this federally funded TRIO program. During the spring of 2020, in the Service Satisfaction Survey, 83% of the students expressed that the program helped them overcome their academic challenges and that it fostered their professional development. Ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the academic advice they had received. In 2021, 78% of respondents were satisfied with remote services.

The Metrics Used to Assess the Impact of Support Services. Assessment is an important component of student-directed services and programs, so information is continually collected from students and staff to assess its effectiveness. Each year, after orientation activities have concluded, new students are asked to complete a survey to collect information about their satisfaction with the orientation program and with the admission and enrollment processes. Additionally, every new student completes a profile survey, which allows the department to know their expectations and needs so that they can be met. Regular students also can evaluate the enrollment process each year. The Office of Institutional Research utilizes the Services Evaluation Survey to collect information on areas such as admissions, registration, financial aid, student welfare, and the library. During the pandemic, this survey was replaced by a survey assessing student satisfaction with the services offered during COVID-19. For the 2022-2023 academic year, the regular survey of service units resumed. The support services offered at the Institution are also collected from the graduating students and graduates.

The results of these surveys are sent to the vice presidents, associate vice presidents, and department directors, for the creation of action plans and long-term planning. The Institutional Assessment Committee meets to discuss the results of the surveys and then sends a report to each member for dissemination, since the committee has representation from all levels of the institution. The survey results have been incorporated into the previous sections.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, AAU demonstrated that it possesses ethical policies and processes to admit, retain, and facilitate student success. This analysis helped identify the following strengths, challenges, and opportunities:

Strengths

- The Institution provides opportunities for students to participate in all levels of university life, including student associations and athletic training programs.
- The Vice-Presidency for Students Affairs supports student success from admission to graduation in a personalized manner, considering academic needs.

Challenges

- Have an integrated system to coordinate the student support services provided and facilitate the assessment of services.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Improve the enrollment processes of new students through the creation of integrated services. During 2021, work began with the integrated services' office, hiring an officer who would attend to the newly admitted population. The officer follows up on the student, document debt, enroll, and other things. The institution is evaluating the possibility of increasing the number of employees who can offer services.
- To complete the virtualization process, the company 3D Technologies was hired to add exams to our system, upload documents, and make other adjustments. Student now see the status of their requests, and the degree audit. Alignment between eCams and Moodle has also been made, and student can now choose the dormitory and the plan cafeteria. Other adjustments have been made to make the process of formalizing enrollment more bearable.

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.

- RA8: Systematic Evaluation of All Programs—The Institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes.
- RA9: Student Learning Programs—The Institution's student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievement throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate, degree level, or delivery and instructional modality.
- RA10: Institutional Planning—Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.

This chapter addresses the following IPs:

- A. Strengthen student learning through active and experiential learning methodologies.
- C. Increase the impact of the spiritual program initiatives on students and staff.

Analysis of Key Issues

AAU has an assessment system that allows the Institution to evaluate its effectiveness and better understand the need for new initiatives and activities supporting the institution's mission and vision. This system also helps to ensure that human, financial, and physical resources are used efficiently to achieve the organization's goals and sustain development. The system helps management in planning and decision-making processes. The Institution has a Guide for Institutional Effectiveness 2017-2022 which defines the processes and methods to be followed for the assessment of institutional effectiveness and provides guidelines for strategic planning processes. The Guide is organized into four sections that cover the entire process: Section I – Institutional Effectiveness; Section II – Strategic Planning; Section III - Institutional Assessment; and Section IV – Guide for the Effectiveness of Academic Programs.

All academic programs have clearly articulated Program Learning Outcomes, which are aligned with the institutional learning outcomes and mission. Each program's assessment plan includes a matrix that shows the alignment between the program and the institutional graduate profile. These goals are defined by department faculty, who ensure high standards of assessment validity to determine whether students are achieving institutional and program learning outcomes.

Program Curricular Goals

Program Evaluations provide an opportunity to evidence and guarantee the highest quality of offer every five (5) years. Furthermore, it is necessary to plan for the future based on the achievements made and the opportunities and challenges presented and projected. This evaluation also allows the department to demonstrate and improve the quality of teaching, research, and service. It periodically reviews the results achieved by the program and determines how to address these areas, by establishing priorities for short-term action, and long-term. The academic unit has a yearly operational plan. An Achievement Report is submitted annually according to the Annual Operational Plan, which is aligned with the requirements of the program evaluation. This report is submitted to the academic dependencies, each of which is responsible for ensuring that the plans are implemented according to the designated timelines. The Guide for the Evaluation of Academic Programs presented by AAU outlines the criteria to consider when evaluating programs. It focuses on the evidence of the quality and effectiveness of the program, based on the results.

Assessment of Learning at the Institutional Level. Assessment of learning is administered regularly by the Department of Institutional Effectiveness and is given to all students or a sample of them. The Department studies the assessment, focusing primarily on the graduating student profiles. It looks to demonstrate whether students leaving the Institution upon graduation, have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that were intended to be developed. AAU uses the results of the assessment to make decisions relating to teaching and learning policies and practices. They are also used to provide the Institution with evidence of student learning and, therefore, ensure the achievement of the institutional mission.

In 2022, AAU again administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which measures the time and energy students devote to their studies and other educational activities. The survey helped the Institution to use the appropriate resources to develop an effective educational practice that stimulates student learning. Like any effective educational institution, AAU aims to guide students toward activities that complement their professional development. The NSSE survey covers four main areas: academic challenges, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, and the campus environment. Ten indicators are used to assess these areas.

Freshmen and senior students obtained the same results in the areas of academic challenge, learning with peers, and experiences with faculty as they did in the comparison groups. Students exhibited higher levels of quality interactions and a supportive environment than the comparison groups, which suggests that our close campus environment may have had a positive impact.

In 2020, the results were like those of the comparison groups which included institutions from Puerto Rico, institutions with a Carnegie Class, and all those surveyed by NSSE that year. The results for the new students attending AAU were significantly higher than those for the comparison groups in both the campus environment area and the supportive environment indicator. The results of AAU's students for 2022 were like those of comparison groups, both for first-year students and seniors. Both groups were above all the other groups in the supportive environment indicator. In 2022, the results of the seniors were also better than those of the comparison groups in the indicators of reflective and integrative learning, higher-order learning, collaborative learning, discussion with diverse others, and student-faculty interaction (NSSE Engagement Indicators Overview 2018, 2020, 2022).

Assessment of Learning at the Program Level. This assessment is administered regularly to all students or a sample of them, and it covers the aspects of the graduate profile. Assessment processes at this level guide decision-making in learning within a specific program. Its objective is to improve the program's curriculum, teaching methods, and required courses. The Vice-Presidency for Academic Affairs, together with the schools and departments, is responsible for the coordination and supervision of learning assessment at this level. Table 5.1 shows an example of the summary of the 2018-2019 appraisal report.

Table 5.1

General Report of the Assessment of Learning by Programs 2018-2019

Department	Program	Assessed Competencies		Courses	Group Average	Students Complied (%)
		Sem 1	/ Sem 2			
Business	Management	3	3	ECON 201, MGMT 205,326 BUAD 437	87%	96%
	Accounting	1		ACCT 491	P	100%
	Office Administration	4	4	OFAD 101,141,223 227,242,	86%	96%
Education, Humanities and Psychology	Education		9	EDUC 201,203, 214,309, 339, HEPE 100,103	91%	93%
	History		1	HUMA 101	86%	91%
	Psychology		3	PSYC 351,248,101,200	87%	99%
Technology and Biology	Biology	4	5	CHEM 121,122,100, 222, 321 BIOL 111,222,323, 335,401,431, MATH 323	77%	86%
	Technology	1	3	COM 101, 111,213, 491,492	79%	85%
Total		13	28		85%	93%

Source: Effectiveness Office

Assessment of Learning at the Course Level. Because of the feedback given to the educator, this type of assessment has a direct effect on student learning. It is opportune since it allows decisions to be made concurrently to improve learning. It is managed by the teacher through class assignments. The school, department, or program is the unit in charge of coordinating the efforts of the teachers so that this assessment is fully complied with. As part of the assessment of the learning process, several decisions have been made to continue to improve the teaching-learning process in academic programs. Each program director creates an Action Plan, which includes the findings of the assessment process in the respective courses. Table 5.2 provides examples of actions taken from the results of the student learning outcomes.

