



SELF STUDY REPORT

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

2026



UNIVERSIDAD DEL
SAGRADO CORAZÓN

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Executive Summary

The Self-Study process provided an opportunity for Universidad del Sagrado Corazón (“Sagrado” or “the University”) to engage in institutional reflection grounded in its Mission: “To educate persons in intellectual freedom and moral conscience who are willing to participate in the construction of a more authentically Christian Puerto Rican society: a community of solidarity in justice and peace.” Celebrating 145 years of educational service in Puerto Rico in April 2025, the University affirms that resilience, adaptability, and social commitment are integral to its identity. While the review period coincided with sustained external disruptions—including Hurricanes Irma and Maria (2017), earthquakes in southwestern Puerto Rico (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2023), Hurricane Fiona (2022), and changes in federal higher education policy and funding priorities (2025)—the University maintained continuity of academic operations, strengthened student support systems, and advanced strategic initiatives aligned with its Mission. The Self-Study confirms institutional compliance with MSCHE standards and demonstrates a sustained pledge to continuous improvement, evidence-based decision-making, and mission-centered innovation.

Standard I: Mission and Goals. Guided by its Mission, Sagrado demonstrates that institutional priorities, academic innovation, and strategic planning processes are intentionally aligned to educate students committed to ethical reflection, intellectual inquiry, and social responsibility. The RBK Project translates the Mission into a coherent educational framework that integrates curricular, co-curricular, and experiential learning opportunities to advance integral human development and engagement with the Santurce community where Sagrado is located. Institutional goals across successive strategic plans derive directly from the Mission and are supported by systematic assessment processes that inform continuous improvement. No major findings were identified. Opportunities include strengthening an integrated mapping of mission-aligned initiatives, improving systematic external communication of outcomes, monitoring resource alignment with institutional capacity, and further integrating Leadership for Public Purpose as an organizing lens for educational and co-curricular experiences in alignment with the Carnegie framework and the priorities of the Sagrado 2030 Strategic Plan (“*Sagrado 2030*”).

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity. Grounded in its Mission-centered commitment to human dignity and respect, the University demonstrates ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability across academic, administrative, and student-facing processes. Institutional policies support fairness, accessibility, and institutional responsibility. Governance and administrative structures promote integrity and align institutional values with operational practices. No major findings were identified. Opportunities include strengthening institutional effectiveness and integrity by systematizing digital monitoring of grievance processes, streamlining and simplifying the performance evaluation processes, formalizing communication and marketing policies, regularly reviewing crisis communication protocols, and refining guidance on the ethical use of artificial intelligence in alignment with *Sagrado 2030* priorities.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience. Consistent with its Mission to promote intellectual formation and social responsibility, Sagrado provides a coherent student learning experience grounded in the RBK Project, a curricular framework integrating liberal arts education, professional

preparation, research, creative practice, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. The Core Curriculum fosters interdisciplinary learning aligned with institutional competencies and is supported by specialized academic schools that promote communication, research, innovation, and experiential learning. Faculty qualifications, curricular oversight processes, and structures for pedagogical innovation support academic quality. No major findings were identified. Opportunities include strengthening the proportion of doctoral-qualified faculty teaching graduate courses as the University develops its graduate level offerings; enhancing research support structures, advising, and scholarly resources; implementing systematic evaluation of asynchronous course design; formalizing procedures for monitoring third-party providers; and ensuring adequate library and academic support staffing as graduate education expands in alignment with *Sagrado 2030* priorities.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience. Aligned with its commitment to educational access and social mobility, Sagrado demonstrates a comprehensive student support ecosystem integrating advising, Federal TRIO programs, accessibility services, career preparation, and co-curricular learning experiences that promote belonging, persistence, and holistic student development. Retention outcomes have returned to stability after the sustained external disruptions affecting Puerto Rico during the review period. No major findings were identified. Opportunities include improving advising capacity and systematic integration, strengthening support for transfer and non-traditional students, enhancing assessment of co- and extracurricular learning, and refining transportation and residential services to support student success in alignment with *Sagrado 2030* priorities.

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment. Consistent with its Mission-centered commitment to academic excellence and intellectual development, Sagrado systematically assesses student learning aligned with institutional competencies derived from the Mission. Curricular maps, program-level assessment processes, and institutional reporting structures support continuous improvement of academic programs. Faculty engagement in assessment processes has strengthened through institutional professional development and academic support structures. No major findings were identified. Opportunities include expanding graduate-level assessment implementation, increasing participation in indirect assessment measures, improving data disaggregation to support equity analysis, and strengthening faculty engagement in advanced assessment practices aligned with *Sagrado 2030* priorities. A longitudinal and comparative analysis of the first complete four-year assessment cycle under the RBK Project and a meta-assessment of the assessment system itself, are currently underway.

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement. Guided by its Mission and commitment to responsible stewardship, Sagrado aligns institutional planning, resource allocation, and institutional effectiveness processes. Despite sustained external disruption, the University maintained financial stability. It continued investing in academic innovation, student services, technological infrastructure, and residential expansion aligned with institutional priorities. Strategic planning processes demonstrate institutional capacity to integrate assessment findings into decision-making. No major findings were identified. Opportunities include strengthening integrated data systems and dashboards, strengthening multi-year financial and capital planning, enhancing communication and transparency in resource

allocation, further strengthening business continuity and facilities planning frameworks, and advancing sustainability initiatives in alignment with *Sagrado 2030* priorities.

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration. Grounded in its Mission-centered commitment to ethical leadership and shared responsibility, Sagrado maintains a clearly defined governance structure supported by an engaged Board of Trustees, shared governance processes, and experienced leadership aligned with institutional priorities. Governance structures demonstrated transparency, accountability, and responsiveness during emergency management while sustaining academic continuity and institutional stability. No major findings were identified. Opportunities include improving the Performance Evaluation Process, formalizing the action cycle in response to climate surveys, and strengthening the assessment of governance, leadership, and administration to continue developing institutional decision-making and execution.

Introduction

Institutional History, Mission and Values

Universidad del Sagrado Corazón (“Sagrado” or “University”) is a non-profit, independent Catholic university with a single campus located in the Santurce area of the capital city of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Sagrado originated in the educational project of the religious sisters of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Puerto Rico. The project began in 1880 with a school for girls and young women and in 1935 expanded to include a college for women. At the time, Puerto Rico had few colleges and universities. This college was the first Catholic college in Puerto Rico and the first institution of higher education to be intentionally modeled on liberal arts colleges in the continental United States.

In the 1970s, the Society closed the school and transferred ownership and governance of the college to a Board of Trustees composed of community leaders. The first lay presidents were then appointed. The college changed its name and became the modern co-educational institution that it is today. As part of the transfer arrangements, the Society and the Archbishop of San Juan retained the right to appoint a quarter of the trustees. In 1988, the Board of Trustees adopted the institutional Mission, which continues to guide the University: “To educate persons in intellectual freedom and moral conscience who are willing to participate in the construction of a more authentically Christian Puerto Rican society: a community of solidarity in justice and peace.”

Sagrado currently serves more than 5,500 students, mostly residents of Puerto Rico, through undergraduate and graduate programs administered by five schools: the Ferré Rangel School of Communication, the School of Arts, Design and Creative Industries, the School of Health and Sciences, the School of Business, and the School of General Education. More than 70% of Sagrado’s regular undergraduate students are eligible for Pell Grants, and a significant number work to finance their studies and support their families. Sagrado is primarily a commuter campus, but the residential component has been growing. Sagrado also offers professional and continuing education courses to more than 3,000 participants through the School of Professional Studies, known as Sagrado Global.

Sagrado remains cognizant of, and continues to draw inspiration from, its roots. The Society of the Sacred Heart, a Catholic women’s religious order, was established by St. Madeleine Sophie Barat in Paris in 1800. She led a group of women who responded to the stark realities of post-revolutionary France by founding what eventually became a worldwide network of schools and universities for women. At the time, women received little formal schooling; schools and teachers were limited, and opportunities for professional advancement were few. The Society’s initial objective was to renew French society through an integral education for women.

St. Madeleine Sophie Barat and her sisters were entrepreneurs serving their mission. They challenged the traditional cloistered life for religious women and the absence of educational alternatives. They realized their project transcended France’s geographical limits and was relevant to societies around the world. The first missionary was St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, who, in 1818, embarked with a group of sisters on the vessel *Rebecca* en route to the United States. They opened the first schools in the Americas. Sixty-two years later, in 1880, her sisters landed in Puerto Rico. The voyage of

the *Rebecca* has become a symbol of daring, audacity, and courage in the service of a mission.

In 2018, Sacred Heart communities all over the world celebrated the 200th anniversary of St. Rose Philippine's voyage by asking themselves about their own Rebecca moment: What is the frontier that each community must cross in the service of its Mission? For Sagrado, this question became pressing after the devastating Hurricane Maria of September 2017: How was Sagrado called to respond to challenging and often tragic social realities and vulnerabilities laid bare by this natural disaster? The University named its institutional response the RBK Project, after the vessel that first brought the sisters to America.

St. Magdalene Sophie Barat had insisted that "times change and we must change with them," and Sagrado was called to change as well.

Context and Environmental Factors

Sagrado's 2026 Self-Study continues that reflection in light of the challenges Puerto Rico faces and uncertainties about the future.

Puerto Rico is undergoing an economic and fiscal recovery process framed by a local economic contraction that began in 2006, a default on public debt announced in 2015, and a public bankruptcy that has not concluded in more than ten years. Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, a sequence of earthquakes in southwestern Puerto Rico in January 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March of that year and lasted more than three years, also affected this process. While these events had significant adverse impacts, they also prompted substantial relief and recovery investments projected to continue for several years. The social effects of all these developments over the past two decades have been profound, including significant mass migration and population decline.

Sagrado has engaged in ongoing reflection at the strategic and operational levels on how best to advance the institutional Mission in this challenging context. In 2025, changes in federal funding priorities added to the challenge by forcing the closure of various academic and student services projects. The RBK Project was specifically developed in response to Hurricane Maria. Still, its guiding principles and main lines of action have continued to guide the University strategy through the challenges of the subsequent years.

The main insight driving this project was the need for a university education that builds students' capacity and ability to imagine, design, develop, and execute substantial projects in their fields of professional endeavor. This kind of education would better prepare students to engage in the projects needed to address the many social and economic challenges facing Puerto Rico, as well as better prepare them for the demands of their professional careers, which will require them to participate in projects to accomplish common objectives continuously.

A second driving insight was that, given the rapid pace of social change and the multidisciplinary nature of many socio-economic challenges, it was critical to give all students a solid foundation in the skills needed to evolve and pursue diverse professional futures. The experiences of the past two decades have shown that they need to be prepared to manage diverse future contexts, potentially different careers and professional settings, and in all these different scenarios, engage in substantial projects

with diverse collaborators to pursue the goals or address the challenges of the communities or organizations to which they belong.

The RBK Project anchored these two insights in areas where the University already had a history of social impact and where it offered greater opportunities for local growth. Accordingly, the project identified five strategic areas: the arts and creative industries; mass media and communications; business and entrepreneurship; health and integral human development; and leadership and civic engagement. Sagrado is currently advancing its work in the latter area.

In April 2025, Sagrado commemorated the 145th anniversary of the Society of the Sacred Heart's educational presence in Puerto Rico and the fifth year of implementation of the RBK Project. This milestone highlighted the continuity of an educational tradition grounded in intellectual rigor, social commitment, ethical reflection, and responsibility for the common good. Sagrado's Mission sustains this legacy through an education centered on the integral development and inviolable dignity of each person and committed to solidarity, justice, and peace. Standard I further examines how this tradition and the Mission inform the RBK Project's philosophical framework.

The Academic Project

The RBK Project was designed between 2017 and 2020, and implemented in August 2020, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The undergraduate curricular structure includes: (a) a Core Curriculum; (b) the Major Concentration; and (c) an Exploration component based on free electives, alternative minors, or a second Major Concentration.

The Core Curriculum comprises 63 credits required for all undergraduate programs¹ to support the development of durable human skills grounded in the liberal arts and humanistic traditions. The Core Curriculum coursework addresses seven institutional competencies, including Critical Thinking, Communication, Research and Exploration, Ethical Reflection, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Leadership for the Common Good, and Digital Literacy², organized into three components:

21st Century Skills (39 credits). This component focuses on developing competencies in Critical Thinking, Communication, Research and Exploration, and Ethical Reflection through multidisciplinary courses and learning experiences that emphasize active, creative, and engaged learning.

Leadership for the Common Good (6 credits). This component includes coursework to develop students' capacity for personal and collective leadership grounded in self-knowledge, contextual awareness, and commitment to the common good, while integrating justice, collaboration, solidarity, and ethical and theological

¹ Undergraduate Nursing programs follow a modified Core Curriculum to comply with CCNE credit requirements.

² From August 2020 through June 2026, the Core Curriculum included five institutional competencies: Communication, Critical Thinking, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Research and Exploration, and Ethical Sense and Social Justice. Although the curriculum already included a Leadership sequence, Leadership for the Common Good was not formally designated as an institutional competency. Following the five-year RBK Project review, the Academic Board approved a revised framework in January 2026, effective academic year 2026–2027, that renamed Ethical Sense and Social Justice as Ethical Reflection, formally incorporated Leadership for the Common Good as a competency, and introduced Digital Literacy as a transversal competency. Because these changes occurred after the assessment period, Standard V reports results for the original five competencies. The new four-year assessment cycle will use the new competency framework, but the University expects to maintain longitudinal consistency because four of the five original competencies remain the same, and the changes to the remaining one are not so material as to prevent comparison.

reflection into academic, civic, and professional development. It also incorporates theology coursework on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition that encourages reflection on the broader transcendent dimensions of human activity.

