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Executive Summary

Caribbean University (CU) has chosen a Comprehensive Model for its Self-Study Report in fulfillment of the requirements for reaffirmation of its accreditation status by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). The University's self-study was directed by a Steering Committee whose members were chosen from each of the academic divisions, administrative offices and student representation. The Steering Committee reviewed the proposed Self-Study Design, and developed the final Self-Study report. Through this process, Caribbean University demonstrates compliance with MSCHE accreditations standards.

Since its beginning, Caribbean University has had a continuing interest for providing quality education to academic and economically underprivileged student population while adhering to its educational tenets of accessibility, adaptability and comprehensiveness. These fundamental principles were made evident in its 1991 and 2001 MSCHE Self-Study Report and continue to hold true to this day. After its last accreditation in 2001, Caribbean University has made great strides in personnel structure, financial administration, infrastructure improvements, student services enhancement, and improved academic standards. These efforts have helped Caribbean University to accomplish the challenges of the population it serves.

The University’s founder and president for 32 years was Dr. Angel Juan. Upon his death, Dr. Ana E. Cucurella-Adorno was appointed by the Board of Trustees as the new President in January, 2002. Under her unique and transformational leadership style, the Institution has grown and evolved to meet its Mission and serve a vital role in the educational development of the communities it serves.

The current Self-Study is a comprehensive evaluation of Caribbean University as it stands in 2010, and it affirms how the University meets its Mission and complies with the needs of the academic community. The Steering Committee and its six (6) Work Groups, addressed the standards of MSCHE in the following manner: Chapter 1, Mission, Goals, Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal, and Resources and Integrity; Chapter 2, Leadership, Governance, and Administration; Chapter 3, Institutional Assessment and Assessment of Student Learning; Chapter 4, Student Admissions and Retention, and Student Support Services; Chapter 5, Faculty; and, Chapter 6, Educational Offerings, General Education and Related Educational Activities.

Caribbean University clearly articulates and demonstrates that it is guided by its Mission, Vision, and purposes at all levels of the organization and in all of its planning, budgeting, and decision-making processes. The University’s Mission is clear, prominently displayed on campuses and in publications and consistently shared with the University’s stakeholders and constituents. Caribbean University consistently lives up to its Mission in providing learning experiences that help students reach their highest potential.

Caribbean University is well positioned for the next decade. It is strong and vital and will continue to fulfill its Mission and purposes in the future. It has adequate resources to accomplish its Mission and they are effectively organized. This conclusion is supported by the constant use of the Strategic Planning, the use of Strategic Guidelines, and the perception that the Institutional Vision and Mission serves in the decision-making process, that the budget responds in part to the Mission, and that the administrative structure also supports the Mission. It is also supported by the perception that alignment exists between physical/infrastructure development and academic plans. The academic and administrative departments are engaged in the processes to improve their operations according to the Strategic Plan developed and approved in 2006.

The Institution's effort in establishing priorities in the resource allocations is grounded in the consensus of the academic and administrative units. The University has promoted integrity through systemic policies in all students, academic and administrative areas. These policies represent an opportunity to preserve good practices and overcome conflicts of interest. Caribbean University understands that it is important to continue serving the majority of underprivileged and at-risk student population, and should continue to increase its resources in order to comply with mandate state and federal requirements and standards related to quality assurance. It is also important to maximize strategic opportunities for the development and growth in graduate and online programs. In order to achieve these, physical facilities, electrical and technological infrastructure need to be strengthened and enhanced.

Caribbean University's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the University to fulfill its Mission. The governance structure of Caribbean University includes an active Board of Trustees with sufficient autonomy to assure Institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development. The governance and administration Work Group concluded that the current organizational structure has allowed the Institution to further its development as well as respond to academic and administrative matters. There is a commitment on behalf of all Institutional constituents in the development and growth of the University. Caribbean University has lines of communication which are effective and efficient. Caribbean University has developed an Action Plan that included the re-conceptualization of its organizational structure towards a University System with greater articulation, coordination, and shared authority between the Central Administration and the academic units. As a System, the University responds to modern administrative and managerial principles, based upon the utilization and efficient maximization of human and economic resources, as well as physical and technological infrastructure.

Caribbean University has developed several ongoing evaluation and assessment processes that assure Institutional effectiveness and inform strategies for continuous improvement. Caribbean University continues its commitment to developing a culture of assessment that focuses on the Institution's Mission, enhancing and improving student learning. The University has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates the overall effectiveness in achieving the Mission and Goals. This process has

assisted Caribbean University to improve its performance towards academic excellence which provides for the compliance with MSCHE accreditation standards. Assessment process in Caribbean University provides useful information on Institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Currently, assessment outcomes are considered in all decision making processes and resource allocations are made to support needed changes. Recommendations of external as well as internal assessment activities have made Caribbean University invest several millions of dollars in its operation to achieve its goals. The University has purchased the Blackboard Outcomes System for Institutional and student learning assessment. The Institution has been able to comply with local and federal standards and to overcome the economic challenge that institutions of higher education in Puerto Rico are facing. Student Satisfaction Survey results evidence a high level of Institutional effectiveness. This has led to increase our retention and graduation rates.