Table 5.2*Competences Assessed by Programs, Findings, and Actions 2019-2020*

Department	Program	Assessed Competencies	Findings/Actions
Business	Management ECON 201, BUAD 331, GMT 205	<p>Properly manage financial and human resources to maximize their utility.</p> <p>Recognizes the importance of planning and measuring the achievement of goals and objectives.</p> <p>Demonstrates responsibility in completing assigned tasks.</p> <p>Recognizes the importance of teamwork and achieving goals.</p> <p>Possess and apply knowledge about legal aspects in commercial law.</p> <p>Interpret and develop documents and projects related to the legal field, using the knowledge acquired in the course.</p> <p>Creativity, conflict management, development strategy, critical analysis.</p>	<p>The students were able to master economic concepts, apply them to Puerto Rico's problems and provide solutions.</p> <p>Continue imparting knowledge through critical thinking and analysis of management situations and their implications for the student's professional life.</p> <p>Improve teaching system in base courses. Integrate the use of conceptual map. External speaker.</p> <p>Increase the number of concept application problems, in order to have greater mastery in the evaluation processes.</p>
	Accounting ACCT 226,321, 326, 332,435, 205,325,331,334,431, 451, 491	<p>Study of the concepts and basic accounting principles and their application in the registration of commercial transactions and in the preparation of financial statements.</p> <p>The following topics are emphasized: analysis and recording of business transactions, accounting cycle, preparation and classification of financial</p>	<p>That students complete the Practicum at least two weeks prior to concluding the semester.</p>

Department	Program	Assessed Competencies	Findings/Actions
		<p>statements, basic elements of accounting for current assets.</p> <p>Identify financial statements, income and expenses, financial statements, cash flow statements, and the meaning of generally accepted accounting principles.</p> <p>Describe managerial accounting and the difference between financial accounting. Describe management information system cost process, tangible and intangible products with income and expense system.</p> <p>Master and apply the skills of using accounting principles to achieve the goals and objectives of the company.</p> <p>Know the importance and value of human resources dedicated to maintaining accounting data in a company.</p> <p>Acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to be successfully placed in the labor market in administrative positions in public or private companies.</p> <p>Achieve adequate sensitivity to appreciate and respond to the effects of ongoing changes in areas such as individual and social behavior, and technological</p>	

Department	Program	Assessed Competencies	Findings/Actions
		<p>changes that affect organizational functioning.</p> <p>Demonstrate responsibility in completing assigned tasks. Recognizes the importance of teamwork and goal achievement</p> <p>Applies the knowledge received in the courses of the Academic Program.</p>	
	<p>Office Administration</p> <p>OFAD 101, 220 ,223, 471, 491, 141, 209, 410</p> <p>OFAD 100, 122, 209, 215, 234, 239, 491</p>	<p>Know and efficiently prepare various documents that are generated in the office by means of the computer.</p> <p>Participate in assessment processes and integrate strategies to improve performance.</p> <p>Efficiently prepare various documents that are generated in the office through the computer.</p> <p>Have knowledge in computer programming and create various documents that are used in the modern office according to continuous technological advances.</p> <p>Demonstrate through practice the skills and knowledge acquired to be able to perform adequately as an administrative</p>	<p>Although all students met the achievement indicator, it would be useful to reinforce some areas in the course content. Offer more practical exercises.</p> <p>OFAD 209 Format skills will be reinforced with guided practice in the classroom.</p> <p>Strengthen dictation skills at various speeds.</p> <p>Format skills will be reinforced with guided practice in the classroom through warm-up exercises.</p> <p>Although all students met the achievement indicator, it would be helpful for students to study more of the details of legal documents through summaries or reports.</p> <p>More practice of typing skills through the Keyboarding Pro program.</p> <p>OFAD 122 Discussion of different formats when making documents in the office</p>

Department	Program	Assessed Competencies	Findings/Actions
		<p>assistant in a public or private company.</p> <p>Learn and acquire knowledge about the rules of courtesy. Gain knowledge about the job interview. Learn what the rights of people with disabilities are and what the ADA Law is.</p>	<p>through practice of application exercises to reinforce teaching.</p> <p>Practice exercises to hone the ability to write directly from copy and continue to develop the skill of following both written and oral directions.</p> <p>Test results were tracked to reinforce teaching. Verbal and email communication.</p> <p>During the semester the student was reinforced through videoconference.</p> <p>During the semester the student was reinforced through videoconference.</p> <p>OFAD 122 Discussion of different formats when making documents in the office through practice of application exercises to reinforce teaching.</p> <p>Practice exercises to hone the ability to write directly from copy and continue to develop the skill of following both written and oral instructions.</p> <p>OFAD 215 It is recommended to reinforce the skills when coding in subsequent courses where the skills of using and managing correspondence are integrated.</p>

Department	Program	Assessed Competencies	Findings/Actions
			<p>Although all the students met the achievement indicator, 100% of them had a marked deficiency in writing an Introduction and a Conclusion. It is recommended that this skill be reinforced in one of the courses and also review the grammar rules, as they also had deficiencies in this area.</p>
			<p>This percentage of the group average of 55% is because there is a student who has an incomplete and has not taken the exam. Although it is given a review before the exam, several of the students do not use it to study. This course should be offered in person because many students in online courses do not follow directions and are not aware of online course requirements and deadlines.</p>
			<p>More about this source text Source text required for additional translation information Send feedback Side panels</p>

Source: Effectiveness Office

The academic departments have an Assessment Coordinator who is responsible for arranging meetings with the faculty they represent to discuss the findings and make action plans. Based on the assessment, the departments have taken various actions, including making changes to the syllabus in programs such as education, theology, nursing, and others. Also, the profiles of the graduates were reviewed to align them with each of the syllabi in the nursing and education programs. In doing so, the Assessment Coordinator ensured that the programs are aligned with the skills required for the profession.

Programs accredited by recognized professional organizations must meet the agency's requirements. AAU has two professionally accredited programs by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE): the bachelor's and master's degrees in Nursing. Under

the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC), AAU offers a bachelor's degree in Respiratory Care. All programs are required to complete an annual program assessment report. Programs that have received professional accreditation usually use the template provided by the external agency. These reports reflect AAU's commitment to strengthening learning through ongoing assessment of program and student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, intending to expand the opportunities for faculty development, the Institution coordinated 28 workshops over the past four years to ensure a competent and cutting-edge faculty. Table 5.3 illustrates some of the workshops offered to the faculty.

Table. 5.3

Professional Development Seminars and Workshops for Faculty

Academic Year	Semester	Professional Development	Date	Contact hours
2018 – 2019	August – December 2018	Educative technology	August 6, 2018	1.5 hrs.
		Curriculum Alignment	August 9, 2018	30 min.
		The Excellence of Spirituality and Service	September 7, 2018	30 min.
		Use of Questions		45 min.
		Portfolio on Google		1 hr.
	January – May 2019	God's Vision for Student Colportage	October 5, 2018	30 min.
		Exams in the ECAMS		1.5 hrs.
		Assessment A – Z	February 1, 2019	2 hrs.
		Organizational Resilience	March 1, 2019	1 hr.
2019 – 2020	August – December 2019	Ellen G. White and discipleship in Adventist Universities and Colleges	September 6, 2019	30 min.
		Compilation Software		1 hr.
		Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation	October 4, 2019	1 hr.
		Trends in Adventist Education	November 1, 2019	1 hr.
	January – May 2020	Retention Practices		1 hr.
		Technology Integration	January 10, 2020	1.5 hr.
		With Christ we reach the goal	February 7, 2020	30 min.
	Playing for the team	March 6, 2020	1 hr.	
2020 – 2021	August – December 2020	Technological tools	August 10, 2020	1 hr.
		Academic Continuity Planning		45 min.
		ACE Model	September 4, 2020	30 min.
		Copyright in Distance Education		1.5 hrs.
		Cyberbullying	October 2, 2020	1 hr.

Academic Year	Semester	Professional Development	Date	Contact hours
	January – May 2021	Impact on Effective Communication in Teaching	January 18, 2021	1 hr.
		How to record on Zoom		30 min.
		Institutional Pedagogical Model	March 5, 2021	1 hr.
		Presence in online courses – How to teach at a distance while maintaining closeness	April 9, 2021	1.5 hrs.
2021 – 2022	August – December 2021	Ideas for Integrating Faith in Instructional Planning	March 4, 2022	1.5 hrs.
	January – May 2022	Use and Management of E-books Bases	April 1, 2022	1.5 hrs.

Source: Academic Affairs Office

Moreover, the DED coordinated several workshops in response to the technological needs presented by the faculty as part of the assessment. These initiatives strengthened the teaching-learning process through technological means in response to priorities A and B.

During 2020-2022, 20 workshops were held for the faculty of the DED. The objectives of these workshops were to strengthen teaching through technology and prepare the faculty to face the challenge of COVID-19, so students could continue with their education. Additionally, these workshops responded to the professional development plans required to strengthen teaching through the integration of technology.

Concerning the development of academic programs and services, AAU's SP 2017-2023 takes into consideration faculty, non-faculty personnel, support technologies, and infrastructure. A budget is assigned each year to specific services and activities. Table 5.6 shows budget allocation for these purposes in the last three fiscal years.

Table 5.6

Budget Allocated for Services and Activities

Service/Activity	2019-2022
Faculty professional development	\$14,498
Tutoring Services	\$65,034

Source: Financial Office

Changes that have been implemented in tutorial support services, faculty and support staff training, as well as extracurricular activities have positively impacted student retention as shown in Table 4.1.

To improve these parameters of student success, the Vice-Presidency for Student Affairs has assumed an important role in the implementation of processes and procedures designed to complement the curricular efforts of each program. Based on the evaluation of exit survey

reports, the Vice-presidency for Student Affairs and Academic Affairs have incorporated extracurricular initiatives specifically designed to improve student retention and graduation. Both vice-presidencies have coordinated a series of orientations for new students that include information about academic programs, student services, and workshops on skills such as technology tools, study techniques, research skills, and library services. In response to the new pedagogical modalities that were implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DED coordinated and offered workshops related to distance education and learning. This included workshops on the creation of presentations and infographics, as well as the use of Moodle.

The Institutional Student Learning Assessment Plan provides each academic program with the tools to review its assessment processes. As AAU increasingly develops an assessment culture, the revision of assessment processes is taking place at the departmental level. Actions are taken to evaluate the effectiveness of assessment procedures as each program reviews its processes and tools and discusses its findings during faculty meetings (*Faculty Meeting Minutes*).