Entrepreneurship (18 credits). The Entrepreneurship component requires students to complete a sequence of courses through which they design, develop, and execute a substantial project related to their disciplinary interests or broader social, creative, or professional goals. The sequence is grounded in a theoretical framework that understands entrepreneurship as a transferable skill and methodology applicable to diverse forms of innovation, including cultural and creative projects, scientific or social research, social entrepreneurship initiatives, or business ventures.

The **Major Concentration** provides disciplinary specialization, with requirements ranging from 27 to 45 credits. The **Exploration** component provides an additional 12 to 27 elective credits, depending on the major, that students may use to complete a minor, pursue a second major, or design an independent sequence of courses. This flexibility allows students to broaden or complement their primary field of study according to their professional or personal interests.

Active and High-Impact Learning. A central feature of the RBK Project is the intentional integration of active learning methodologies and high-impact educational practices that promote critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and applied problem-solving, aligned with Sagrado's Mission and institutional competencies. Active learning is embedded throughout the Core Curriculum and academic programs, fostering student engagement, learning communities, and academic success.

Experiential learning is supported through specialized facilities across the academic schools. The Communication Core Sequence incorporates weekly immersive sessions in the Language Center to strengthen bilingual communication skills. At the same time, Entrepreneurship Core Sequence use the Collaborative Innovation Center (Neeuko) for design thinking, prototyping, and project development. Students also engage in applied learning through audiovisual studios, design and performing arts laboratories, science laboratories, and business simulation environments. Since 2020, classroom renovations have further expanded collaborative learning spaces that support group work, simulations, writing workshops, and interactive instruction.

Active learning is complemented by three institution-wide high-impact practices: community engagement through service-learning, internationalization through global and intercultural experiences, and professional development through applied learning in organizational and industry settings.

Service-Learning is a distinctive strength of Sagrado's educational model and reflects its longstanding commitment to social impact. Sagrado is the only university in Puerto Rico to hold the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement. All undergraduate students complete at least one community-engaged learning experience as part of their academic program, while co-curricular service and volunteer activities are documented through the extracurricular transcript.

Academic Programs. As of August 2026, Sagrado offers 52 academic degrees. Of these, 31 are bachelor's degrees, 3 are combined degrees, 3 are associate degrees, 3 are undergraduate certificates, 10 are master's degrees, 1 is a graduate certificate, and 1 is a doctoral degree. At the undergraduate level, the university also offers 56 minor concentrations.

The average total credits for all bachelor's degrees is 120, although certain programs can have higher requirements in fields such as Science, Computing, and Business.

Before the launch of the RBK Project in August 2020, all bachelor's degrees underwent curricular review to align program structures with the new Core Curriculum and to update professional competencies in response to disciplinary developments and evolving market trends. Five new bachelor's degree programs were launched in 2022, including Fashion Design and Management, Industrial Design, Graphic Design, Creative Writing and Literature, and Art and Entertainment Business.

Following the necessary approvals, the University will offer its first-ever doctoral degree—a Ph.D. in Creative Writing and Literature—beginning in August 2026.

Program Accreditations. The Nursing Program is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The Social Work Program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), although the program is currently under the closure process and no longer admits new students. The School of Business and the Ferré Rangel School of Communication are pursuing accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) and the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), respectively.

Academic Structure, Management Roles, and Faculty

As part of the RBK Project implementation, Sagrado redesigned its academic organization to align its structures with its educational vision and strategic priorities. Traditional academic departments evolved into five schools that serve as platforms for interdisciplinary collaboration, curricular innovation, research, external partnerships, and student success. Each school is led by a dean and supported by academic leaders—full-time faculty who combine teaching with disciplinary and academic leadership and oversee curriculum, assessment, faculty and student support, high-impact practices, and external partnerships.

The Office of the Provost was also strengthened to support the increasing complexity of the academic enterprise. Specialized leadership areas were established for academic operations, curricular development, academic research and grants, and graduate education. At the same time, the Pedagogical Innovation Unit and Academic Researcher role expanded institutional capacity for faculty development, instructional innovation, and student learning assessment. These structures allow deans and academic leaders to focus more directly on academic quality, innovation, and student success while strengthening institutional coordination of curriculum, research, assessment, and academic operations.

A broader transformation of the faculty model accompanied these organizational changes. Following an adjustment to adjunct faculty compensation in 2021, the University continued reviewing faculty workload, development, evaluation, and compensation. In June 2026, Sagrado adopted a revised Faculty Handbook that established differentiated appointment categories, reduced teaching loads to provide greater capacity for impact projects, pedagogical innovation, community engagement, and other Mission-aligned activities, and introduced a Research Professor track with a substantially lower teaching load to strengthen research and scholarly activity. The University also approved a new Faculty Performance Evaluation Policy and Procedure

that integrates peer and student evaluations, annual performance evaluation, promotion in rank, and assessment of faculty Strategic Academic Objectives within a unified framework. In August 2026, Sagrado reviewed the compensation scale for full-time faculty.

Faculty and Student Support Services

Faculty development and student support were also strengthened as integral components of the RBK Project. Established in 2022, the Pedagogical Innovation Unit supports full-time and adjunct faculty through instructional design, consultations, classroom observations, workshops, certifications, learning communities, and other professional development opportunities that advance active learning, high-impact practices, interdisciplinary collaboration, and pedagogical innovation. Internal and external funding, scholarly and professional opportunities, and institutional expectations for continuous professional growth further support faculty development.

Student support evolved into an integrated Student-Centered Support Model designed to accompany students from recruitment through graduation. Building on the priorities of proactive and inclusive advising, faculty mentoring, meaningful co- and extracurricular engagement, and integrated financial support, the model connects academic and career advising with financial aid, accessibility services, well-being, spiritual development, professional and international experiences, student life, and early intervention. The *Mi Ruta (My Pathway)* framework further organizes advising and student development across the student lifecycle, reinforcing the University emphasis on belonging, persistence, academic achievement, and preparation for life after graduation.

The University also revised key policies and guidance governing student life to strengthen expectations for respectful conduct, participation, shared responsibility, and community life. The revised Student Life Guide, Student Organizations Guide, and University Residence Guide, together with the Student Code of Conduct, provide a more coherent framework for student engagement and campus life. These efforts accompanied significant growth in student engagement and residential life, including the expansion of recognized student organizations and residential capacity during the Self-Study period.

Community Engagement and Social Impact

Community engagement remains a defining expression of Sagrado's Mission and the RBK Project's commitment to preparing students to help build a society grounded in solidarity, justice, and peace. Throughout the Self-Study period, the University continued to connect academic learning with community needs through service-learning, community-engaged projects, applied research, volunteer experiences, and partnerships with community and external organizations. These experiences extend learning beyond the classroom while creating opportunities for students and faculty to apply their knowledge in service of the common good.

Sagrado's longstanding commitment to community engagement has been recognized through the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, which the University successfully renewed in 2025. The reclassification process also served as an institutional assessment of Sagrado's community-engagement practices, identifying opportunities to strengthen the assessment of community-engaged learning,

faculty development in community-engaged research, and documentation of partnership outcomes. In 2026, Sagrado was also awarded the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability, further recognizing the University commitment to integrating social responsibility and sustainability into its institutional Mission and practices. Together, the two Carnegie classifications reinforce community engagement and sustainability as interconnected dimensions of Sagrado's educational and social impact.

Learning Assessment

During the Self-Study period, Sagrado strengthened its institutional capacity for student learning assessment and continuous monitoring of the student experience and institutional effectiveness. In 2022, the University formalized its student learning assessment framework through the Student Learning Assessment Policy and corresponding procedure and established the Academic Researcher role within the Office of the Provost. The formal assessment cycle under the RBK curriculum began that year and spans four academic years, with the first complete cycle concluding in 2025–2026. Direct assessment is fully implemented in the Core Curriculum and undergraduate academic programs and continues to expand across graduate programs. Curriculum maps align institutional competencies, program learning outcomes, courses, assessment activities, and rubrics, while faculty design, implement, review, and use assessment findings to improve curriculum and pedagogy. The first complete cycle now provides the basis for a longitudinal and comparative analysis and subsequent meta-assessment of the assessment system.

A broader system of indirect assessment and continuous monitoring complements direct evidence of student learning. Recurring instruments include the First Destination Survey, Student Sense of Belonging Survey, Beginning-of-Semester Survey, Institutional Satisfaction Survey, and Graduating Students Exit Survey. At the same time, targeted surveys assess specific curricular and co-curricular experiences, including the Language Center and the Leadership and Entrepreneurship components of the Core Curriculum. Together with enrollment, retention, graduation, transfer-out, persistence, professional licensure, and other student success indicators, these measures provide multiple sources of evidence for understanding student learning, the student experience, and institutional effectiveness. Faculty and institutional leadership review findings and use them to inform curricular revision, student support strategies, resource allocation, strategic planning, and continuous institutional improvement.

Data Profile: Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation

Institutional data demonstrate the positive impact of the University's academic project. Following the enrollment disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, undergraduate enrollment increased from 3,611 students in 2021–2022 to 4,854 in 2025–2026, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Student success indicators followed a similar trajectory. Undergraduate retention improved from 65% to 80% during the same period, while the overall graduation rate increased from 31% in 2014–2015 to 43% in 2025–2026, peaking at 52% in 2024–2025. These trends reflect sustained institutional efforts to strengthen advising, persistence, and academic support through coordinated student success initiatives. The University monitors these indicators annually to inform planning, resource allocation, and continuous improvement across academic and

student support units. Table 1 summarizes enrollment, retention, and graduation trends from 2014–2015 through 2025–2026.

TABLE 1. ENROLLMENT, RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES			
Academic Year	Undergraduate Enrollment	Retention Rate	Overall Graduation Rate
2025–26	4,854	80%	43%
2024–25	4,494	79%	52%
2023–24	4,099	79%	44%
2022–23	3,731	72%	39%
2021–22	3,611	65%	41%
2020–21	4,097	77%	43%
2019–20	4,448	81%	40%
2018–19	4,239	73%	40%
2017–18	4,376	77%	36%
2016–17	4,302	77%	35%
2015–16	4,525	76%	33%
2014–15	4,643	75%	31%
<i>Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Reports.</i>			

Self-Study Process and Organization of the Report

Sagrado's MSCHE Steering Committee defined four Self-Study Review (SSR) priorities aligned with Sagrado's Mission, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. MISSION AND INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES FOR MSCHE SSR	
Mission and Vision Statement	Priority
Mission: To educate persons in intellectual freedom and moral conscience who are willing to participate in the construction of a more authentically Christian Puerto Rican society: a community of solidarity in justice and peace.	Enhance Academic Excellence through Experiential Learning. Pursue an academic project of excellence designed to promote integral human development that incorporates high-quality experiential learning practices to develop the institutional competencies and provides clear pathways most likely to lead to the desired post-graduation outcomes.
Vision: We offer a unique academic project, an innovative educational experience in which the classroom is the world, in an environment characterized by community life. It is based on the principle that human beings and Christian values are at the center of our project.	Strengthen Student Support Networks. Nurture a student support network that complements the academic experience and fosters engagement, sense of belonging, and the personal and professional growth of each student.
Mission: To educate persons in intellectual freedom and moral conscience who are willing to participate in the construction of a more	Foster Community Engagement. Engage diverse communities through a strategy designed to accomplish the objectives of the academic and student

TABLE 2. MISSION AND INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES FOR MSCHE SSR

Mission and Vision Statement	Priority
authentically Christian Puerto Rican society: a community of solidarity in justice and peace.	life projects, which foster the participation of all members of the Sagrado community.
Vision: We offer a unique academic project, an innovative educational experience in which the classroom is the world, in an environment characterized by community life. It is based on the principle that human beings and Christian values are at the center of our project.	Enhance and Align Institutional Resources for Success. Increase institutional resources and align administrative operations and institutional strategies to effectively support the academic mission, governance, and long-term institutional success.

Table 3 shows the alignment between the priorities and the Standards for Accreditation.

TABLE 3. ALIGNMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES WITH MSCHE STANDARDS

MSCHE Standards	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
I. Mission and Goals	✓	✓	✓	
II. Ethics and Integrity	✓	✓	✓	✓
III. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience	✓		✓	
IV. Support of the Student Experience		✓		
V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment	✓	✓	✓	
VI. Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement				✓
VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration				✓

At the same time, through the Self-Study process, Sagrado aims to achieve the following four outcomes:

1. Demonstrate how the institution currently meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (Fourteenth Edition) and provide evidence by Standard in alignment with the Evidence Expectations by Standard.
2. Leverage periodic assessment through each standard, using assessment results for continuous improvement and innovation to ensure levels of quality for constituents and the attainment of Sagrado's objectives and the advancement of its Mission.
3. Engage the University community in an inclusive and transparent self-assessment process, including analysis of a range of data, such as disaggregated data, to ensure students are properly served, institutional objectives are met, and the Mission is advanced.
4. Evaluate the gaps and opportunities in achieving the vision outlined in *Sagrado 2030*, reaffirming the Community Engagement classification, and assessing readiness to apply for the Leadership for Public Purpose classification from the Carnegie Elective Classification of Higher Education Institutions.