Learning outcomes assessment has been highly considered in all academic programs including the General Education component. Programs such as the Speech and Language Therapy, Education and Nursing, among others, are evidence of the Institution's academic excellence. Students in these programs consistently attain high passing rates (compared with other scores in Puerto Rico) in their corresponding licensing exams. General Education at Caribbean University is assessed with various instruments through diagnostic and achievement tests in English, Spanish and Math. The Institutional Assessment Process includes both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Caribbean University maintains an open-door admissions policy that is consistent with the principle that higher education is not an intellectual or economic privilege, but a right of individual human beings. The open-door admissions policy has provided educational opportunities to students who otherwise would have never thought of pursuing college studies, thus improving their quality of life. Admissions procedures have been established to ascertain the applicant's ability to successfully pursue the courses of study for which they choose to enroll at the University. The student profile is consistent with Caribbean University's Mission, and the goals of providing educational opportunities to students who are economically, culturally and educationally underprivileged.

Within the scope of its Mission, the University provides various student services that are designed to support successful student enrollment and personal and career development. Caribbean University offers various support services that helps increase retention and graduation rates and contribute to the improvement of student's academic development. These activities include recreational, academic, health, and social support services. Since many students are likely to abandon their educational goals, Caribbean University has successfully sought federal funded programs that aim at improving retention and graduation rates.

Caribbean University has a highly qualified and experienced faculty who take their teaching role seriously. Faculty members perform a variety of functions within and on behalf of the University as they strive to fulfill the University's Mission. Caribbean

University strives to recruit and retain highly qualified professors. These efforts are framed within the established policy for recruitment. The University assures that candidates have the appropriate academic preparation and qualifications. They must possess at least a Master's or Doctoral degree, its equivalent or experience and prestige that can qualify them in their teaching specialty. Such degrees should be obtained from accredited universities. Since the last Monitoring Report, the number of full-time faculty has increased.

There are various opportunities for faculty participation in the decision-making process. The academic staff of Caribbean University has been and continues to be of critical importance. The faculty continuously strives to create a learning environment that assures the highest quality programs and serves as the cornerstone of the Institution's Mission. According to interviews, observations and examined documentation, all participating faculty in the 2010 Analytical Study, agreed that Caribbean University's faculty are highly committed to the Mission and Vision of the Institution, and actively participate in curriculum development.

The University offers a rich array of rigorous academic programs. Caribbean University has demonstrated a genuine concern for academic programs integrity and its congruence with its philosophical tenets of accessibility, adaptability and comprehensiveness. Its educational offerings are developed based on the Institution's Mission. The University further fulfills its Mission by offering programs that develop professional knowledge, competencies and skills in technology, business, art and health career; all of which are supported by a General Education component that provides a sound social and humanistic foundation. Programs and departments periodically review their curricula with a view to reflect social change and to meet with the evolving economic and social realities of the Island, as well as, national and international scenarios. The development of new programs illustrates a keen awareness of the rapid changes occurring in the world, and provides students with the ability to develop the intellectual traits and skills necessary for success.

Caribbean University strives to achieve coherence between its academic offerings and other experiences that contributes to the total educational environment as well as to promote the development of lifelong skills. The University demonstrates its commitment to creating learning opportunities which support the Mission, and prepare students for living and working in a global society. Caribbean University is proud of its accomplishments that have positioned the Institution within the higher education community in Puerto Rico and our internationalization including Latin America.

This Self-Study has provided a rational and honest look at the progress that the University has made over the past ten years; where the Institution stands today; and more importantly, where new journeys and pathways can and will lead in the future. It has also provided major findings for enhancing Institutional and educational effectiveness. The Self-Study process has served to identify Caribbean University's strengths and challenges, but mostly to recognize that the Institution has made huge advances in the development of processes and initiatives toward Institutional effectiveness and student

learning outcomes. Caribbean University has successfully moved towards the attainment of its strategic priorities linked to long term planning for decision making and budgeting processes. The Self-Study affirms the University's readiness to meet the challenges of the future in the context of the MSCHE Standards of Excellence.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education
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Certification Statement:
Compliance with MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation and Federal Title IV Requirements
(Effective October 1, 2009)

An institution seeking **initial accreditation** or **reaffirmation of accreditation** must affirm by completing this certification statement that it meets or continues to meet established MSCHE requirements of affiliation and federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 such as those on distance education and transfer of credit.

The signed statement must be attached to the executive summary of the institution's self-study report.

If it is not possible to certify compliance with all such requirements, the institution must attach specific details in a separate memorandum.

Caribbean University

is seeking *(Check one)*: ___ Initial Accreditation _X_ Reaffirmation of Accreditation

The undersigned hereby certify that the institution meets all established requirements of affiliation of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 such as those on distance education and transfer of credit, and that it has complied with the MSCHE policy, "Related Entities."

___ Exceptions are noted in the attached memorandum *(Check if applicable)*

Dr. Ana E. Cucurella
President

October 27, 2010

Prof. Evaristo Medina
President
Board of Directors

October 27, 2010

J:\Procedures & Process\CertificationStatementEffectiveOct09