During 2018-2022, the AAU administration held several meetings with teachers, employees, and students to inform them about the plans of the Institution. Each of these activities may be found on the agendas and minutes of the meetings. In addition, each administrative and academic office is part of an internal electronic communication system which eases the access of information; thus, management is able to keep faculty and staff informed on institutional assessment plans.

Conclusion

AAU is committed to providing students with a rigorous and broad education that prepares them for educational and professional success and an informed and engaged academic community. This analysis helped identify the following strengths, challenges, and opportunities:

Strengths

- Establishing a well-designed structure for assessment and a plan for each academic program has been key to increasing data-driven decision-making on academic programs.
- Faculty training in assessment, teaching, and learning has influenced the development and integration of pedagogical practices that improve student learning across the curriculum.

Challenges

- Maintaining the resources necessary to sustain long-term faculty dedicated to working with the assessment processes and structure. This will ensure the continuity necessary for a successful assessment cycle and the expansion of assessment conversations at the institutional level.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Developing mechanisms to further support, collect, organize, and disseminate research and assessment results. A specific recommendation is to encourage faculty to conduct

research on assessment that would provide information to further impact student learning.

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.

- RA8: Systematic Evaluation of All Programs: The Institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes.
- RA10: Institutional Planning: Institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments.
- RA11: Finance Resources: The Institution has documented financial resources, funding base, and plans for financial development, including those from any related entities (including without limitation systems, religious sponsorship, and corporate ownership) adequate to support its educational purposes and programs and to ensure financial stability. The Institution demonstrates a record of responsible fiscal management, has a prepared budget for the current year, and undergoes an external financial audit on an annual basis.

This chapter addresses the following IPs:

- A. Strengthen student learning through active and experiential learning methodologies.
- B. Restructure academic and support services.

Analysis of Key Issues

This chapter shows AAU's commitment to promoting institutional improvement by establishing strategic goals and objectives derived from a comprehensive analysis that includes challenges and opportunities. One challenge of the external environment that has been accentuated in recent years is the demographic reduction of the young population.

As a strategy to address this challenge, the Institution seeks to diversify its academic offerings, particularly its distance education programs. This alignment has guaranteed the sustainability of the Institution to fulfill its mission. In addition, this chapter presents the systemic assessment strategies implemented to ensure the effectiveness of the planning processes and its programs, services, and resources.

Allocation of Budget Distribution Aligned to the Needs and Future Projections of the Different Academic and Non-Academic Dependencies

AAU identifies and assigns the necessary funds for the operation of the different academic programs and administrative units through the University's Operational Budget. It is a financial guide prepared annually to distribute funds and ensure use in the development of University operations and activities. The Board of Trustees annually approves the Operating Budget, which

becomes the financial instrument that guides the process of achieving the SP's objectives. Different administrative bodies review the Operating Budget to ensure that financial decisions are aligned with the SP and that projected revenues are sufficient to cover scheduled expenses. The budget process at AAU is subject to a very thorough analysis because of its limited resources.

During the budgeting process, non-academic units annually receive a zero-based budget. This approach ensures that units are only allocated the resources needed to operate during the fiscal year. In instances where budget dollars are not fully expended, funds are recovered in central administration and are not retained by the unit. In the academic units, the annual budget allocations are based on an estimate, known as the base allocation, which is an estimated and predictable amount determined through the analysis of the behavior of real income and expenses of the last fiscal year. The observation and analysis of the behavior of income and expenses of the completed fiscal year are evaluated and compared with the academic activity in the undergraduate area and graduate programs, thus creating a financial conceptual framework of the economic environment of the Institution.

Per the accounting policies outlined in the AAU Accounting Procedures Manual (Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual, 54-58), the directors of the administrative units, service units, and academic units annually prepare a budget request considering the needs of their departments and the objectives established in their annual work plan. Annual work plans are prepared in a pre-established template, in which the goals and objectives of the institutional SP are integrated. The template provides space for the units to integrate their operational objectives. Each annual plan has an integrated assessment instrument to analyze and evaluate the results of the implementation of projects and initiatives in each area. This analysis provides the necessary data to make informed decisions about the actions to be included in the next planning cycle and gives an idea of the allocation of resources necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of the SP.

Requests from the different units are first evaluated by the Vice Presidents of the areas and, after their approval, they are sent to the Vice President for Financial Affairs, who makes the allocation and preliminary distribution of funds. The preliminary allocation of funds is studied and analyzed by the President's Executive Committee. Once approved by the committee, it is ready for subsequent presentation to the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees. In the Finance Committee, the document is subjected to a rigorous evaluation and all the recommendations that the committee wishes to make are made, leaving the draft budget ready to be presented to the plenary session of the Board of Trustees. The final approval of the budget project, with its corresponding designation of income and allocation of resources, is the absolute prerogative of the Board of Trustees. Once the operating budget is approved by the Board of Trustees, it becomes the legitimate authority of the administrators of the Institution to distribute income and authorize expenses according to the designated activity (Accounting Policies Manual, annual plan templates, website where the units submit their budget requests).

Effectiveness in Planning, Resource Allocation, Institutional Renewal Processes, and Availability of Resources

The Institution continually adopts strategies to improve efficiency in the use of its funds and generate savings in the operational areas. This prepares the Institution to face budgetary challenges without undermining its commitment to its mission. In the management of its Fiscal resources in the past five years, AAU has maintained a stable financial position, along with

sustained development of its physical infrastructure. The University is directly affected by the island's economic scenario, which includes recent natural disasters, government instability, and the pandemic; despite all these, it continues to provide its students with an excellent education in a beautiful and welcoming campus.

The University annually submits its finances to an audit process by independent auditing firms. In the past five years, the University received unqualified opinions in its financial statements, certifying that it complies with all Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. AAU keeps its accounting records on a completely transparent basis and follows the highest ethical and moral standards, qualities that characterize the Institution. Financial planning, infrastructure planning, and resource allocation processes are aligned with AAU's mission and strategic priorities (Audited financial statements).

AAU maintained a stable income until 2020. It was in this year that the global pandemic of the COVID-19 virus began. The declaration of a pandemic and the restrictions imposed by the government to protect health significantly affected the University's level of income. In the 2020 fiscal year, AAU's income was \$10,590,598, the lowest of the entire five-year period. However, in the 2021 fiscal year, after the implementation of a cost control plan, measures to improve efficiency, and the arrival of federal funds to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, the Institution's revenues reached \$11,256,370, an increase of 6%. In the 2022 fiscal year, the Institution experienced the highest amount of income of the entire five-year period, \$12,941,684, an increase of 13% compared to the previous year. The recovery presented was achieved by the arrival of the grants and incentives developed and provided by the Federal Government. These federal contributions were decisive and were invested in the development of services and programs for the welfare of the students, as well as for the economic stability of the Institution.

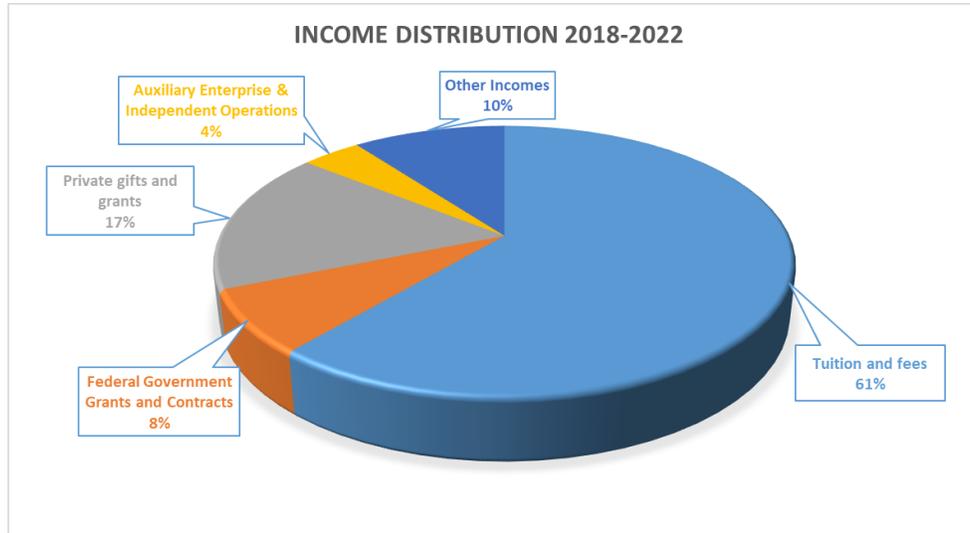
From 2018 to 2022, our finances have been solidified. The Institution has maintained a constant increase in Total Assets, as well as in Total Net Assets. If comparing the 2018 fiscal year with the 2022 fiscal year, one would observe a total increase in Assets of 8% and in Net Assets of 29%. One would also see the University's fiscal stability in debt service; during this period the total liabilities were reduced by 56%.

The University's financial information is shared regularly at faculty and non-faculty staff meetings, University Administrative Council meetings, and Board of Trustees sessions. In doing so, the entire University community is officially informed about the Institution's financial position. (Minutes of faculty, staff, CAU, and Board of Trustees meetings).

Income Categories. Graph 6.1. shows the main income categories during the five-year period. The main categories are income from Tuition and Fees that average 62% of income, donations from affiliated entities such as the Puerto Rican Union of Adventist Churches (17%) as well as other private entities, grants, and incentives from the Federal Government (8%), and other miscellaneous income from sales and auxiliary services provided by the university. The Federal Government proposals and incentives include non-recurring income from the Cares Act (HEERF I), CRRSAA (HEERF II), ARP (HEERF III), and proposals subsidized by the Federal Department of Education, such as, Program TRIO SSS, ESL and ESL regular, and Program SEHS.