The Self-Study was led by Dr. Anuchka Ramos-Ruiz, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs and Sagrado's MSCHE Accreditation Liaison Officer, and guided by a presidentially appointed Steering Committee of faculty and administrators. Beginning in 2023–2024, a Core Group coordinated the process, managed a centralized Evidence Inventory, monitored progress, prepared for evaluation visits, and supported drafting and editing. Seven Working Groups, one for each MSCHE standard, reviewed and analyzed evidence and developed chapter narratives, with cross-group consultation to ensure consistency. Throughout the process, faculty and staff participated through regular meetings, working sessions, a centralized digital repository, and periodic institutional updates, promoting broad participation, collaboration, and transparency.

The final report is organized around the seven MSCHE Standards, with each chapter presenting an evidence-based narrative by criterion, supported by a coded Evidence Inventory, and concluding with strengths and recommendations for continued improvement. The final chapter synthesizes institutional findings and future priorities. Beyond compliance, the Self-Study provided an institution-wide opportunity for reflection, dialogue, and planning, supporting both accreditation and continuous institutional improvement.

Standard I: Mission and Goals

Introduction. Sagrado's Mission has guided the University's strategic planning, the design and implementation of the RBK Project, institutional responses to successive emergencies, student success initiatives, and its longstanding commitment to community engagement and social impact. In a context marked by profound social, economic, and demographic change in Puerto Rico, this Mission-centered approach has enabled Sagrado to remain responsive while maintaining strategic continuity. This chapter shows how the University's Mission translates into institutional goals, student achievement priorities, and assessment processes that support evidence-based planning and continuous improvement.

Mission and Goals (Criteria 1, a–f). Formally articulated by the Board of Trustees in 1988, Sagrado's Mission states: "To educate persons in intellectual freedom and moral conscience who are willing to participate in the construction of a more authentically Christian Puerto Rican society: a community of solidarity in justice and peace."

The Mission is both internally directive and externally oriented: it guides institutional decision-making while explicitly calling Sagrado to contribute to society by advancing solidarity, justice, and peace. The Mission is stated in the Sagrado Bylaws (*S1-1a-University Bylaws*), and it is reaffirmed annually by the Board of Trustees (*S1-1c-Board's Corporate Resolution Reaffirming the Mission and Vision 2025–2026*). The Mission is widely communicated and known among internal stakeholders through Sagrado's primary governing and policy documents, as well as through institutional ceremonies and community milestones (*S1-1f-Sample Communications or Publications of the Mission Statement*).

The University further operationalizes its Mission through a system of institutional goals and unit-level objectives defined by a strategic plan. Currently, the Sagrado 2030 Strategic Plan ("*Sagrado 2030*"), developed through a deliberate and participatory planning process involving all internal stakeholders, establishes the University's long-term priorities (*S1-1a-University President Report to the Board of Trustees on Strategic Planning Process-Sagrado 2030*). At the beginning of each academic year, the President reviews the annual institutional priorities with the Board of Trustees, the University's leadership, faculty, and staff to ensure a shared understanding and reinforce the Mission as the foundation for planning and decision-making. Evidence of this will be provided in Standard VI.

The RBK Project. As introduced in the opening section of this Self-Study, the RBK Project emerged from Sagrado's institutional reflection following Hurricane Maria and the bicentennial of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne's 1818 voyage aboard the *Rebecca*. Framed as Sagrado's own "Rebecca moment," the reflection asked what frontiers the University was called to cross in response to Puerto Rico's changing circumstances and, more fundamentally, how Sagrado should live its Mission amid the challenges of the times. *Rebecca* became a symbol of daring, audacity, and courage in service of the Mission and the educational tradition of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

The RBK Project is grounded in a humanistic understanding of education centered on the integral development of the whole person and the preparation for constructive action in service of the common good. Its foundational reflection describes education as developing the capacities "to be, to do, to live together, to know, and to

transform.” Intellectual freedom and moral conscience complement each other: students develop their own judgment while assuming ethical responsibility for their decisions and actions. Consistent with the Mission’s call to participate in the “construction” of society, education extends beyond disciplinary knowledge and professional preparation to develop the capacities necessary to address social challenges and contribute meaningfully to society.

This understanding informs RBK’s conception of leadership, entrepreneurship, and citizenship, expressed in the formation of *líderes-emprendedores-ciudadanos solidarios*: persons prepared not simply to adapt to existing circumstances but to help transform them. Grounded in responsibility toward the social context, the framework emphasizes the common good, hope, dialogue, and the capacity to imagine alternatives. These principles shaped a Core Curriculum rooted in the liberal arts and humanistic traditions, integrating intellectual formation with leadership, entrepreneurship, ethical and social responsibility, and community engagement. The reimagined curriculum and student journey also reflect the three pillars Pope Francis articulated in 2017: humanizing education, fostering a culture of dialogue, and cultivating hope. The Core Curriculum is discussed further in Standard III.

The project’s design connected this philosophy to Puerto Rico’s circumstances and Sagrado’s strengths through three questions: What does Puerto Rico need at this historical juncture? What does Sagrado know how to do and where has it distinguished itself? What is feasible for the University to undertake? Building on Sagrado’s experience in service-learning and learning by doing, the resulting model emphasized self-direction and participation in a society grounded in solidarity, justice, and peace. RBK was thus conceived as an operationalization of the Mission’s call to educate persons willing and able to participate actively in the construction of society.

This philosophy translated into a curriculum combining intellectual formation, disciplinary preparation, curricular flexibility, leadership, entrepreneurship, and applied learning. The substantial project at the center of the Entrepreneurship component, along with the emphasis on active, creative, and productive learning, strengthens students’ capacity to move from reflection and ideas to constructive action. RBK also extends beyond the curriculum, aligning academic programs and their co-curricular components with student support, learning environments, faculty development, assessment, resources, and institutional structures. Faculty are central as instructors, mentors, and disciplinary professionals who advance the Mission and help students translate knowledge into meaningful action.

The project advanced through Sagrado’s governance and regulatory structures, including faculty discussion, Board of Trustees review, Academic Board consideration of curricular changes, and regulatory approvals. Implementation began in August 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, after the project itself had emerged from Sagrado’s response to Hurricane Maria. Since its launch, RBK has undergone continuous review and iteration based on its implementation, student learning, and evolving educational context. This assessment and refinement process, further discussed in Standards III and V, remains integral to the project. (*S1-1d-Institutional Statement to JIP with Mission and RBK Alignment*; *S1-1d-RBK Project Documentation Sample*).

A Mission Guiding All Stakeholders. The Mission extends beyond the academic model to shape Sagrado’s relationship with the broader community and the experiences of students, faculty, and staff. By referring to the education of “persons,”

rather than only “students,” the Mission underscores the University commitment to everyone it serves. This outward orientation is reflected in Sagrado’s Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement and its sustained partnerships with the broader community. Community engagement is primarily realized through the Service-Learning Program, a curricular requirement for all undergraduate students that integrates community-based experiences with academic learning to develop civic responsibility, ethical reflection, and social impact. Initiatives such as *Nuestro Barrio*, *CoMesa*, *Voluntarios de Corazón*, and *Sagrado Contigo* further exemplify Sagrado’s commitment to solidarity, justice, and peace. Sagrado also advances its social impact through Sagrado Global offerings for adult and non-traditional learners and strategic partnerships with K–12 schools, industry, and nonprofit organizations. In 2018, the Board of Trustees established the Medalla Rosa Filipina Duchesne to recognize individuals whose service embodies the Society of the Sacred Heart’s educational tradition and commitment to transformative leadership. (*S1-1d–Social Impact Report 2023–2024*).

Sagrado’s Mission is also reaffirmed through institutional traditions that celebrate its Sacred Heart identity and educational legacy. During its 145th Anniversary in 2025, Sagrado reflected on its history, Mission, and contributions to Puerto Rico through institutional events and public communications. As part of the commemoration, Sagrado conferred the Medal of Distinguished Service to the University upon the religious sisters of the Society of the Sacred Heart in recognition of their foundational role in Sagrado’s educational project. At the same time, media coverage highlighted the University enduring leadership and the continued relevance of its Mission. (*S1-1b–El Nuevo Día Newspaper – 145 Years of Educational Legacy*).

Students encounter the Mission throughout their academic journey, from recruitment to graduation. At major recruitment events, Sagrado articulates its value proposition through its Mission and presents it to students and families through the President. During New Student Welcome Ceremonies, the Mission is introduced as the foundation of the educational experience (*S1-1d–Sample New Students Orientation with Mission Onboarding*). The Lighting of the Flame symbolizes St. Madeleine Sophie Barat—known as “the daughter of fire”—and the transformative power of education embodied in Sagrado’s Mission (*S1-1d–Review of the Flame Lighting Ceremony*). This journey culminates at Commencement, when the President invites graduates to consider their responsibility beyond campus through the question: “Where will you put your heart?”

The Mission likewise shapes the work of faculty and staff. Recruitment processes for academic and administrative positions include reflection on alignment with Sagrado’s Mission and values, while onboarding for new employees and full-time faculty introduces the University history, Mission, Catholic identity, and Sacred Heart spirituality (*S1-1d–Mission Onboarding for Employees*). Faculty orientation further connects the Mission to Sagrado’s curriculum and pedagogical philosophy, including required onboarding for adjunct faculty (*S1-1d–Faculty Mission Onboarding*). During 2025–2026, employees also participated in workshops addressing the Sacred Heart roots of the University Mission. As discussed in Standard VI, this alignment extends to institutional planning and resource allocation, with operating and capital budgets supporting activities and initiatives that advance the Mission.

Scholarly Inquiry and Creative Activity (Criterion 1, e). Sagrado's Mission supports a culture of scholarly inquiry, creative expression, and innovation aligned with its commitments to solidarity, justice, and peace. For students, these dimensions are embedded in the undergraduate academic experience. In addition to developing an entrepreneurship project, all undergraduate students complete a three-course sequence in research methodologies, research design, and data analysis and visualization. Reflecting the Mission's social orientation, a recent assessment using UNESCO Thesaurus categories found that prominent student research topics include mental health, well-being, education, and other social issues. (*S1-1e-Profile of Projects in the Research and Exploration Core Courses*).

For faculty, scholarly inquiry and creative activity are grounded in academic freedom and supported through faculty development, internal funding, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Recurring academic events, including the Symposium on Pedagogical Innovation and Research and the Symposium on Creative Industries, provide venues for sharing scholarly and creative work and advancing the University commitment to knowledge, creativity, and service to the common good. (*S1-1e-Faculty Development Plan 2022–2025*).

Institutional Goals (Criterion 2). Institutional goals are established based on the current strategic plan. During the Self-Study period, the Board of Trustees approved three strategic plans (2017–2020, 2022–2024, and 2025–2030), each defining the institution's long-term priorities. The current plan is named *Sagrado 2030*. These strategic plans are operationalized through annual institutional priorities that frame unit-level objectives (*S1-2-Compilation of Sagrado's Strategic Plans, from 2017 to 2030*).

As mentioned, the Self-Study period required Sagrado to navigate a prolonged period of disruption and uncertainty that placed significant demands on emergency response and operational continuity. Institutional leadership responded through an agile planning approach, regularly updating and communicating priorities while sustaining academic continuity, student support, and institutional resilience. Although immediate needs delayed some longer-term initiatives, particularly infrastructure modernization and technology investments, the University continued advancing strategic priorities as much as possible throughout this period.

Throughout these years, the annual institutional priorities evolved in response to changing institutional needs while remaining aligned with the University's strategic direction. Initial priorities focused on implementing the RBK Project, redesigning academic structures, and strengthening student advising. During the pandemic and recovery period, objectives emphasized academic continuity, enrollment recovery, digital transformation, student belonging, organizational restructuring, and financial sustainability. As institutional conditions stabilized, priorities shifted toward long-term transformation through the development of *Sagrado 2030*, including expanding bilingual education, professional learning experiences, research capacity, student success initiatives, enrollment and residential growth, fundraising, and infrastructure renewal. This evolution reflects Sagrado's ability to balance operational agility with strategic continuity while maintaining a consistent process for defining, communicating, and assessing institutional priorities (*S1-2-Institutional Priorities, from 2019–2020 to 2025–2026*).

The launch of *Sagrado 2030* marks a transition from nearly a decade of institutional planning shaped by emergency response and recovery to a new phase of transformational growth (*S1-2-Executive Leadership Report 2025-2026*). Standard VI further describes the relation between the Strategic Plan, annual institutional priorities, unit-level objectives, resource allocation, and institutional assessment.

Goals Focused on Student Success (Criterion 3). Fulfilling Sagrado's Mission requires more than providing transformative educational experiences; it also requires ensuring that students persist, graduate, and are prepared to contribute to society through their professions and communities. Accordingly, throughout the Self-Study period, the University's annual institutional priorities (*see evidence in Criterion 2*) progressively strengthened its student success agenda. Early priorities focused on implementing the RBK Project and a redesigned academic advising model, followed by ensuring academic continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic by adopting the Canvas learning management system. As the University entered the recovery phase, priorities shifted toward redesigning enrollment management to strengthen persistence and retention. As will be discussed in Standard IV, Sagrado introduced the Student Sense of Belonging Survey as a leading indicator of persistence and developed action plans based on its findings.

Student Achievement Indicators. Student achievement data demonstrate sustained institutional improvement over the last decade. Undergraduate enrollment has recovered steadily since the pandemic and now exceeds pre-pandemic levels, reflecting the University's success in stabilizing enrollment.

TABLE 4. FALL ENROLLMENT BY YEAR

Academic Year	Total Enrollment	Undergraduate Enrollment	Graduate Enrollment
Fall 2024	5,037	4,494	543
Fall 2023	4,660	4,099	561
Fall 2022	4,224	3,731	493
Fall 2021	4,110	3,611	499
Fall 2020	4,501	4,097	404
Fall 2019	4,751	4,448	303

Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment Reports

The increase in annual enrollment is similarly reflected in twelve-month enrollment, which captures the total unduplicated number of students served during the academic year and demonstrates continued institutional growth.

TABLE 5. 12-MONTH ENROLLMENT BY YEAR

Academic Year	Total 12-Month	Undergraduate	Graduate
2023–24	5,576	4,896	680
2022–23	5,074	4,455	619
2021–22	4,954	4,330	624

TABLE 5. 12-MONTH ENROLLMENT BY YEAR

Academic Year	Total 12-Month	Undergraduate	Graduate
2020–21	5,287	4,763	524
2019–20	5,160	4,759	401
2018–19	5,102	4,781	321

Source: IPEDS 12-Month Enrollment Reports. Data represent total unduplicated headcount enrollment for 12-month periods (July 1–June 30) by student level.

Together, the enrollment trends shown above and the retention and graduation outcomes presented in Table 1 point to increasing institutional stability and overall improvement in student success. Transfer-out rates show a similar pattern of improvement following the pandemic recovery period, as shown in Table 6. Sagrado continues to monitor these indicators as part of its broader student success strategy.

TABLE 6. SAGRADO'S TRANSFER-OUT RATES³

Year	Transfer-Out
2025–26	20%
2024–25	18%
2023–24	25%
2022–23	27%
2021–22	26%
2020–21	21%
2019–20	26%
2018–19	29%
2017–18	25%
2016–17	21%

Source: IPEDS Reports.

Since 2018, Sagrado has administered the First Destination Survey (FDS) in accordance with National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) standards to assess graduates' post-graduation outcomes six months after degree completion. The University reports both the percentage of graduates who are employed or continuing their education and the Knowledge Rate, which reflects the proportion of graduates for whom the University obtained outcome information. Although the Knowledge Rate has ranged from 14% to 27%, results show a positive trend in graduate outcomes: the percentage of graduates who were employed or pursuing graduate education increased from 54% in 2018 to 86% in 2025, demonstrating increasingly successful transitions after graduation (*S1-3a-First Destination Survey 2018–2025*).

³ Higher transfer-out rates were observed during and immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic (2021–2022 to 2023–2024) and in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria (2017–2018 to 2019–2020).

TABLE 7. SAGRADO'S FDS RESULTS BY ACADEMIC YEAR

Graduated Class	Working or Continuing Education %	Knowledge Rate %
2025	86%	20%
2024	77%	27%
2023	77%	22%
2022	78%	23%
2021	80%	19%
2020	68%	14%
2019	74%	24%
2018	54%	24%

Source: Sagrado's First Destination Survey Results (NACE Standards and Protocols). Note: "Working or Continuing Education" combines the percentages of graduates employed and those pursuing graduate/professional studies. Knowledge Rate represents the percentage of graduates for whom outcome information was obtained.

While Sagrado continues to strengthen graduate participation to improve survey representativeness, it is also expanding its post-graduation outcome measures to include graduate school admission and professional licensure results. Programs such as Nursing and Education already monitor licensure examination outcomes as additional evidence of student achievement (*S1-3a-Sagrado's Puerto Rico BSN Nursing State Board Outcomes; S1-3a-Teacher Certification Exam, PCMAS*).

Accessibility and Belonging. At the institutional level, accessibility and belonging directly express Sagrado's Mission and its commitment to the dignity of every person. Sagrado seeks not only to expand educational opportunity but also to ensure that students are supported throughout their university journey. These principles are reflected in institutional policies, financial aid practices, student support services, and co-curricular experiences, as detailed in Standards II and IV.

Sagrado's commitment to educational access is reflected in its student population and the resources dedicated to student success. According to the 2023–2024 IPEDS Student Financial Aid Survey, 72% of degree-seeking undergraduate students received Pell Grants and 81% received some form of financial aid⁴. To reduce financial barriers, Sagrado complements federal and state assistance with institutional scholarships, including the Sagrado Achievers and Pre-Achievers merit scholarships, while integrating financial literacy into the first-year curriculum to promote informed financial decision-making and persistence (*S1-3a-Sagrado Achievers and Institutional Scholarships Data*).

Sagrado complements financial support with a comprehensive network of student success programs. The University serves a significant population of low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities through the Federal TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) and Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities (SSSD) programs. SSS has received uninterrupted federal funding since 1979, and in 2020, Sagrado became the first and only university in Puerto Rico to host

⁴ The 2023–2024 IPEDS Student Financial Aid Survey is provided as evidence in Standard IV.

an SSSD program. Sagrado also operates a TRIO Upward Bound program that has supported college access for high school students for more than 50 years. These federally funded programs are complemented by the Institutional Scholarship Program, which provides student support through private philanthropy.

Beyond access, Sagrado intentionally cultivates a culture of belonging through co-curricular and extracurricular experiences that reflect its Mission. Institutional efforts have been informed, since 2022–2023, by the Student Sense of Belonging Survey findings. Belonging is further reinforced through initiatives that celebrate Puerto Rico's cultural diversity and strengthen community engagement. In 2023–2024, Sagrado organized the Symposium San Mateo de Cangrejos: Memories of a Black and Maroon Settlement, engaging more than 250 Social Studies teachers, and partnered with the Historical Society of Villa Palmeras to publish Cangrejero Legacy in Communities and Education, recognizing the surrounding community's Afro-descendant heritage. Sagrado promotes intergenerational learning through Sagrado for Adults 50+, while study abroad programs, international internships, and faculty exchanges foster intercultural understanding and global citizenship.

The Pastoral Care Center, known as the Sophia Center, is a distinctive expression of Sagrado's Mission, promoting integrative spirituality, solidarity, and transformative dialogue across religious and cultural traditions. Its programs extend beyond campus through initiatives such as CoMesa, the Community Garden, the Volunteer Program, and the *Sagrado Contigo* Emergency-Relief Program, which connect students, faculty, and staff with opportunities for mutual support. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Center also led institutional efforts related to mental health, well-being, and community resilience (*S1-3b-Sophia Center Constitutive Document; S1-3b-Sophia Center 2024–2025 Achievement Report*).

As the Sophia Center's initiatives show, Sagrado recognizes that fostering belonging across differences requires active participation from the entire community. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to contribute to one another's development through initiatives such as the Sigma Beta Delta Honor Society Tutoring Program, the Peer Advising Program, and a faculty mentoring program currently under development.

This culture of shared responsibility also informed Sagrado's reflection on its readiness to pursue the Carnegie Elective Classification for Leadership for Public Purpose. The Self-Study concluded that Sagrado's longstanding tradition of service-learning, community engagement, and leadership development already embodies many of the principles underlying the classification. As the only university in Puerto Rico to hold the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement for more than two decades, Sagrado has demonstrated a sustained commitment to reciprocal partnerships, civic learning, and social transformation.

Support and Institutional Improvement. Sagrado ensures that student achievement goals are supported by appropriate administrative, educational, and student support services aligned with its enrollment profile and institutional priorities. Human resource allocation reflects a sustained commitment to strengthening instructional quality, student learning, and institutional effectiveness.

TABLE 8. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFF -FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE)

AY	Management	Business & Financial Operations	Computer, Engineering, & Science	Community Service, Legal, Arts, & Media	Health care	Other	Total
2024–2025	48	18	7	7	1	39	120
2023–2024	95	26	8	15	1	59	204
2022–2023	76	20	9	10	1	51	167
2021–2022	83	18	8	11	0	57	177
2020–2021	67	16	12	18	0	68	181
<i>Source: IPEDS Data Feedback Report</i>							

TABLE 9. INSTRUCTIONAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT - FTE

Academic Year	Instructional FTE	Instructional Support FTE	Total
2024–2025	207	59	266
2023–2024	178	104	282
2022–2023	151	94	245
2021–2022	158	74	232
2020–2021	170	41	211
<i>Source: IPEDS Data Feedback Report</i>			

Human resource trends reflect the University's strategic alignment of personnel with its educational priorities.

Financial resources similarly reflect these priorities. Between FY2020–2021 and FY2024–2025, Sagrado invested \$142.7 million in its Program Activities (or core educational functions) and \$85.8 million in administrative Supporting Activities: 34% of total expenditures were dedicated to instruction, 14% to student services, 11% to academic support, 3% to student financial aid, and 38% to administrative (supporting) activities. Student financial aid expenditures also more than doubled between FY2020–2021 and FY 2024–2025 underscoring the institution's commitment to educational success and student persistence. Together, these investments align human and financial resources with the University's strategic priorities and student achievement goals (*S1-3d-Analysis of Expenditure Across Core Areas Aligned to Institutional Priorities*).

Periodic Assessment and Continuous Improvement (Criterion 4). The institution assesses goals annually through the Performance Evaluation Process, in which staff and institutional leaders report progress on the objectives for which they are responsible. As will be detailed in Standard VII, the process follows the Objectives and Key Results (OKR) methodology, aligning unit objectives with the institutional priorities approved annually by the Board of Trustees. The executive leadership team reports quarterly progress and year-end results. The President reports on institutional

performance and follow-up actions to the Board of Trustees at the Board's final meeting of the academic year.

Sagrado's Mission is assessed through multiple institutional and external mechanisms. The Sophia Center prepares the Annual Report on Compliance with the Mission in the Catholic Faith, which is presented to the Board of Trustees as required by the University's Bylaws. As a Catholic university recognized under *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Sagrado also submits periodic reports to the Metropolitan Archdiocese of San Juan on implementing its Catholic Mission (*S1-4-Annual Report on Compliance with the Mission in the Catholic Faith 2025–2026*).

Institutional commitment to the Mission is further assessed through periodic strategic planning and external review. In March 2025, the *Sagrado 2030* Questionnaire found that 95% of respondents identified with the Mission and 97% expressed willingness to contribute to the University's strategic priorities, leading to the inclusion of Goal D to strengthen institutional identity and belonging (*S1-4-Report on the Results of the Sagrado 2030 Questionnaire*). Similarly, the 2025 reclassification process for the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement provided an external assessment of how Sagrado's Mission is expressed through community engagement, reaffirming the University's commitment to reciprocal partnerships while identifying opportunities to strengthen the assessment of community-engaged learning, faculty development in community-engaged research, and documentation of partnership outcomes (*S1-4-Sagrado's 2025 Reclassification of the Community Engagement Carnegie Elective Classification*). This external validation was further extended through the Carnegie Elective Classification for Sustainability, awarded to Sagrado in 2026, recognizing the University's institutional commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship (*S1-4-Carnegie Sustainability Application Decision*).

The Self-Study identified an additional opportunity to strengthen the systematic assessment of how students experience and internalize the Mission through co-curricular and extracurricular experiences. Future assessment efforts will examine how these experiences contribute to students' sense of belonging, civic engagement, ethical development, leadership, and commitment to the common good.

Conclusion and Recommendations. Sagrado demonstrates full alignment with MSCHE Standard I by maintaining a Mission that is clear, publicly articulated, and consistently reflected in institutional planning, governance, academic programs, student support, and resource allocation. The Mission serves as the foundation for the University's strategic plans, annual institutional priorities, and unit-level objectives, ensuring coherence across academic and administrative functions.

During the Self-Study period, Sagrado balanced long-term strategic planning with the operational demands of multiple emergencies, preserving institutional continuity while advancing major initiatives such as the RBK Project and *Sagrado 2030*. Student achievement goals evolved from supporting academic continuity to establishing measurable targets for retention, graduation, post-graduation success, and student belonging, all supported by systematic assessment and evidence-based decision-making.

The evidence further demonstrates that Sagrado's Mission extends beyond the classroom through community engagement, service-learning, pastoral care, leadership development, and initiatives that foster belonging, civic responsibility, and social impact. Investments in human, financial, and organizational resources reinforce these

priorities, while multiple internal and external assessment processes—including strategic planning, Board oversight, Catholic Mission reporting, and Carnegie classifications—support continuous institutional improvement.

No major compliance concerns were identified in relation to Standard I. The following areas for improvement were identified:

1. Strengthen the systematic assessment of Mission-centered co-curricular and extracurricular experiences by developing direct and indirect measures that evaluate how these experiences contribute to students' sense of belonging, civic engagement, ethical development, leadership, and commitment to the common good.
2. Expand post-graduation outcome assessment by increasing participation in the First Destination Survey and incorporating additional indicators, including graduate school admission and professional licensure outcomes, to provide a more comprehensive picture of student success after graduation.
3. Pursue the Carnegie Elective Classification for Leadership for Public Purpose.

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Introduction. Sagrado's Mission provides the ethical foundation for institutional governance and operations. Its commitments to intellectual freedom, moral conscience, human dignity, and the common good are translated into policies, decision-making processes, and accountability mechanisms that promote transparency, respect, and responsible stewardship. This chapter demonstrates how these values are reflected in the University's governance, academic and employment practices, student protections, financial transparency, and continuous assessment of institutional integrity.