Graph 6.1

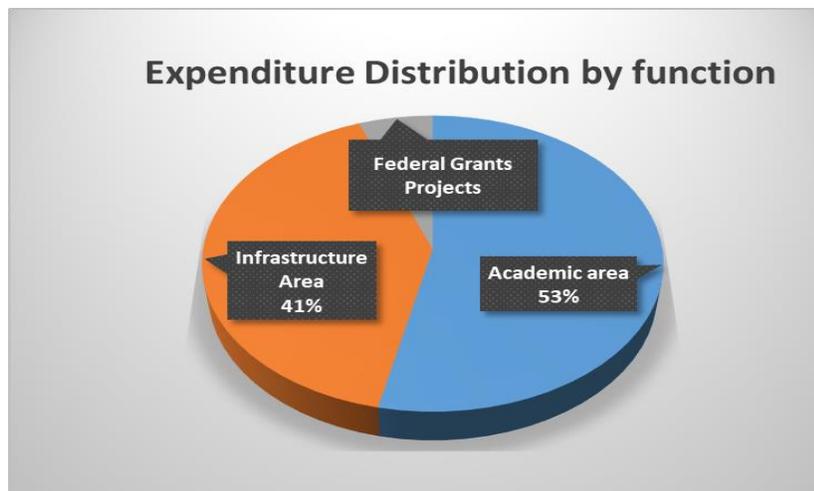
Income Distribution for 2018 – 2022



Distribution of Expenses. Aligning with the Institution’s SP, the resources received were distributed and used as follows: 53% of the income received was invested in the academic areas and direct services to the student, 41% was invested in infrastructure maintenance and development, and the remaining 6% corresponded to federal projects.

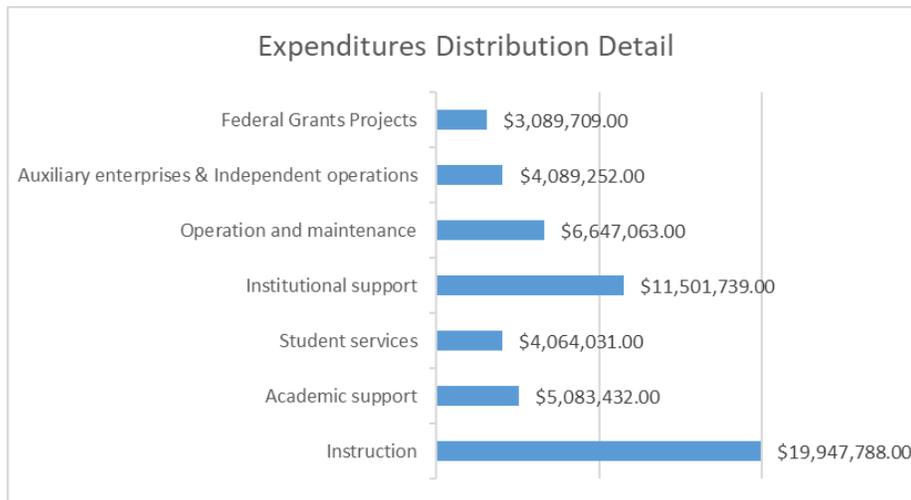
Graph 6.2

Expenditure Distribution by Function



Graph 6.3

Expenditure Distribution Detail 2018-2022

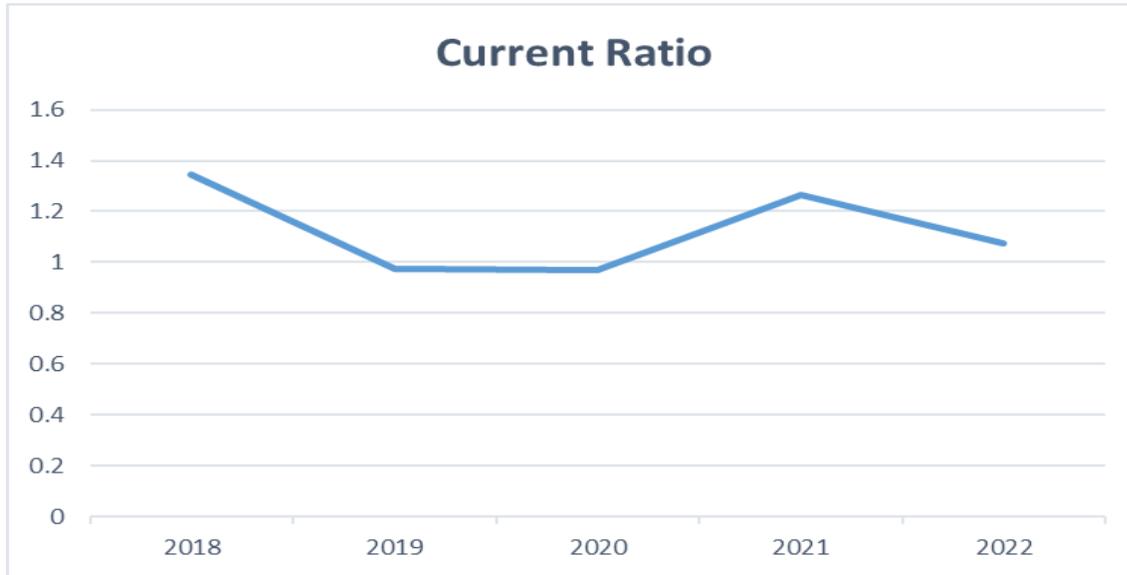


Financial Indicators. AAU has maintained excellent financial indicators during the period covered by this self-study. The following financial indicators reflect the Institution's financial stability. The Current Ratio which indicates the ability to convert current assets into cash to respond to current obligations, has an average of 1.13 in the past five (5) years. The liquidity ratio has averaged 50% for the same period. Graphs 6.1.8 and 6.1.9 demonstrate the behavior of the indicators. The changes in the indicators reflect the effects of the crisis created by COVID-19, and the recovery achieved with the help of the incentives granted by the Federal Government. These have been decisive for both students and the Institution at large.

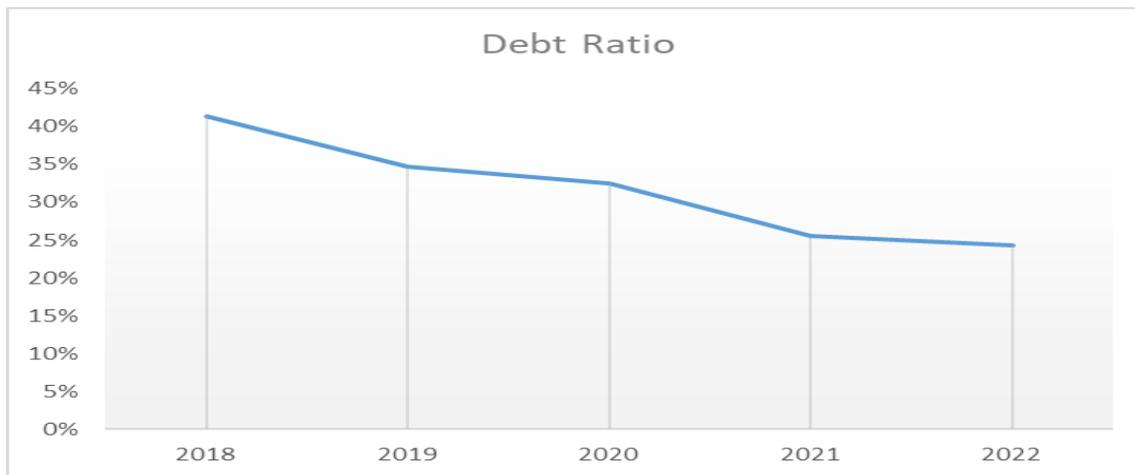
Graph 6.4

Liquidity Ratio 2018 – 2022



Graph 6.5*Current Ratio 2018 – 2022*

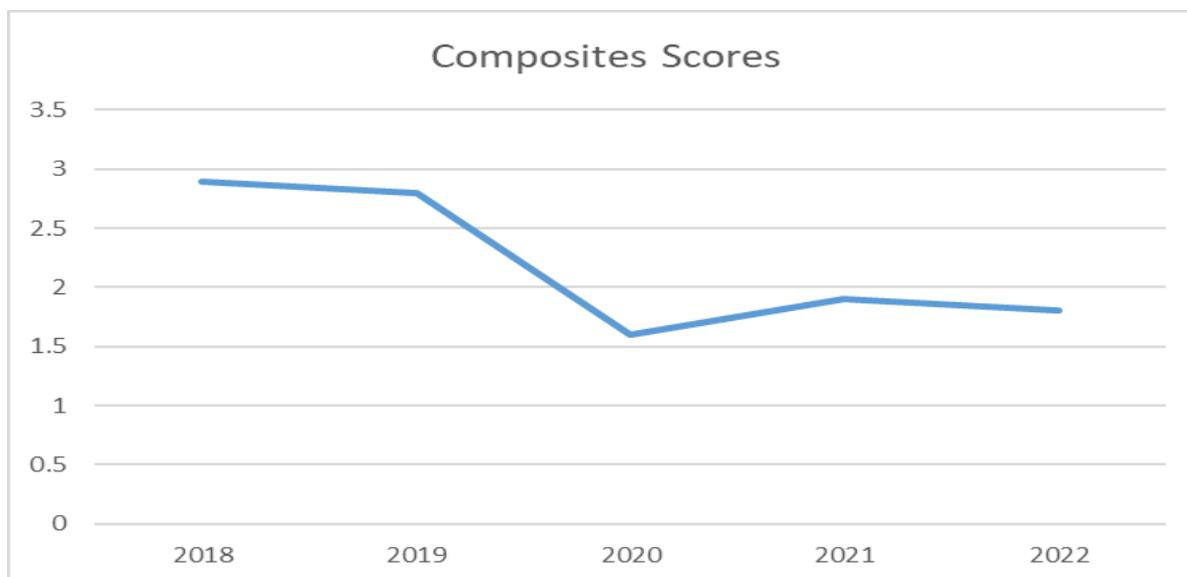
Regarding debt service, the Institution has maintained an average Debt Ratio of 32% during the five-year period. This financial indicator measures the percentage of total Assets that is committed to debts. Graph 5 reflects that the Debt Ratio has decreased, from 41% in June of 2018, to 24% in June of 2022. The change represents a decrease of 23% in the five-year period, while demonstrating compliance with the terms of financing contracted by the University. Effective debt management allows the Institution to maintain access to financing in liability markets to attend to future development projects.