Freedom of Thought and Expression, and Intellectual Property (Criterion 1). Sagrado defines academic freedom as a fundamental principle, stating that it is “the right and responsibility of faculty to seek the truth in their field of expertise, to teach with rigor and intellectual integrity, and to publish or communicate the results of their research without arbitrary interference” (*S2-1-Faculty Handbook*). This definition is aligned with the institution's Mission to foster intellectual freedom and moral conscience. Consistent with its Mission, the University protects faculty from internal and external pressures, ensuring an environment that supports free inquiry, scholarly and creative expression, and professional responsibility.

For students, the free exchange of ideas and the right to exercise freedom of speech are guaranteed, framed by the expectation of respect and responsibility (*S2-1-Student Code of Conduct*). Likewise, Sagrado requires all community members to conduct their academic activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner (*S2-1-Academic Integrity Policy and Academic Integrity Procedure*). Sagrado upholds respect for intellectual property, reinforcing the value and security that faculty and students can expect in their creative and academic endeavors and regulating the reproduction of a variety of protected works (*S2-1-Policy on the Protection of Copyright and the Use of Photocopies or Reproductions of Works*).

The responsible integration of artificial intelligence (AI) across the University has become an important institutional priority, consistent with the Sagrado 2030 Strategic Plan (“*Sagrado 2030*”) and Sagrado's emphasis on ethical discernment, responsible innovation, and sound judgment, with initial efforts focused on the academic context. During 2024–2025, the Pedagogical Innovation Unit, within the Office of the Provost, led a year-long dialogue with faculty on the ethical and responsible use of generative AI in teaching and learning. This process resulted in the Manual for the Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Academics at Sagrado, which established initial guidance for academic practice (*S2-1-Manual for the Responsible Academic Use of Generative AI*). Building on this work, the University began developing a broader institutional policy in Summer 2026, with publication planned for fall 2026.

Fostering a Respectful Climate (Criterion 2). Guided by its Mission, Sagrado promotes respect for human dignity across all dimensions of university life. Ethical reflection—one of the core institutional competencies—is cultivated through discipline-specific coursework, service-learning, and co-curricular experiences, including student organizations, community service, and campus ministry.

The Institutional Code of Ethical Conduct applies to faculty, staff, students, contractors, and visitors, and explicitly affirms respect for the rights and dignity of every individual (*S2-2-Institutional Code of Ethical Conduct*). For students, the Student Life

Guide, Student Organizations Guide, University Residence Guide, and the Student Code of Conduct further establish expectations for respectful conduct and community life (*S2-2-Student Life Guide; S2-2-Student Organizations Guide; S2-2-University Residence Guide*).

To assess institutional climate, Sagrado administered an Institutional Climate Study in 2025, which found generally positive perceptions of the institution, communication, and workplace respect, while identifying opportunities to strengthen compensation, benefits, professional development, recognition, and inter-unit collaboration. The findings were presented to the Board of Trustees and will inform an institution-wide action plan led by the Office of Organizational Development and Human Resources (*S2-2-Institutional Climate Study; S2-2-Presentation to Board of Trustees About the Results of the Institutional Climate Study*).

The annual Student Sense of Belonging Survey assesses student climate. Results have guided successive institutional interventions, moving from addressing interpersonal relationships (2023), to behavioral health and wellness to promote higher levels of institutional connection and resilience (2024), and most recently, to sustaining improvements in belonging while addressing persistent challenges related to financial stress, food insecurity, mental health, and sleep quality (2025). By 2025, students reported a higher overall sense of belonging ($M = 3.98/5$). Survey findings are reviewed by institutional leadership and the Board of Trustees and directly inform the University's student success strategies (*S2-2-Student Sense of Belonging Surveys; S2-2-Presentation to the Board of Trustees on the Sense of Belonging*).

Grievance Policies and Procedures (Criterion 3). Sagrado maintains clear, consistently applied procedures for addressing complaints and grievances that uphold academic and ethical integrity while ensuring fairness, transparency, and respect in all interactions. Members of the university community who believe they were treated contrary to institutional policies or the Institutional Code of Ethical Conduct may file a complaint, which the University reviews promptly, confidentially, and impartially. Grievance policies and procedures are publicly available in both Spanish and English on the University website. In addition, the University provides enrolled and prospective students with contact information for filing complaints with its institutional accreditor, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico licensing authority, and other appropriate state agencies (*S2-3-Institutional Policies and Procedures and Contact Information for Filing Complaints*).

The University's governing documents establish standards of conduct and grievance procedures. The Employee Handbook outlines expectations for employee conduct and corrective actions, including procedures for addressing sexual harassment and workplace bullying administered by the Office of Organizational Development and Human Resources (*S2-3-Employee Handbook*). The Faculty Handbook establishes standards of professional conduct. The Student Code of Conduct defines student rights, responsibilities, and disciplinary procedures. Additional policies address specific circumstances, including harassment and intimidation, residence hall conduct, and final grade appeals (*S2-3-Policy Against School Harassment and Intimidation and Procedure for the Resolution of Complaints of School Harassment and Intimidation; S2-2-University Residence Guide; S2-3-Procedure for Requesting an Appeal for Review of Final Grade*).

Sagrado tracks complaints and grievances submitted by students, faculty, and staff through designated channels to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability. In August 2025, the Office of Compliance, Audit and Institutional Integrity started reviewing the reporting of grievances and disciplinary cases to standardize and enhance report contents from Academic and Student affairs. Statistics from these reports are monitored by the Internal Auditor and presented to the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees each semester.

As part of the Self-Study process, the University identified an opportunity to systematize the digital monitoring of grievance processes further. Beginning in August 2025, and following recommendations from the Office of Compliance, Audit, and Institutional Integrity, the Office of the Provost and the Office of Student Affairs standardized periodic reporting mechanisms, issued respectively by the Provost and the Dean of Students, to strengthen institutional oversight, consistency of documentation, and continuous improvement of grievance procedures related to grade appeal, academic integrity and student conduct (*S2-3-Grievance Records*).

Title IX Complaints. The University has the Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure in place, in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education. A Title IX Coordinator—a manager-level position with investigative experience—reports to the General Counsel, who oversees investigations and communicates findings to the Office of Student Affairs (for student respondents) or the Office of Organizational Development and Human Resources (for employee respondents). Title IX education is integrated into course orientations, employee onboarding, and faculty training, and resources are available on the institutional website (*S2-3-Title IX Webpage; S2-3-Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaints*). The University maintains a confidential record of these types of complaints (*S2-3-Record of Title IX Complaints 2022–2026*).

Ethics and Integrity Hotline. To facilitate confidential reporting, the Internal Auditor manages the Ethics and Integrity Hotline, which allows any member of the university community to submit concerns anonymously. In 2024, Sagrado announced the implementation of a third-party-managed platform to strengthen confidentiality and anonymity in reporting. The communication included instructions on how the system operates and provided multiple reporting options, including phone, web access, and mobile applications for iOS and Android (*S2-3-Ethics and Integrity Hotline Policy and Ethics and Integrity Hotline Procedure*).

Research Protocols. Research courses inform students that they may participate in research activities, such as obtaining informed consent or assent, administering instruments, and conducting interviews, observations, or focus groups. These activities are conducted as academic exercises, and all information collected remains confidential and is shared only within the classroom. Students and faculty conducting research involving human subjects must complete ethics certification through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program). In 2022, Sagrado received authorization from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish its own Institutional Review Board (IRB), which reviews research protocols submitted by students and faculty. The IRB Guidelines and the protocol application form are available through Sagrado's IRB website (*S2-3-Guidelines for the*

Protection of Human Subjects in Research)⁵. The Assistant Vice President for Academic Research and Grants oversees the IRB.

Conflict of Interest (Criterion 4). Sagrado's Procedure for the Disclosure of a Conflict of Interest sets out how trustees, administrators, faculty members, staff, students, and third parties should identify and disclose actual or potential conflicts promptly (*S2-4-Procedure for Disclosure of a Conflict of Interest; S2-4-Sample Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form*). Disclosures are made through a digital certification form, which the Internal Auditor then evaluates. Where necessary, the Internal Auditor may refer cases to the General Counsel or the Conflict of Interest Evaluation Committee. The Board of Trustees handles potential conflicts involving trustees or the President directly. Sagrado's use of the Procedural Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research provides additional safeguards for conflicts related to research activities. It prohibits members from reviewing any project where a potential conflict exists and requires formal disclosure.

Fair and Impartial Employment Practices (Criterion 5). Respect and recognition of each individual's intrinsic worth guide Sagrado's clear, equitable, and consistently applied policies for hiring, evaluation, promotion, and separation. Institutional leadership and the Board of Trustees conduct periodic reviews of talent management, using a report from the Office of Organizational Development and Human Resources that analyzes workforce composition, including recruitment, retention, development, and promotions (*S2-5-Presentation of data analysis about hiring and promotion December 16, 2021; S2-5-Presentation of data analysis about hiring and promotion March 4, 2025*).

Hiring Policies. The University prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and pregnancy), national and ethnic origin, age, physical or mental disability or genetic information, marital status, national and ethnic origin, citizenship, status as covered veteran, and any other characteristic protected by federal or local law (*S2-5-No Discrimination in the Employment Policy*). The Faculty Handbook describes the recruitment process for new full-time and adjunct faculty. At the same time, the Recruitment Policy for Administrative Staff establishes the process for full-time and part-time staff (*S2-5-Recruitment Policy for Administrative Staff*).

Performance Evaluation Process. Administrative staff participate in the University's Performance Evaluation Process, established in the Employee Handbook and coordinated by the Office of Organizational Development and Human Resources. New employees complete a probationary evaluation in accordance with applicable law, followed by annual performance evaluations administered through ADP Workforce Now. The process incorporates the University's Objectives and Key Results (OKR) methodology, aligning individual performance objectives with unit-level goals and the institutional priorities approved annually by the Board of Trustees. Employees are assessed on progress toward assigned objectives and standardized institutional competencies defined for their roles. For exempt employees, including faculty administrators, the process includes a self-evaluation, evaluation by the immediate supervisor, and approval by the next-level supervisor; non-exempt employees are evaluated directly by their supervisors. Results are discussed with employees and

⁵ Link to the Sagrado's IRB Website is included in Evidence Inventory URLs.

support professional development, performance improvement, and institutional accountability.

Based on feedback from supervisors and employees about the process's effectiveness, Sagrado has identified an opportunity to streamline the Performance Evaluation Process and better align performance outcomes with professional development, recognition, and compensation practices. The University will undertake this transition during the 2026–2027 academic year. This improvement is consistent with the broader institutional assessment of the Performance Evaluation Process discussed in Standards VI and VII.

Faculty Evaluations. Through the academic year 2025–2026, the Evaluation and Rank Promotion Manual (*S2-5-Faculty Evaluation and Promotion in Rank' Handbook 2024*) governed faculty evaluation. The Academic Board approved this Manual, which established standardized processes and instruments for peer classroom evaluation, student evaluation, and promotion in rank. Full-time and adjunct faculty participated in annual peer classroom evaluations and student evaluations each academic term. Since 2021, SmartEvals has administered student evaluations through a secure, confidential process to collect, analyze, and report student feedback.

Under this framework, promotion in rank was a voluntary process available to full-time faculty generally every five years until reaching the rank of Professor. The promotion review considered teaching, research or creative activity, service, and professional development. The Evaluation and Rank Promotion Manual was revised periodically to strengthen consistency, fairness, and effectiveness, including major revisions in 2022 and 2024.

Building on the assessment of this system and the revised Faculty Handbook, the Academic Board approved a new Faculty Performance Evaluation Policy and Faculty Performance Evaluation Procedure in June 2026, effective in 2026–2027 and replacing the prior Manual (*S2-5-Faculty Performance Evaluation Policy and Faculty Performance Evaluation Procedure*). As explained further in Standard III, the new framework retains peer and student evaluations while integrating them into a unified system that also includes annual performance evaluation, promotion in rank, and assessment of each faculty member's Strategic Academic Objective. It further aligns evaluation expectations with the differentiated faculty appointments established in the revised Faculty Handbook, provides for performance improvement plans when needed, and makes promotion in rank an expected component of the tenure-track career progression for Professors of Teaching and Impact Projects and Research Professors.

Disciplinary Actions. The Office of Organizational Development and Human Resources manages disciplinary processes involving staff in consultation with the relevant department, the General Counsel, and, when appropriate, the President. Sanctions are determined following impartial investigations that carefully consider the nature, severity, and specific circumstances of each case. Sagrado follows a progressive discipline model, which may include measures ranging from verbal warnings to separation from employment. The University regards termination as the most serious sanction and imposes it only after a thorough review and consultation process.

Marketing, Communication, and Transparency Practices (Criterion 6). An integrated communication model, supported by collaboration between the Marketing and Admissions Office and the Office of Institutional Communication, enables the University to engage internal and external audiences effectively in ways

consistent with its Mission-driven priorities. Sagrado views communication as a strategic means of advancing its Mission and projecting a coherent institutional identity. Accordingly, the University follows communication and marketing practices grounded in principles of truthfulness, accuracy, accessibility, transparency, and accountability. As part of the Self-Study process, the institution has identified the opportunity to further formalize these practices through an institutional policy that articulates shared standards and expectations.

Externally, Sagrado runs campaigns that clearly and accurately communicate its academic offerings and student experience. Current campaigns are organized under the Sagrado Experience branding framework, which presents the University's narrative through its 145-year history and legacy, innovative academic programs, experiential learning, campus pride, vibrant and safe campus environment, Santurce location, and comprehensive student support services. This institutional narrative is complemented by school-specific marketing and social media strategies, as well as communications supporting development and alumni engagement. Public relations and digital media campaigns further highlight student success, academic excellence, and experiential learning through testimonials and user-generated content. Together, these strategies promote consistency between the University's public messaging and the programs and experiences it provides (*S2-6-Sample Marketing, Admissions, and Recruiting Materials*). The University allocates adequate fiscal resources to support these efforts (*S2-6-Expenses Analysis Recruitment Process and Marketing*).

The Provost or President approves all advertising campaigns and promotional materials related to academic programs. Academic programs are promoted using the exact descriptions, modalities, curricular sequences, and admission requirements submitted to the Puerto Rico Board of Postsecondary Institutions for program approval. The institution finalizes and publishes materials, including the Institutional Catalog, before each year's recruitment cycle begins. When curricular revisions or new academic programs are introduced, the academic schools provide orientation sessions for the admissions team to ensure that all information communicated to prospective students is accurate and consistent. The Provost or President also approves press releases, institutional announcements, and scripts for official events or institutional videos. The University also maintains institutional guidelines to ensure consistency across communication platforms (*S2-6-Brand Manual; S2-6-Social Media Policy*). One area for improvement is to formalize these practices in an officially documented process to ensure standardized approval procedures.

Internally, Sagrado maintains a communication system that integrates downward, upward, and horizontal information flows. Downward communication includes official announcements, newsletters, segmented emails, the mi.sagrado.edu portal, and a WhatsApp channel for direct communication with students. Upward communication channels, such as surveys, committees, and fora, allow students, faculty, and staff to provide feedback and participate in institutional decision-making processes. Horizontal communication channels, such as publications like *La Península* and *Punto y Coma*, interdisciplinary initiatives, and shared projects, promote collaboration across the community. The digital platform InSagrado integrates news, institutional updates, and community achievements to foster dialogue and reinforce institutional identity (*S2-6-Sample Internal Communications*).

Sagrado's crisis communication management practices also follow ethical communication principles (*S2-6-Crisis Communication Management Plan*). When an institutional response is required, the Chief Institutional Communications Officer convenes a response team to work directly with the Office of the President to manage information flow and decision-making. Sagrado prioritizes timely, accurate, and compassionate communication with all constituencies. The crisis communication process involves continuously monitoring internal and external communications, preparing trained spokespersons, proactively engaging with key audiences, and issuing official statements or clarifications as required. The University recognizes the opportunity to formalize a periodic review of crisis communication protocols and materials, ensuring that lessons learned from prior incidents are systematically incorporated into new procedures and staff training, thereby strengthening institutional preparedness, response consistency, and the prevention of misinformation.

Accessibility and Financial Transparency for Students (Criterion 7).

The University prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and pregnancy), national and ethnic origin, age, physical or mental disability or genetic information, marital status, national and ethnic origin, citizenship, status as covered veteran, and any other characteristic protected by federal or local law. Its Equal Opportunities for Students with Disabilities Policy establishes transparent procedures for requesting, evaluating, and implementing reasonable accommodations to ensure equitable participation in academic and co-curricular activities (*S2-7a-Equal Opportunities for Students with Disabilities Policy*).

As mentioned earlier, Sagrado also promotes a respectful and inclusive campus environment through its Student Life Guide, Student Organizations Guide, and University Residence Guide, which establish rules for community life and expectations for respectful conduct, inclusion, and shared responsibility. In 2024, Sagrado further strengthened its commitment to inclusion by adopting a Chosen Name Policy, allowing students to use their chosen names across institutional systems while preserving legal names for official records (*S2-7a-Policy Regarding the Name Chosen by Students*).

Sagrado is equally committed to transparency in the cost of attendance and student financial aid. Through the Consumer Information section of its website, the University provides publicly accessible information on tuition and fees, cost of attendance, financial aid programs, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) guidance, refund policies, and a Net Price Calculator, together with student financial aid indicators required for consumer disclosure. These resources include the institution's three-year Cohort Default Rate, the percentage of students receiving loans, and average student loan indebtedness, enabling prospective and enrolled students to make informed financial decisions (*S2-7b-Documentation on Cost of Attendance and Other*).

Institutional policies further ensure accurate financial aid administration by establishing procedures for student eligibility verification, attendance confirmation before disbursement, and compliance with federal regulations (*S2-7b-Verification Policy and Procedure; S2-7b-Student Assistance Policy and Procedure for Determining Eligibility to Disburse Financial Aid; S2-7b-Direct Loans Quality Assurance Policy and Procedure*). Students also have access to individualized financial counseling and the Student Consumer Manual, which describes available financial assistance, eligibility requirements, and students' rights and responsibilities (*S2-7c-Student Consumer Manual*). As discussed in Standard IV, the University complements these transparency

measures with financial literacy initiatives and ongoing monitoring of financial aid outcomes to promote affordability, responsible borrowing, and student success.

Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulations (Criterion 8). Sagrado complies with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, as well as MSCHE policies and affiliation requirements. The University maintains transparent public disclosure and systematic governance practices to ensure that institutional information is accurate, accessible, and current. Through its Consumer Information website, the University provides publicly available information required by federal and state regulations, including refund and withdrawal policies, licensing and accreditations, and other regulatory disclosures. The institutional website also clearly describes academic program offerings and requirements. In addition, Sagrado accurately represents its MSCHE accreditation status and its degree-granting authority through the Puerto Rico Board of Postsecondary Institutions (*S2-8-Public Disclosure and Compliance Documentation, S2-8e-ECAR; S2-8f-Statement of Accreditation Status*).

Periodic Assessment of Ethics and Integrity (Criterion 9). The Office of Compliance, Audit, and Institutional Integrity oversees compliance activities, identifies risks, and investigates potential misconduct. Thus, Sagrado's ethical and compliance framework is assessed through two core instruments. First, the Institutional Compliance and Integrity Program functions as an assessment instrument built on a high-level organizational structure with clearly defined roles, ensuring effective governance, continuous monitoring, and systematic audits to detect deviations from institutional policies and regulatory standards. Second, the Internal Audit Charter functions as an assessment instrument overseen by the Internal Auditor, who reports directly to the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees, ensuring independent evaluation of institutional controls and processes. The Internal Auditor provides independent and objective assurance and consulting services to evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of Sagrado's risk management, internal controls, and governance processes. The internal audit scope covers compliance with institutional policies and regulations by all officers, employees, and contractors (*S2-9-Institutional Compliance and Integrity Program*).

As set out in the Internal Audit Charter (2024), all assessments are formally documented and reviewed regularly (*S2-9-Internal Audit Charter*). The Internal Auditor also reports them to the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees. The Internal Auditor prepares an annual work plan for the Committee's approval and provides quarterly updates on the status of audit activities and outcomes. Except for confidential investigations, the Internal Auditor formally communicates audit results to management, the Audit Committee, and the responsible unit executives, ensuring a transparent and traceable cycle of review and response. The relevant management unit must develop corrective measures and submit them to the Internal Auditor within 30 days of receiving a formal report. The Internal Auditor then monitors completion and effectiveness to ensure sustained improvement and compliance.

The Office of Compliance, Audit, and Institutional Integrity also oversees the creation and revision of institutional policies to ensure that all institutional documents are well-written, clear, and accessible, and provides practical guidance to stakeholders. Once approved, the university codifies and maintains all documents in an electronic repository accessible to the university community and the general public. This ensures consistency, traceability, and public accountability (*S2-9-Procedure for the Development of Institutional Documents*).

Conclusion and Recommendations. Sagrado demonstrates that ethics and integrity are embedded across institutional policies, governance structures, academic practices, and decision-making processes, aligned with its Mission, which affirms intellectual freedom, moral conscience, and the construction of communities of solidarity grounded in justice and peace. Institutional policies governing academic freedom, intellectual property, conflict of interest, grievance procedures, research protocols, employment practices, and compliance provide a coherent framework that supports transparency, accountability, and respect for human dignity across all constituencies.

The chapter evidences how ethical principles are operationalized through clearly defined institutional procedures and oversight mechanisms. Codes of conduct, grievance processes, Title IX policies, and the Ethics and Integrity Hotline support fair and consistent resolution of concerns, while the Office of Compliance, Audit, and Institutional Integrity provides systematic monitoring of compliance, risk management, internal controls, and policy implementation. Institutional surveys and audit processes provide evidence that the University periodically evaluates its practices and uses the findings to inform continuous improvement.

Sagrado's Mission also informs a culture of ethical reflection that extends beyond regulatory compliance. Initiatives such as the institutional dialogue on the ethical implications of artificial intelligence demonstrate the University's commitment to responsible innovation and to preparing students, faculty, and staff to navigate emerging ethical challenges in higher education and society. Similarly, institutional practices in communication, marketing, and public disclosure reflect a commitment to transparency and accuracy in representing academic offerings, institutional policies, and student support resources.

No major compliance concerns were identified under Standard II. The following areas for improvement were identified:

1. Continue to systematize further digital monitoring and reporting of grievance processes related to academic integrity cases, grade appeals, and student disciplinary procedures to strengthen documentation consistency and institutional learning.
2. Develop institutional communication and marketing practices into a comprehensive policy that integrates existing approval procedures, ethical communication principles, and standards for accuracy and transparency.
3. Streamline and simplify the Performance Evaluation Process.
4. Establish a periodic review process for crisis communication and management protocols to ensure that lessons learned from prior incidents are systematically incorporated into staff training and institutional preparedness.
5. Continue to refine institutional guidance on the ethical use of artificial intelligence across academic and administrative contexts.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Introduction. Sagrado provides coherent and rigorous student learning experiences aligned with its Mission through the RBK Project, which integrates the Core Curriculum, academic programs, institutional competencies, and high-impact learning experiences within a common educational framework. During the Self-Study period, the University strengthened this framework by reorganizing Academic Affairs, enhancing the faculty model and faculty development, conducting systematic curricular review, and continuing to invest in academic resources and learning environments. This chapter examines these developments, together with distance and graduate education, third-party providers, and the processes through which Sagrado ensures the quality, integrity, and continuous improvement of its educational offerings.

A Note on the Evolution of Academic Affairs. During the Self-Study period, Sagrado strengthened Academic Affairs' organizational capacity to support implementation of the RBK Project and advance academic quality, student learning, faculty development, and research. The University reorganized its academic structure by replacing traditional departments with schools led by deans and supported by academic leaders, creating project-based academic units that align academic leadership with institutional priorities and promote collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement.

To support this transformation, the University established the School of General Education to oversee the Core Curriculum; created the Pedagogical Innovation Unit to strengthen faculty development and innovative teaching; and created the Academic Researcher role to support implementation of the revised student learning assessment framework.

The Office of the Provost expanded its leadership structure by creating three operational areas, each led by an Assistant Vice President. The Assistant Vice President for Academic Research and Grants oversees student learning assessment, faculty development, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), external grants, and research capacity-building. The Assistant Vice President for Curricular Development leads curricular innovation and oversees the integration of service-learning, professional and internationalization experiences across academic programs. The Assistant Vice President for Academic Operations centralizes operational functions—including course scheduling, adjunct faculty hiring, and budget management—so deans and academic leaders can focus on academic excellence and innovation. Sagrado also recently established the role of Assistant Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies to lead graduate education development and support the transition toward a Graduate School. The Office of Student Affairs under the leadership of the Dean of Students reports to the Provost, highlighting a holistic approach to student success.

Coherent Student Learning Experience (Criterion 1, a-b). As detailed in Standard I, the RBK Project constitutes Sagrado's renewed educational framework. Implemented in 2020, it translates the institutional Mission into a pedagogical model centered on integral human development and social impact. Curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular learning experiences are intentionally designed around a shared set of institutional competencies, ensuring coherence, integration, and synthesis.

Academic programs are deliberately sequenced to support cumulative learning, guiding students from foundational experiences to advanced inquiry and professional

application. The undergraduate curricular structure includes: (a) the Core Curriculum; (b) the Major Concentration; and (c) the Exploration courses. Institutional competencies are embedded in both the Core Curriculum and Major Concentration courses and also inform the systematic learning assessment process, as described in Standard V.

At Sagrado, academic leadership, in consultation with the faculty, leads the curriculum. As of August 2026, Sagrado offers 52 academic degrees. Of these, 31 are bachelor's degrees, 3 are combined degrees, 3 are associate degrees, 3 are undergraduate certificates, 10 are master's degrees, 1 is a graduate certificate, and 1 is a doctoral degree. At the undergraduate level, the University also offers 56 minor concentrations. The curriculum is organized under five academic schools.

The Curriculum Affairs Manual guides curricular revisions, moratoriums, closures, and new programs. Proposals must consider student demand, market benchmarking, learning assessment results, industry or discipline trends, expert faculty input, alignment with the institutional Mission, and assessment of needed resources (*S3-1-Curriculum Affairs Manual*).