Graph 6.6*Debt Ratio 2018-2022*

One of the most important indicators in our industry is the “Composite Score.” The Federal Department of Education establishes a financial indicator for institutions that receive federal funds and seek to reflect the efficiency of operations, the operating result, financial liquidity, and capitalization. The indicator has a range from -1 to 3, with the ideal number being 3. When the indicator is between 1.5 and 3.0, it indicates that the institution meets the required financial stability expectations; from 1.0 to 1.4 the institution complies but must be monitored by the Government, and stricter guidelines are established for compliance with the standards; and, finally, from -1 to 0.9 the institution does not comply and, to continue receiving federal funds, it is required to have a letter of credit in favor of the Federal Department of Education for up to 50% of the funds received the previous year. Graph 6.6 shows this indicator's behavior during the past five years. The Institution presented a "Composite Score" of 2.9 in June of 2018 and 2.8 in June of 2019. The index reduced to 1.6 in 2020 (Influenced by a change in the calculations in the formula) and recovered slightly in 2021 to 1.9. In the year 2022, it is 1.8. The Institution has complied with the requirements of the Federal Department of Education as a financially responsible institution.

Graph 6.7

Composite Score from 2018 to 2022



Human Resources. AAU currently has approximately 137 employees, of which 86 are full-time, 16 are part-time, and 35 are faculty members. The Human Resources Office is the unit in charge of offering advice and support to the administration concerning compensation and fringe benefits. They are responsible for calculating payroll and are custodians of employee files. In addition, they provide training and professional development programs for the staff. In 2020, AAU implemented a new digital platform that almost eliminated the use of paper forms and reduced processing time. The University acquired the Kronos digital program with funds from the CARES Act with an investment of \$52,228.

Physical Infrastructure. University facilities consist of 16 buildings used for classrooms, laboratories, administrative offices, a gym, a library, the simulation hospital, a cafeteria, offices of the academic departments, and the fitness center, among others. In the last five years, the Institution has invested approximately \$3,855,000 in the development of its infrastructure. The investment has been aimed at improving the educational experience of students, through the renovation and construction of new and better facilities, as well as a strong investment in infrastructure and technology.

The Institution has several buildings for housing which are used by employees and students. AAU is the university with the largest number of international students in Puerto Rico. When international students decide to come to study here, they are offered welcoming facilities to stay within the campus. The University also has a beautiful guesthouse which has 8 rooms and accommodates up to 24 guests, available for the enjoyment of university guests, as well as those who wish to come and tour the campus. The guesthouse was inaugurated in 2018, with an investment of \$230,630.

To increase and improve active and experiential learning in health-related programs, the Institution participated in a Title V competition. In 2015, the Department of Education approved a Title V grant for the 2015-2020 academic years. This grant was geared towards Expanding Capacity and Strengthening Health Sciences Degree Programs. The project was designed to do the following:

- Revise the Nursing and Respiratory Care curriculum for inclusion of high-definition simulation technology,
- Expand access to Health Sciences Programs (HSP) via conversion to online/hybrid delivery,
- Enhance infrastructure to support instruction via the creation of a state-of-the-art Simulation Lab,
- Improve foundational skills in Math and English proficiency by developing a Math Resource Center, an English for HSP course, and acquiring instructional resources, and
- Engage in Respiratory Care curriculum and program evaluation to complete Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) accreditation.

The Institution currently has the most complete simulation hospital in the region. It has an emergency room, a delivery room, a pediatric care room, an intensive care room, and several classrooms, among other amenities. These facilities were built with a total investment of \$1,259,349 and are currently in full use, creating a unique and innovative learning experience for students in the Department of Health Sciences.

In 2019, the University inaugurated its Fitness Center, a physical conditioning center that allows students to exercise in a safe environment with the latest exercise machines and weight-lifting equipment. In this way, we fulfill AAU's goal of creating professionals with holistic development of mind, body, and spirit. The University invested a total of \$268,905 in this facility.

Puerto Rico is a tropical island exposed to storms and hurricanes. Such natural events cause significant damage and often put companies out of business for several weeks, sometimes months. Seeking to mitigate the collateral effect of the passage of storms and hurricanes through the region, the University invested \$100,000 in electric generators to keep our main buildings operating. Additionally, AAU has started the construction of a water well (private aqueduct) that will supply this precious liquid to the Institution without interruptions, regardless of inclement weather. At present, AAU has invested about \$44,000 in the construction of the water well, and an additional investment of \$80,000 is projected for its completion.

The institutional pillar of spirituality is the most important for the University. AAU is an institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Puerto Rico. AAU is presently working on constructing the University's temple, an extraordinary structure dedicated to worshipping God and preaching the gospel. The project has an investment of \$2,989,494, and an additional investment of \$1,500,000 is estimated for its completion. The temple is financed through donations from our affiliates, alumni, and friends of the Institution.

Information Technology Resources. Information Technology Services (ITS) provides essential support for the University's operational, research, and academic goals. It performs these functions by optimizing Information Technology (IT) resources; managing technology; promoting data security and accuracy; providing streamlined processes for business and student learning and success; managing operational and infrastructural needs; and aligning technology oversight, innovation, and investment.

ITS has established policies for the proper use of the technological network to provide the greatest possible security in the use of computerized systems. In addition, it has developed the manual of procedures for use of laboratories and rules for use of the Wireless system (ITS policies, standards, and procedures).

AAU invests in technology to enhance student learning and success. Investments target physical and virtual learning spaces, as well as improving the quality of instruction, web accessibility, and faculty development. ITS supports the Vice-presidency for Academic Affairs and the academic departments in the development of new technologies for classrooms.

The Institution has worked toward improving the teaching-learning experience by increasing the use of educational technology and distance/hybrid offering. In 2018, AAU created the DED which helped the Institution increase the number of courses offered in the online/hybrid modality, providing more flexibility and accessibility to the academic programs. Also, the DED increased professional development for faculty and staff concerning the integration of technology face-to-face and online education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the DED, the Vice-presidency for Academic Affairs, the Vice-presidency for Finance, and the Vice-presidency for Student Affairs came together to increase and improve services, protocols, and procedures to facilitate remote teaching in times of emergency. The effort benefited all academic programs and special attention was given to the technological infrastructure. As a result of this effort, the following student support services were offered virtually and continue to be offered today: library, admissions, financial assistance, registration, and student finances, among others. All these services are offered virtually and face-to-face, following the strictest security protocols.

New technology was acquired to convert face-to-face spaces into virtual classrooms. Funds came from the Coronavirus Relief and Economic Security Act (2020). In the 2020-21 fiscal

year, the Institution received a second Federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund grant (2021) which it used to continue to increase technology for online teaching and to offer better virtual services to support students. Seeking to provide its students and professors innovative study alternatives without constraints due to space, since 2020, the University has invested \$2,363,490 in technological infrastructure.

Major Challenges Facing the University Related to the Location of Resources for Technology, Resources for the Physical Plant, as well as Human Resources Processes Used to Address These Challenges

The University has a physical and technological infrastructure suited to its current needs. Through funds from the Care Act, HEERF I, HEERF II, and HEERF III programs, AAU acquired state-of-the-art technological equipment, and now 95% of our classrooms and laboratories have audiovisual equipment that enriches face-to-face learning and effectively allows distance education. Using these same federal funds, new classrooms (containers) were purchased and designed, which are in the process of being installed. They represent an investment of over \$600,000. The investment provides nearly 4,900 additional square feet for classrooms and common learning spaces, with the required furniture, so students and faculty have a first-rate educational experience. To maintain the existing physical facilities, each operating budget includes the necessary resources for adequate conservation of the assets. The Institution maintains a constant search for external resources to optimize their development.

Regarding Human Resources, in the past, the University administration carried out a reorganization process in which the staff was reduced to temper it to the reality of current clients. At present, AAU has the necessary employees to operate efficiently. The AAU administration always keeps evaluating the customer service procedures and processes to identify ways through which efficiency can be promoted, in such a way, that it can provide an excellent service and keep operational costs under control.