Proposals advance through a collaborative development and governance process, overseen by the Assistant Vice President for Curricular Development, to ensure that curricular design, credit requirements, and learning outcomes are coherent, sustainable, and appropriate to the credential awarded. Curricular revisions and new academic offerings are reviewed by the Academic Board's Curriculum Committee and subsequently approved by the Academic Board. The Board of Trustees must also approve new academic offerings, except for minor concentrations. All proposals must comply with the standards for contact hours established in Sagrado's Credit Hours Policy, published in the Institutional Catalog (*S3-1-Credit Hours Policy*)⁶. New program and curricular revision proposals specify the credit hours assigned to each course, which are subsequently reflected in the official course syllabi (*S3-1-Example of the Accounting Program Review Proposal and Sample Syllabi with Credit Hours*).

The University employs three mechanisms to ensure compliance with its Credit Hours Policy. First, subject-matter experts develop courses in Canvas in collaboration with instructional designers from the Pedagogical Innovation Unit. While faculty retain academic freedom, course design must ensure consistency across sections and modalities and include sufficient instructional content, learning activities, and contact hours to support the assigned credit value and expected learning outcomes. Second, the Manager for Academic Programming within Academic Operations verifies credit-hour assignments during course scheduling (*S3-1-Course Programming Procedure*). Third, the Jenzabar Student Information System (SIS) generates daily reports that monitor academic programming, including credit hours, enrollment, schedules, classroom capacity, and faculty assignments.

At the start of each term, faculty are reminded to maintain credit-hour integrity and follow approved course modalities and schedules. When faculty miss contact hours, a digital Class Make-Up Report documents the activities used to replace them. It is routed to the appropriate dean for review and approval, ensuring instructional continuity and compliance.

⁶ Links to the Institutional Catalogs are included in the Evidence Inventory URLs.

Student Learning Experiences that are Designed, Delivered, and Assessed by Faculty (Criterion 2, a-e). One of Sagrado's foundational convictions is that faculty work, commitment, and vocation sustain academic excellence and innovation. Accordingly, faculty hiring, development, and support have remained priorities across the University's last two strategic plans. As established in the Faculty Handbook—the guiding document for all faculty matters—the faculty comprises full-time and adjunct professors responsible for delivering the student learning experience (*S2-1-Faculty Handbook*). Sagrado maintains a stable core of full-time faculty engaged in teaching, research, creative work, service, and professional development. As of July 2026, the University had 66 full-time faculty members, most of whom hold doctoral degrees and are recognized experts in their fields.

TABLE 10. FACULTY CREDENTIALS BY DEGREE TYPE

Degree Type	Number	%
Doctoral's Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., DNP, DBA, Eng.D.)	40	61%
Master's Degree (MA, MS, MSN, MArch, M.Ed, MFA, MBA, MSW)	25	38%
Other Advanced Degrees (J.D.)	1	1%
TOTAL FACULTY	66	100%
<i>Source: Sagrado's Faculty Roster as of July 2026.</i>		

TABLE 11. FACULTY BY ACADEMIC RANK

Academic Rank	Number	%
Professor	14	21.2%
Associate Professor	10	15.2%
Assistant Professor	42	63.6%
TOTAL FACULTY	66	100%
<i>Source: Sagrado's Faculty Roster as of July 2026.</i>		

The current Faculty Handbook was revised and approved by the Academic Board in June 2026. It establishes new appointment categories for Professors of Teaching and Impact Projects (mandatory tenure track), Research Professors (mandatory tenure track), and Instructors (non-tenure track), aligning faculty responsibilities with Sagrado's strategic priorities. It also establishes new teaching load limits, effective beginning in the 2026–2027 academic year. The maximum teaching load for Professors of Teaching and Impact Projects is reduced to 12 credits per semester (24 credits annually), redistributing 20% of their workload to support impact projects, pedagogical innovation, community engagement, and other mission-aligned scholarly activities. Research Professors have a maximum teaching load of six credits per semester, allowing them to devote most of their workload to research and scholarly or creative activity.

TABLE 12. FACULTY TEACHING LOAD STATISTICS*Comparative Analysis: Before July 2026 vs. After July 2026*

Metric	Before July 2026	After July 2026	Change
Average Teaching Load (credits/semester)	11.24	8.94 ⁷	-2.30
Maximum Teaching Load (credits/semester)	15.0	12.0	-3.0
Minimum Teaching Load (credits/semester)	3.0	3.0	0
Total Faculty Analyzed	66	66	0
<i>Source: Sagrado's Faculty Roster, Faculty Handbook (2019) and revised Faculty Handbook (2026).</i>			

Full-time faculty are complemented by a qualified group of adjunct faculty who contribute disciplinary expertise and current professional experience, complementing instructional capacity. Adjunct faculty are appointed on an academic-term basis with a maximum teaching load of 12 credits per term. In 2020, the University introduced a fixed-term, 10-month faculty appointment with a maximum teaching load of 15 credits per academic term to strengthen the recruitment and retention of professionals with specialized, practice-oriented expertise.

The University has steadily improved its student-to-faculty ratio over the past six years, decreasing from 23:1 in Fall 2019 and Fall 2020, to 22:1 in Fall 2021 and Fall 2022, and to 21:1 in Fall 2023 and Fall 2024, according to IPEDS. This trend indicates that instructional capacity has grown relative to enrollment, providing students with greater access to faculty and supporting more personalized learning experiences.

Instructional work is complemented by specialized support personnel, including Language Center specialists, Studio Lab specialists, Collaborative Innovation Center coordinators, and laboratory coordinators and technicians in microbiology, biology, chemistry, physics, and nursing. Based on the reported IPEDS Fall 2024 total enrollment of 5,037 students and 386 FTE staff, the University calculated a student-to-staff ratio of approximately 13:1.

As of Spring 2026, undergraduate course sections averaged 14 students⁸, supporting personalized instruction and meaningful faculty–student interaction. To support instructional quality, the Academic Board approved guidelines in 2021 establishing enrollment caps based on modality, space capacity, and safety and academic considerations (*S3-2c-Rules for Granting Special Permits for Enrollment*).

Resource allocations in instruction, academic support, student services, and financial aid demonstrate Sagrado's sustained commitment to its educational mission (*S1-3d-Analysis of Expenditure Across Core Areas Aligned with Institutional Priorities*).

Faculty Development. The Faculty Teaching and Professional Development Manual, approved by the Academic Board, establishes expectations, requirements, and pathways for faculty development across teaching, research, creative work, and professional engagement. It requires all full-time faculty to complete at least 12 hours of professional development annually. It outlines opportunities for internal and external training, pedagogical innovation, scholarly activity, support for doctoral studies,

⁷ Faculty members receive different releases that affect the overall average.

⁸ This calculation is based on data from the course programming repository (R-100) generated on May 12, 2026.

sabbatical leaves, and academic release time for special projects. The Manual also aligns faculty development with institutional assessment processes, promotion in rank, and strategic academic priorities, reinforcing a shared responsibility for sustaining academic excellence and instructional effectiveness (*S3-2a-d-Faculty and Professional Development Manual*).

In 2022, with faculty input, the University created the Pedagogical Innovation Unit to strengthen faculty development and innovative teaching. The Unit supports full- and adjunct faculty through consultations, classroom observations, instructional design, and professional development, including workshops, certifications, learning communities, specialized clinics, and the annual Symposium on Pedagogical Innovation and Research (*S3-2d-Annual Report of the Pedagogical Innovation Unit*). All full-time and adjunct faculty are required to complete training in Sagrado's Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) or its equivalent (*S3-2d-Evidence of faculty training in Canvas LMS or equivalent*). The Unit has also facilitated communities of practice in co-teaching, microlearning, and student mentoring. At the same time, Sagrado has supported 20 full-time and 3 adjunct faculty in earning the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) Certificate in Effective College Instruction (*S3-2d-Evidence of faculty training*). The University also provides annual funding for external professional development. It maintains memberships in academic networks, including the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, and the Council for Independent Colleges, which expand opportunities for professional learning, collaboration, and scholarly exchange. Since 2025, Sagrado has also been a founding member of CHARISM, an alliance of four Catholic universities that promotes faculty exchange, joint scholarship, curricular innovation, shared academic pathways, and expanded educational opportunities for students.

Faculty Evaluations. Sagrado maintains a systematic process for evaluating teaching effectiveness and regularly assesses and strengthens its faculty evaluation policies and procedures. The framework includes peer evaluation, student evaluation, and promotion-in-rank evaluation, supported by standardized rubrics and clearly defined criteria established in the Evaluation and Rank Promotion Manual, approved by the Academic Board that governed during 2025-2026 academic year (*S2-5-Faculty Evaluation and Promotion in Rank' Handbook 2024*)

The University has periodically revised the Manual to improve the effectiveness, consistency, and fairness of faculty evaluation. In June 2022, the Academic Board approved a major revision that introduced standardized rubrics for peer and student evaluations, clarified promotion procedures, defined a step for faculty to discuss student evaluation results with academic leadership, and incorporated recommendations from a broad faculty consultation process (*S3-2e-Evidence of Assessment and Changes to the Evaluation and Rank Promotion Manual in 2022*). Additional revisions approved in April 2024 standardized evaluation processes across regular and library faculty, refined evaluation criteria and student survey items, and updated institutional terminology following organizational changes (*S3-2e-Evidence of Assessment and Changes to the Evaluation and Rank Promotion Manual in 2024*).

Sagrado assesses teaching effectiveness through peer and student evaluations. Full-time and adjunct faculty undergo classroom observations by the dean and a faculty peer and receive student evaluations for each course taught. Since 2021, student evaluations have been administered through SmartEvals, a platform managed by the

Office of the Provost that provides a secure and confidential process for collecting, analyzing, and reporting student feedback. Results are shared with faculty and are available for review with their dean. The Academic Researcher coordinates both processes and conducts institutional analysis.

Assessment results have informed continuous improvement of the evaluation system. Between 2022–2023 and 2024–2025, peer evaluation results remained consistently high (85–93%), while student ratings met or approached the institutional benchmark of 90% across most items and academic levels. At the same time, the University identified declining undergraduate response rates (49% to 31%) and greater variability in graduate response rates (56% to 40%), findings that directly informed subsequent revisions to the evaluation framework (*S3-2e-Faculty Evaluations Four Years Trend Report*).

Building on the recent revision of the Faculty Handbook, the Academic Board approved the new Faculty Performance Evaluation Policy and the Faculty Performance Evaluation Procedure, which replaced the Evaluation and Rank Promotion Manual effective July 1, 2026 (*S3-2e-Evidence of Assessment and Changes to the Evaluation and Rank Promotion Manual in 2026; S2-5-Faculty Performance Evaluation Policy and Faculty Performance Evaluation Procedure*). The new framework consolidates peer evaluations, student evaluations, and promotion-in-rank, and integrates annual performance evaluations. It also clarifies governance, separates policy from operational procedures, establishes performance improvement plans when needed, and aligns evaluation expectations with the differentiated faculty appointments established in the Faculty Handbook. Under the new framework, promotion in rank becomes an expected component of the tenure-track career progression for Professors of Teaching and Impact Projects and Research Professors.

Student Learning Experiences Reviewed Regularly. Sagrado regularly reviews its student learning experiences through a systematic process informed by student learning assessment results, faculty feedback, disciplinary developments, labor market trends, and other indicators of institutional effectiveness.

Between 2019 and 2020, the University completed a comprehensive curricular transformation under the RBK Project, which redesigned the Core Curriculum, updated all academic programs, and included reviewing, moratoria, or closing selected academic offerings. Subsequently, between 2023 and 2025, the University implemented additional curricular revisions to strengthen the Core Curriculum, refine institutional competencies, and continuously update and enhance academic programs in response to student learning assessment findings and other evidence of educational effectiveness (*S3-2e-Sample of Program Reviews 2019–2025*).

In addition to institutional review processes, accredited academic programs undergo periodic evaluations required by their specialized accrediting agencies to ensure continued compliance with professional standards and program quality. The Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) through 2030, while the Bachelor of Arts in Social Work, currently under the closure process, remains accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Both programs are housed within the School of Health and Sciences (*S3-2e-Specialized Accreditation Reports: CCNE; S3-2e-Specialized Accreditation Reports: CSWE*).

Academic Programs Clearly and Accurately Described (Criterion 3).

Through coordinated efforts among the Office of the Provost, the Registrar's Office, and the Marketing and Admissions Office, Sagrado ensures that academic programs are clearly and accurately described in official publications and digital resources, enabling students to understand program requirements and expected time to completion. The University annually updates its Academic Offerings webpage and the Institutional Catalogs, which are publicly available in both Spanish and English through the institutional website (*S3-3-Undergraduate and Graduate Educational Programs with Enrollment*).⁹

Upon admission and enrollment, every student receives the official Study Plan for their academic program, which outlines the credit and course sequence required for degree completion. Study Plans remain available throughout the student's academic career through the mi.sagrado.edu portal (*S3-3-Study Plan Samples*).

The average total credits for all bachelor's degrees is 120, with slightly higher requirements in fields such as Science, Computing, and Business (124–130 credits). The Associate of Science in Nursing requires 67 credits, the RN–BSN completion program requires 49 credits, most master's degrees require 24–33 credits, and graduate certificates require 18 credits. The Ph.D. in Creative Writing and Literature has 45 credits.

A trend analysis of average time to degree by entry cohort shows that undergraduate completion is accelerating. Across the seven undergraduate cohorts observed to date—those entering 2012 through 2018, each followed for six years—average time to degree declined from 4.54 years for the 2012 cohort to 4.38 years for the 2018 cohort, a reduction of about two months. The 2017 and 2018 cohorts, the first to study under the 120-credit curriculum, recorded the two shortest completion times in the series, at 4.46 and 4.38 years (*S3-3-Undergraduate and Graduate Trend Analysis Average Time to Degree*). At the graduate level, average time to degree across the cohorts entering between 2020 and 2023 has remained stable at approximately 1.50 years, with a completion rate of 73.7%; individual cohorts ranged narrowly from 1.36 to 1.58 years, with no directional trend over the period.