Financial Planning and Budgeting Process Aligned to the Institution's Mission and Goals, Strategic Plan, and Objectives with Evidence-Based Decision Making

AAU's mission promotes the holistic formation of competent professionals, committed to the service of God and humanity. It will be recognized for the teaching of Adventist Christian values, the excellence of its academic programs, and the emphasis on service.

In compliance with this mission and vision, AAU considers the objectives established in the annual plans of the different departments when preparing the Institutional Operating Budget. The University's operating budget shows, in its allocation of funds, the importance that the Institution gives to the fulfillment of its mission and vision. This is shown by the money assigned to the spiritual/philosophical dimension that characterizes it as an entity of the Adventist Church. An example of this and related to goal 1 of the SP is that AAU's operational budget provides for the existence of a Department for Religious Affairs, with a full-time chaplain and a director for religious affairs who cares for the spiritual life of the University community. Its functions include developing religious services for employees and administration, running a visitation program for students and employees, and coordinating seminars and spiritual training programs. In addition, AAU allocates financial resources in the operational budget to offer two weeks of Spiritual Emphasis per year, in coordination with the Adventist Church located at the University. During these weeks, Adventist Christian values are promoted, and the evangelizing

mission of the Institution is fulfilled, which includes that our students know God and Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Regarding the scope of goal 2 of the SP, AAU allocates funds in the budget to carry out extra-curricular activities that strengthen the spiritual, social, physical, and emotional health of students and members of the University community. These activities seek to strengthen interpersonal relationships and develop the physical, mental, and spiritual faculties of the participants through sports, contact with nature, community service, and healthy recreation.

One of the most important areas for the development and growth of the University is the Communications and Marketing departments, as well as the Recruitment department. These departments receive significant allocations of funds to increase the number and diversity of students on campus. They also promote academic programs and make AAU facilities known to the local and international community, promoting the educational experience that only an institution like this offers. AAU inspires the best version of its students and staff and has done so for 60 years. In the fulfillment of the marketing and recruitment program, AAU allocates economic resources so that different means of communication is used, such as the written press, radio, television, social media, and the internet, for people to know about AAU, as an alternative, completely different, from other educational institutions.

In compliance with goals 3 and 4, which include the most important aspect of the mission, which is offering academic excellence, AAU designates funds in each operating budget for the hiring and retention of competent and specialized faculty for all academic programs. The Institution makes sure that each professor has a fair academic load, so they can provide students with an excellent education and have time to guide them in any other areas of need. The University has a faculty development program, which allows faculty who do not have a doctoral degree to apply for financial aid to complete it. The program has a rigorous application process in which the University analyzes if the proponent's area of specialty is of institutional need and can contribute to the development of the academic program to which the professor belongs. Authorization from the Board of Trustees is required to grant this benefit.

In the area of technological development, within the last five years, AAU made significant progress to improve internet access by developing a more efficient wireless network. It also acquired first-class telephone equipment along with applications that allow employees to provide service remotely, minimizing lost calls. The Institution acquired new computers for the data centers and improved its physical facilities. This investment, close to \$275,000, allows faculty and students to develop a dynamic and up-to-date teaching-learning process.

The budget allocates a significant number of resources to the Library, a first-class building located in the center of the campus, which features group and independent study areas, an impressive collection of books, and a Center for Learning and Technology Resources (CART). AAU replaced all the computers in this center in 2021, and it now has state-of-the-art machines available for the use of all students in a professional and excellent environment.

Spirituality and Christian values are the main axes of AAU's mission and vision. Given this fact, one of the most important academic departments is the Department of Religion. It prepares pastors and ministers who serve the Adventist Church in Puerto Rico and around the world. AAU allocates funds in the budget for the Department to continually enrich its evangelism and community service labs. These programs play a very important role in the development of the Adventist Church in Puerto Rico, which is the Institution's main affiliate entity.

Goal 6 includes the importance of maintaining a nice and welcoming campus, which creates a study environment where spirituality and contact with nature are enhanced. Of the available resources in the annual budget, AAU allocated an average of 40% for the maintenance and conservation of the campus' buildings and landscape. This item represented nearly \$22,228,000 during the past five years. This investment allowed the Institution to present a welcoming campus in a spiritual environment for its students and the people who visit it. When people visit for the first time, they constantly say that AAU's campus is beautiful and that there is a different atmosphere. They indicate that it is an “***oasis in the middle of the city.***” By maintaining a beautiful campus, AAU accomplishes the mission.

Decisions Process. The decision-making process, as well as the designation of the levels of authority and hierarchies are included in the following documents: the AAU Constitution, the Board of Trustees Handbook, and the Operating Regulations Handbook. These documents define the processes and functions of the administrators in the execution of their positions.

Communicate Planning and Improvement Processes that Provide Participation and Incorporate the use of Assessment Results

AAU is committed to progressive planning and continuous assessment. Its institutional strategic plan is an active document developed with input from students, faculty, and staff and emerging from the 2012-2017 SP.

Our current SP, developed in 2017, reflects the University's vision: spirituality, excellence, and service. It also reflects the five strategic initiatives that guide the University's work: (a) Spiritual Development; (b) Student Success; (c) Academic Quality; (d) Administrative Effectiveness, and (e) Social Commitment and Collaborative Relations. The purpose of these initiatives is to facilitate the fulfillment of the mission, by identifying the key elements.

AAU has a system that integrates strategic planning with resource allocation and assessment. The results obtained by the assessment processes guide the planning and allocation of financial resources. This system is evidenced in the following steps followed by the Institution for the development of its SP:

- 1) Formulation of goals and objectives,
- 2) Identification and implementation of strategies, projects, activities, and initiatives that operationalize the goals and objectives,
- 3) Allocation of institutional and supplemental resources (e.g. external funds such as state and federal grants, private donations, private or organizational funding, etc.),
- 4) Assessment of results, and
- 5) Use of the results for informed decision-making and continuous improvement in the next planning cycle.

Figure 6.1

Steps to Develop the Strategic Plan



AAU's planning process involves the three existing administrative levels and is described in the Guide for Institutional Effectiveness of the year 2022. At the institutional level, the SP is the document in which the long-term (5-year) goals and objectives of the Institution are outlined. The scope of the SP allows the Institution to fulfill its mission and remain relevant in the current context of higher education.

The SP is a document prepared with the participation of the entire University community, under the direction of the Strategic Planning Committee and in alignment with MSCHE and Adventist Accreditation standards. Once completed, the Board of Trustees grants final approval of the document. The document is subject to constant review to keep it updated and relevant. Following updates, if any, the SP is presented again to the Board of Trustees.

At the administrative level, strategies are formulated, and objectives are defined to make the goals of the SP operational. Each administrative vice-presidency, based on its area of execution, carries out the process individually, always ensuring that its operational plans are completely aligned with the Institutional Strategic Plan. The Work Plans of the vice-presidencies are evaluated by the Strategic Planning Committee and the President's Executive Committee and then submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

At the departmental level, both academic units (schools and departments) and non-academic units (general administration and services) formulate, document, and implement an annual work plan. Its objectives and strategies should lead to the achievement of the objectives of the operational plan of their areas. In the annual work plan, the units must identify the specific and priority actions to be carried out during the year to achieve the established goals.

The Strategic Planning Committee achieves the University community's participation in the planning process by integrating representation from the faculty, support and service staff, the administration, and the students. The approved SP is circulated to all the vice presidents,

deans, and unit directors, so they can work on their annual plans and budget requests in alignment with it. The document is available to the general public and posted on the University website and found in the Office of the Vice President for Planning and Development.

AAU carries out its annual evaluation of the planning process using the method of achievement reports. Each academic and non-academic unit prepares a report that includes the achievements obtained concerning the annual plan of that unit. Similarly, in the vice presidencies, a report is made that includes the achievements of these, aligned with the goals and objectives of the Institution as described in the SP. The Institutional Effectiveness Department annually prepares a general achievement report based on all the reports described above, which is then presented to the Board of Trustees by the President of the University for the corresponding approval. The general achievement report shows how the Institution is fulfilling its mission and also integrates statistical data that indicates the achievement of goals and objectives. An achievement report is a key tool used to identify those aspects and areas that need to be strengthened; therefore, findings of weakness or noncompliance are converted into recommendations for changes in planning, or to improve the assessment process. The vice presidents, deans, and directors are responsible for participating in and implementing the Institution's annual planning. The results and findings of the assessment process should be included in the plans for the following year. The general achievement report for each year, in addition to being shared with the entire staff, is available on the University's website and in the Department of Institutional Effectiveness, where the entire University community has access to it.

The COVID-19 pandemic required changes in the way in which education was traditionally provided in Puerto Rico. Because of this pandemic, in the last two years, the Institution has continued reviewing and updating the SP. By conducting meetings and collecting important and relevant information at these meetings, AAU revised its SP to meet the needs required by the moment.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that AAU possesses strategic goals and objectives that are used for the development of operational plans and the allocation of resources. Based on the self-assessment of the Criteria for Standard VI, AAU has identified the following strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement:

Strengths

- AAU has been financially stable for the past five years. It has been able to comply with the SP despite the economic crisis in the country. It continues to provide its students with an education of excellence. It has complied with the established plan to strengthen the infrastructure. New buildings were constructed, and facilities were improved, including the Simulation Hospital, the Eagle Fitness Center, and the Antillean Guesthouse, among others. In addition, several projects were started, and some are still under development, such as the Student Center, the Sports Center, new classrooms, and the Temple. Significant investments were also made in the area of technology.
- The University has audiovisual equipment, communications, computers, and programming that allow it to be more efficient in the teaching process and in distance

education. It has maintained an accounting transaction registration system that complies with all the standards of the regulatory institutions; this is evidenced by external audits (all unqualified opinions), demonstrating its commitment to integrity in financial management. It has maintained the debt service in full compliance, which allows the University to go to the financial market to seek financing sources to continue developing its operations.

Challenges

- Demographic models project a continued decline in the island's high school graduates over subsequent years.
- Although resources have been sufficient to support programs and services, fiscal resources are overly compromised in personnel and day-to-day operational expenses.
- The frequency of anomalous events in recent years (i.e. hurricanes, earthquakes, and the pandemic) have made it difficult to monitor and validate assumptions for budget and financial planning.

Opportunities for Improvement

- The University can continue improving its financial position. It must continue with a vision of development and expansion in all areas, from academic programs to direct services to students. It plans to strengthen distance education to develop new online programs. It will develop new professional certifications and programs of study. AAU expects revenues to remain constant or increase in the immediate future, allowing for growth in net assets, to invest in fulfilling its mission.
- As part of its identity, AAU seeks to promote academic development within a framework of Christian coexistence. This commitment is maintained to continue promoting this environment of Christian coexistence for the enjoyment of all members of its community. The University continues searching for external financial resources that will allow it to maintain efficient functioning of the infrastructure that it already has and allow it to develop new projects for students' general well-being.

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 systems, or other unaccredited organizations, the Institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

RA 12: The Institution fully discloses its legally constituted governance structure(s) and any related entities (including without limitation systems, religious sponsorship, and corporate ownership). The Institution's governing body is responsible for the quality and integrity of the Institution and for ensuring that the Institution's mission is being accomplished.

RA13: Most of the members of the Institution's governing body have no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the Institution. The governing body adheres to a conflict-of-interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of the members of the governing body or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the Institution. The Institution's district/system or other chief executive office shall not serve as chair of the governing body.

RA 14: The Institution and its governing body/bodies make freely available to the Commission accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the Institution and its operations. The governing body/bodies ensure that the Institution describes itself in comparable and consistent terms to all its accrediting and regulatory agencies, communicates any changes in accredited status, and agrees to disclose information (including levels of governing body compensation, if any) required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities.

This chapter addresses the following IP:

- D. Emphasize the integration of community service experiences.

Analysis of Key Issues

AAU has a clearly defined and transparent governance structure, with by-laws and regulations in place to define roles and responsibilities at each level. The President of AAU has the necessary qualifications, experience, and authority to implement changes that benefit the University. Both academic and administrative staff members are qualified academically and with a vast experience. In addition to classroom activities and departmental meetings, they regularly engage with each other and with students through mechanisms established and supported by the University. Assessment mechanisms are in place to ensure that governance, leadership, and administration are operating smoothly and effectively and that problems are

quickly identified and addressed. The Board of Trustees continues assessing their role and responsibilities in ensuring good practice in board governance. The Institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the Institution (*Operation Handbook, 23*).

AAU's Existing Decision-Making Structure

The University is operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization and as such is governed by the Puerto Rican Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has jurisdiction over all Seventh-day Adventist institutions in Puerto Rico. The Board of Trustees, the President's Executive Council, and the University Administrative Council ensure that the Institution fulfills its mission and objectives, maintains its integrity, and offers excellent academic programs.

The Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is the University's legal representative. It is composed of thirty-one members. Five ex-officio members reside in Florida as they work for the Seventh-day Adventist Inter-American Division Headquarters participating only in extraordinary board meetings. Twenty-one members of the Board reside in Puerto Rico. Eleven of these twenty-one members are nominated because of their position in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church's organizational structure, and the other ten members are educators, lawyers, health professionals, businessmen, administrators, or lay people committed to helping the Institution fulfill its mission and goals. The University's President represents the Institution as the Secretary of the Board of Trustees, and the University's Vice Presidents are standing invitees with a voice. The Board of Trustees recently updated the Board of Trustees Manual to bring it in line with best practices in higher education. The Board's objective is to ensure that the Institution adheres to its educational philosophy and fulfills its stated mission.

Meetings of the Board of Trustees. The Board usually meets four to six times a year; however, whenever necessary, additional meetings are scheduled. Furthermore, the Board requires a quorum for the transaction of business and the approval of the meetings scheduled.

Functions of the Board of Trustees. Some of the responsibilities are the followings:

- Selects and evaluates the University President,
- Approves the University's academic and working policies,
- Reviews institutional assessment results to collaborate in the strategic planning process,
- Approves the University's SP to achieve short- and long-term goals,
- Approves the University's annual Budget,
- Hires and promotes faculty and department directors,
- Approves the University's academic programs, and

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- Develops adequate financial support for the University's operation.

Training of the Board of Trustees. The University coordinates seminars and workshops, especially for new Board members. Recent workshops were offered on April 26 and August 30, 2022 which included the followings topics: the accreditation process, the difference between governance and management, and board member's responsibilities. These were presented by expert's on higher education boards.

Evaluation of the Board of Trustees. The Board members were asked to complete a self-evaluation survey in Spring 2019, and Spring 2021 of them responded to the questionnaire. Ninety-five percent (95%) stated that they knew the University's philosophy and mission, and 86% said that they understood and met their responsibility as members of the Board of Trustees. Seventy-one percent (71%) also attended and participated actively in Board meetings. Seventy-one percent (71%) said that they were aware of the needs and concerns of the university community.

In the Fall of 2021, AAU's Department of Institutional Effectiveness coordinated an evaluation of the Board of Trustees. According to the results shared, from a total of 6 participants 100% confirmed knowing AAU's philosophy and mission, 100% understood and fulfilled their responsibilities as a member of the Board, and all participants attended and actively participated in the meetings. Eighty-three percent (83%) said that they were aware of the needs and concerns of the university community. These results were shared with the president of the Board of Trustees and with the members.

The Board is also divided into sub-committees with specific duties and responsibilities which include the following:

- *Academic Commission-* Through its officers in each association and union, explores the academic program needs of the Adventist and non-Adventist community served by AAU.
- *Planning and Development-* Explores possible fundraising and financing strategies for different prioritized projects.
- *Student Services-* Establishes the institutional parameters that govern the services and activities of the students; ensures that these are met through an evaluative process.
- *Finances-* The Finance Commission is responsible for advising the University administration on financial operations. It also acts as a review committee for the University's audited financial statements, after being evaluated by the Audit Committee and recommending their approval to the Board of Trustees.
- *Religious Affairs-* Coordinates religious activities within the academic and social program of the University and intertwines them with those of the church, in consultation with the president of the University. Also plans and promotes activities that highlight the moral and religious values of the University family in accordance with the University's head pastor.

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- *Audit*- Evaluates the accounting firms authorized to carry out the University's audit work and recommends their hiring to the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees ensures that the University responds to the needs of Puerto Rican society and constitutes an essential element in the effort to solve the problems faced by the people. The Board should stimulate the development of the University's talents and resources to make the core values of its society a reality.

University Administration

The University's administration is composed of the following five officers: University President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Financial Affairs, Vice President for Students Affairs and Vice President for Planning and Development, and Director for Religious Affairs.

University President. The past President served for 12 years. In 2022, the Board of Trustees appointed a new President. She has the appropriate credentials, professional experience, authority, and autonomy to fulfill her responsibilities.

The President oversees the general operations of the Institution and represents the University on the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee of the Puerto Rican Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization.

Among the President's responsibilities are the followings:

- Serve as Secretary to the University's Board of Trustees,
- Fulfill the mandates of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee,
- Maintain and promote the Institution's objective and mission,
- Plan, coordinate, direct, and supervise the work of the administration, faculty, and staff,
- Develop and maintain an academic program, including research and service, that meets student needs,
- Develop strategies, in conjunction with the Board of Trustees, to obtain the financial resources needed to operate the Institution,
- Provide the Institution with a healthy and well-balanced administrative structure,
- Promote the Institution's best interest within federal and national agencies, and
- Promote spiritual activities for the University family, student, and community.

The President is the key officer responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the institution's Strategic Plan, Annual Works Plans, and the allocations of resources to guide the institution towards achieving its goals. In the past five years, the President achieved eight

collaborative agreements, aligned with the Institutional Priority D2 to increase educational opportunities for students.

AAU is an academic institution with a vision to serve humanity. This service entails community and global outreach in which students and employee participate. Through collaboration agreements with community leader's students can participate in educational experiences that strengthen their knowledge, skills, and disposition in their fields of study.

On the other hand, the Institution has qualified administrators who collaborate with the President in the fulfillment of the Strategic Plan and therefore in the fulfillment of the mission. Table 7.1 shows the qualifications of personnel under the direct supervision of the President.

Table 7.1*Qualifications of Administrative Staff under Direct Supervision of the President*

Role	Name	Degree, Field, University	Years of Experience in Higher Education
Interim Vice-President for Academic Affairs	Yolanda Pérez	MA, Business Education, Inter American University of PR (pursuing a doctoral degree in Education)	24
Vice-President for Financial Affairs	Luis Acobes	MA, Business Administration-Accounting, University of Arizona	3
Vice-President for Students Affairs	Sigfredo Morales	Edd, Educational Leadership, Interamerican University of PR	16
Interim Vice-President for Planning and Development	Digna Williams	Edd, Educational Leadership, University of Puerto Rico	21
Director for Religious Affairs	Esteban Hidalgo	MDiv, Andrews University (ABD)	12

Source: Human Resource Department

Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The Vice-President (VP) for Academic Affairs oversees all academic aspects of the Institution, which include: curriculum, library, registrar office, distance education, faculty, and academic departments. As second in command, the VP for Academic Affairs acts as president in the event the President is unavailable. The VP for Academic Affairs chairs the Academic Affairs Executive Committee, the Graduate Studies Committee, and the Academic Norms Committee. Through these committees, the VP facilitates curriculum improvement, academic policy guidelines, and decision-making for meeting students' academic needs. The Chief Academic Officer also promotes faculty development and provides an academic environment that is congruent with the Institution's mission and philosophy.

Vice-President for Student Affairs. The Vice President for Student Affairs oversees services related to students. His responsibilities include the following: promoting Christian values within the student body, promoting congruency between the Institution's philosophy and the different student organizations, supervising student publications, orientation and counseling services, residence halls, cafeteria, and maintaining campus safety, among others. He also chairs the Student Affairs Executive Committee. The current VP of Student Affairs was named to the position on May 17th, 2021.

Vice-President for Planning and Development. This office oversees several aspects of the Institution, including the following: institutional effectiveness and institutional

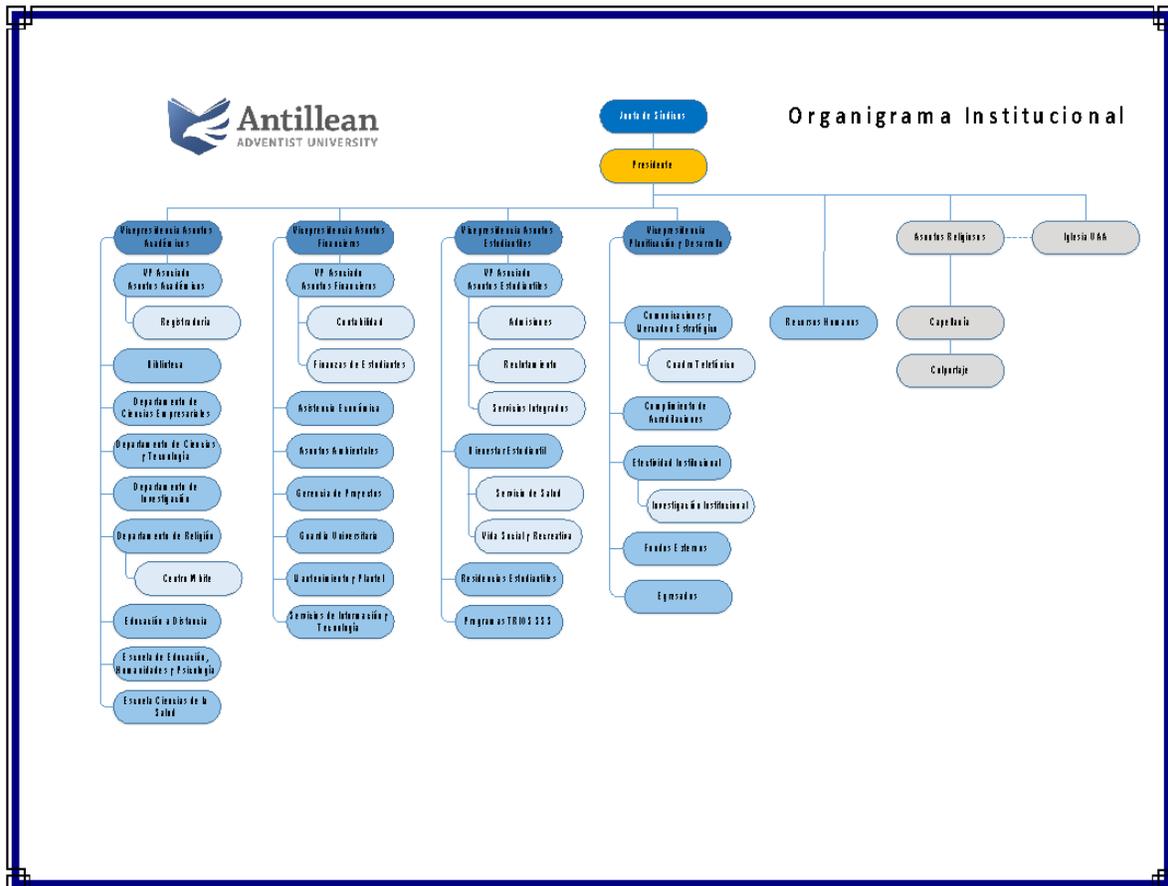
research, marketing, admissions, recruitment, fundraising, and alumni. The Vice President for Planning and Development chairs the Planning and Development Executive Committee.

Director for Religious Affairs. This officer oversees the planning, organizing, implementation, and supervisions all the religious activities of the Institution. He is responsible for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Institution’s Plan for Spiritual Development. The Director for Religious Affairs collaborate with the Church Pastor, the Chaplain, and the Director for Colporteurs.

The Antillean Organizational Structure is the framework by which administrative processes converge to provide operational functionality to the Institution. Figure 7.1 shows an organizational structure of appropriate size, with relevant components to assist the President in fulfilling her functions and responsibilities.

Figure 7.1

Institutional Organization Chart



The President’s Executive Committee. This is the President's administrative and legislative body, whose members are the President, Vice Presidents, and Director for

Religious Affairs. Some of the responsibilities of the President's Executive Committee are as follows:

- Advise the President and vice versa in areas which they consider relevant;
- Decide complex and vital issues that require immediate action or confidentiality;
- Support and assure compliance of the University's budget, the Strategic Plan, the Master Plan for Spiritual Development, and the Infrastructure Development Plan;
- Verify compliance of Board of Trustees decisions;
- Develop agenda points to be presented at the University Administrative Council;
- Verify compliance of recommendations made by the external auditor and government and accreditation agencies;
- Develop strategies to improve institutional effectiveness.

University Administrative Council. The University Administrative Council is the body with executive and legislative power of the highest rank within the University, responsible for the study, evaluation, and decision-making on recommendations of the internal committees, within the parameters established by the Board of Trustees. Their duties are clearly defined in the Working Policy Handbook (29-33).

Matters dealt by the University Administrative Council, which require the approval of the Board of Trustees, are referred through the President of the University. The President has the prerogative to refer matters directly to the Board of Trustees. The members of the Administrative Council are as follows:

- President of the University – Chair
- Vice President for Academic Affairs – Secretary
- Vice Presidents
- Director for Religious Affairs
- University Chaplain
- University Church Pastor
- Deans of Schools and Directors of Academic Departments
- Seven faculty representatives
- Three staff representatives
- President of the Student Council

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- President of the graduating class

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Governance, Leadership, and Administration

As part of the periodic assessment of the effectiveness of administrative structures and services, AAU prepares and submits to the President an Annual Report of Institutional Effectiveness detailing the outstanding achievements and identifying areas for improvement. In addition, it conducts multiple audits by internal and external regulatory agencies, as indicated below:

- **Contracted External Audits**—The Institution recruits external auditing firms to perform annual assessments of the effectiveness of different administrative, operational, academic, and fiscal processes related to financial aid programs to prepare the financial statements and the single audit.
- **Federal Audits**—Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Education, regularly assess AAU in its administrative processes, including student services such as Veterans Affairs and Financial Aid.

Following these evaluations, the Institution develops and implements improvement plans to address concerns raised by audits and submits them to the relevant agencies. The regularity of the audits ensures compliance with the plan submitted by the Institution and is useful to assess the effectiveness of governance and administration.

Effectiveness of Changes in AAU's Systems Structure

During the past years the Institution has undergone various changes with the purpose providing quality services to both students and personnel. Personnel and student feedback and surveys provided data for justifying changes.

Vice Presidency for Academic Affairs. The Department of Distance Education (DDE) was created to meet the needs of a growing population that preferred a virtual modality of learning. This initiative produced programs and courses that required training in technology to both faculty and students; the DDE provided the training. During the COVID Pandemic this initiative proved advantageous to students and faculty because of certain health restrictions. During the pandemic the federal government provided funds for buying technological equipment which facilitated the teaching learning process.

Vice Presidency for Student Affairs. In order to provide improved services to students an integrated service was established. An officer for this service was hired, as well as a retention and enrollment management officers. The admissions and recruitment offices became part of this vice presidency with the purpose of following up on students from recruitment to admissions and beyond.

Vice Presidency for Financial Affairs. For more than ten years this vice presidency had under its supervision the Human Resource Department. With the purpose of being more objective, currently this position is supervised by the president.

Vice Presidency for Planning and Development. This vice presidency created the Department of Communication and Strategic Marketing with the purpose of designing and implementing strategies for advertising the institution and managing internal and external

communications. Clear and periodic corporate communication is vital for students, employees, and the larger community using different media. This department currently has an upscaled media center in which both students and personnel promote the university. In this way AAU can attract more students that identify themselves with the mission of the institution.

Conclusion

AAU's Board of Trustees is committed to incorporating innovative practices into its governance, communication, and work plans. In addition, the Board is proactive in its efforts to follow best practice models in higher education. This analysis has allowed the University to identify the following strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement:

Strengths

- AAU possesses a clearly defined organizational structure to provide the necessary guidance and direction for effective governance and management.
- The Institution's has an organizational culture focused on its mission and goals.

Challenges

- Conduct periodic assessments on the effectiveness of institutional management and governance.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Improve the efficiency of office and department administrators by providing professional growth experiences/training.