Other Educational Offerings. The University extends its Mission through Sagrado Global and the School of Professional Studies, which are affiliated with the Office of the Provost. Accredited by the International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET), Sagrado Global offers non-credit professional certificates, short courses, and customized training. During the 2024-2025 academic year, these offerings served approximately 2,800 participants. The institution systematically collects participant feedback at the end of every course and uses it to strengthen program quality. Between 2022 and 2025, 2,293 course evaluations across 222 offerings yielded an overall participant satisfaction rate of 94.8%. As part of the Sagrado 2030 Strategic Plan (*"Sagrado 2030"*) planning process, the University is conducting a strategic review of Sagrado Global's portfolio to evaluate its long-term direction and sustainability (*S3-3-Short Courses Program Evaluations Report*).

In 2022, the University also launched an Early College dual-enrollment pilot with LEAP Social Enterprise, allowing high school students to complete courses on Sagrado's campus while simultaneously earning university credit aligned with Puerto Rico

⁹ Links to the Institutional Catalogs are included in the Evidence Inventory URLs.

Department of Education requirements. Delivered face-to-face with support from Canvas LMS, the program enables students to earn up to 18 university credits before high school graduation. The Office of the Provost oversees the program. An assessment of its effectiveness found that many participants reported feeling comfortable in the University's environment (85%), prepared for university-level expectations (87%), and more interested in pursuing higher education (70%). The report also identified opportunities to strengthen student immersion in campus life, institutional support, and program infrastructure. Findings are guiding the next phase of the program's development (*S3-3-Report on LEAP Social Enterprise Early College Program Experience*).

Sufficient Learning Experiences and Resources (Criterion 4). The RBK Project prioritizes active learning and high-impact learning experiences, balancing a strong humanistic foundation with opportunities for students to design, develop, and implement projects that address real-world challenges. These experiences—including service-learning, professionally engaged learning, and international and intercultural opportunities—are intentionally integrated throughout the curriculum to support the achievement of institutional competencies and program learning outcomes.

Curricular and embedded high-impact learning experiences are structured through the Study Plans, the Advising Worksheets, and through course syllabi that define learning outcomes, credit-hour expectations, course content, and assessment methods (*S3-4-Undergraduate Advising Worksheets; S3-4-Graduate Advising Worksheets; S3-4-Sample Syllabi; S3-4-Master syllabus*).

Service-Learning Program. Since 1998, Sagrado has sustained a comprehensive Service-Learning Program. The program integrates service-based learning into academic courses by connecting students and faculty with community partners to address real needs, allowing students to apply disciplinary knowledge while strengthening civic engagement, ethical leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. The program has a dedicated coordinator (*S3-4-Community Engagement Experience Manual*).

Professional and International Experiences. The Center for Professional and International Experiences (CEPI) supports career development and postbaccalaureate preparation through career exploration, résumé and portfolio development, mock interviews, graduate school advising, and financial literacy. CEPI also supports co-ops and practicums across undergraduate programs (*S3-4-Definitions for Professional Experiences Integrated Into the Curriculum*). In addition, CEPI advances internationalization by supporting global and intercultural curricular experiences, faculty-led academic travel, and study-away and mobility opportunities through bilateral agreements, the National Student Exchange (NSE), and other consortia, enabling students to participate in short- and long-term academic experiences in the United States and abroad. It has dedicated staff, budget, and facilities.

Language Center. The Language Center supports the development of communication competencies in Spanish and English through structured learning experiences integrated into the Core Curriculum. Its instructional personnel work alongside the Core Curriculum Communication sequence faculty to reinforce student learning outcomes. With dedicated staff, budget, and facilities, the Center advances

bilingual education, strengthens communication skills, and promotes student academic success.

Collaborative Innovation Center (Neeuko). Neeuko serves as the experiential laboratory for the Entrepreneurship Core Sequence. Through hands-on activities, design thinking, prototyping, and project development, Neeuko supports applying entrepreneurial knowledge in real-world contexts, reinforcing interdisciplinary learning and innovation. Neeuko's Fab Lab provides students and faculty with access to digital fabrication tools and technical guidance for prototyping and design. It has dedicated staff, budget, and facilities.

The Sophia Center. The Sophia Center supports learning by coordinating theology courses, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, social action initiatives, symposia, and conferences. The University Chaplain is also a Theology Assistant Professor, ensuring coherence among academic formation, pastoral accompaniment, and community engagement. The University has dedicated staff, a budget, and facilities.

Student Support Services. Standard IV details the Student-Centered Support Model. However, as part of designing and delivering student learning experiences, it must be mentioned that Sagrado serves a significant population of low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities through its Federal TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) and Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities (SSSD) programs. SSS has received uninterrupted federal funding since 1979, while in 2020 Sagrado became the first and only university in Puerto Rico to host the SSSD program. These programs provide advising, academic progress monitoring, tutoring, early-alert interventions, and other support services. Demand for disability-related services has grown: as of September 2025, 400 students had certified reasonable accommodations, including 390 undergraduates, a 10% increase from the previous year, and over 60% participate in the SSS or SSSD programs (*S3-4-Reasonable Accommodations Report 2025-1S*). Two specialized advisors certify and support the implementation of accommodations, complemented by faculty training and online resources developed by the Pedagogical Innovation Unit. Faculty receive each student's reasonable accommodation certification, enabling them to provide the appropriate academic support within their courses.

Tutoring Services. Sagrado has expanded tutoring through externally funded and student-led initiatives, including the NSF-funded Increasing Student Success in STEM project, the U.S. Department of Education STARS grant for Theater, Design, and Visual Arts, and Title V support for Core Curriculum courses. In 2024, the student-led Sigma Beta Delta Honor Society also launched peer tutoring for business courses, while the TRIO SSS and SSSD programs provide tutoring to their participants. As grant-funded initiatives conclude, Sagrado has identified the development of a sustainable, institution-wide tutoring model, particularly for gateway and mathematically intensive courses, as an opportunity for continuous improvement.

Communication Center. The Center provides audiovisual equipment, technical assistance, and access to modern facilities for hands-on learning in communication and related academic disciplines. Through equipment lending, recording services, and video and photography resources, students across the University develop practical skills essential for professional practice in the communications field.

Learning Spaces. Despite a succession of natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, Sagrado continued investing in learning spaces that support the high-impact

learning experiences central to the RBK Project. More than 15 RBK classrooms were redesigned with flexible layouts and multimodal furniture to facilitate collaboration and project-based learning. In 2020, a significant number of classrooms were technologically upgraded with digital whiteboards, projection systems, updated faculty computers, and classroom recording capabilities integrated with Canvas and Panopto. Faculty offices were also renovated, while the Communication Center and Pedagogical Innovation Unit provide ongoing technical and instructional support.

Since 2022, the reorganization of Academic Affairs into schools has been accompanied by continued investment in specialized learning environments. The School of Arts, Design and Creative Industries includes visual arts studios, photography laboratories, digital editing classrooms, music rehearsal rooms, design workshops, and experimental theaters. The Dance Program conducts instruction at Centro Danza, a leased facility; developing dedicated on-campus dance facilities has been identified as a strategic priority to support the program's continued growth. The Ferré Rangel School of Communication features professional-grade 4K and HD television studios, podcast and sound studios, postproduction laboratories, exhibition spaces, and university-operated television and radio stations. The School of Health and Sciences includes renovated chemistry, physics, zoology, and molecular biology laboratories; expanded nursing clinical laboratories; the Computing@Sagrado Lab; updated exercise science laboratories; and the Biology Learning Resource Center (CRAB). The School of Business provides applied learning spaces, including the Carvajal Foundation Board Room, a renovated amphitheater, and a financial simulation classroom currently under development.

These investments have significantly strengthened Sagrado's academic infrastructure despite a prolonged period of emergency response and institutional recovery. At the same time, Sagrado recognizes that additional capital investments remain necessary to continue strengthening student learning experiences. Expanding financial resources to modernize facilities and develop new academic infrastructure is therefore a priority of *Sagrado 2030*.

Madre María Teresa Guevara Library. The Madre María Teresa Guevara Library is one of the University's primary learning resources. Open Monday through Saturday, it provides on-site and virtual services to undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, alumni, and external researchers.

According to Fall 2024 IPEDS, the Library employed 5.0 FTE librarians and 5.0 FTE staff, supported by 48 student assistants, an increase from 32 the previous year. The University is evaluating staffing levels in response to enrollment growth and evolving service demands.

The Library supports all academic disciplines through more than 50 licensed databases, e-books, electronic journals, audiovisual resources, newspapers, open educational resources (OER), subject guides, and citation management tools. As reported by IPEDS, its collections include 115,599 physical items and 571,761 electronic resources, with electronic holdings increasing from 237,392 in 2019 (*S3-4-Data on Library Collection*). Library services include circulation, reserves, reference and research consultations, interlibrary loan, technology lending, computer laboratories, printing, and access to the General, Puerto Rican, Reference, and Special Collections, the University Historical Archive, and ReDiS, the institutional repository. Students and faculty may also borrow laptops and internet hotspots.

Institutional policies govern library operations on user services, collections, technology lending, preservation, the Historical Archive, and ReDiS, along with procedures for evaluating donated materials and ensuring equitable access and consistent collection development (*S3-4-General Policy of the Madre María Teresa Guevara Library; S3-4-Library Gifts and Donations Procedure*).

The Library also leads Sagrado's Information Skills Program, embedding information literacy instruction throughout the Research and Exploration Core sequence and reinforcing these competencies across undergraduate and graduate programs through faculty collaboration. Librarians provide course-integrated instruction on research strategies, database use, and academic integrity, complemented by an extensive collection of online tutorials, discipline-specific research guides, style guides, citation management resources, research methodology guides, and other digital learning objects available through the Library website (*S3-4-Description of Bibliography Instruction and Information*).

Consistent with its Learning Commons model, the Library provides technology-rich collaborative learning spaces at its main facility and the CoWork@Barat, including collaborative study areas, a computer laboratory with workstations equipped with specialized software (*Adobe Creative Cloud, Maya, SPSS, and Dedoose*), adaptive technologies, audiovisual resources, and printing services. Café Sagrado, opened in 2022, further enhances the student learning environment. Beyond campus, the Library advances community engagement through the Community Membership Program, the Annual Book Fair, and Espacio de Lectura Sagrado, a children's reading room that promotes Puerto Rican children's literature. In 2026, an adjacent library space was renovated to become the future headquarters of the planned Graduate School.

The Institutional Satisfaction Survey monitors user satisfaction and identifies opportunities for continued improvement, including modernizing physical and technological infrastructure (*S3-4-Evidence of Regular Assessment Three-Year Trend Analysis of Library Service Satisfaction*). This finding is consistent with broader institutional priorities related to facilities and infrastructure, which are discussed in greater detail in Standard VI.

Distance Education. Sagrado ensures the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its distance education offerings through institutional policies, qualified faculty, instructional design support, and comprehensive academic and technical services. The Distance Education Policy establishes that distance education must meet the same academic standards as face-to-face instruction and defines it as instruction in which 50% or more of the learning experience occurs through synchronous and/or asynchronous modalities supported by regular and substantive interaction between faculty and students (*S3-4-Institutional Policy for Distance Education*).

While recognizing distance education as a student-centered instructional alternative, Sagrado affirms that face-to-face instruction remains fundamental to the integral development of undergraduate students, particularly during the early years of study. Accordingly, the University offers four instructional modalities based on pedagogical and programmatic needs:

- Videoconference (VC): 100% synchronous online instruction.
- Virtual-Hybrid (VH): 50% synchronous and 50% asynchronous online instruction.

- Hybrid (H): 50% face-to-face and 50% asynchronous online instruction.
- Online (O): Fully asynchronous online instruction.

Regardless of modality, all courses follow the approved syllabus, achieve the same learning outcomes, maintain regular faculty-student interaction, and comply with institutional policies governing instruction, assessment, student services, copyright, and academic integrity. Students are expected to actively engage in their courses by participating in synchronous sessions, communicating regularly with faculty, completing coursework on time, participating in course evaluations, and orienting to the University's learning platforms.

Faculty teaching online courses meet the same credential requirements as face-to-face faculty and must complete institutional certification in online pedagogy. As of Spring 2026, 94% of full-time faculty had completed this certification (*S3-2d-Evidence of Faculty Training in Canvas LMS or Equivalent*). The Pedagogical Innovation Unit coordinates faculty development and is supported by two instructional designers and a senior manager. Since becoming a Quality Matters (QM) member in 2021, the University has aligned Canvas course templates and instructional design practices with QM standards to promote consistency, accessibility, and student engagement. In 2023, Sagrado became the first private university and the second in Puerto Rico to earn a QM certification, with its EDU306C course achieving a 98% rating through a rigorous quality review process. In 2024, two other courses also received the QM certification (*S3-4-Quality Matters Course Certifications*). Additionally, Sagrado's instructional designers have completed specialized QM professional development, including training in applying the QM Rubric, rubric updates, QM coordination, and developing measurable, consistent learning objectives (*S3-4-QM Staff Certificate*).

The University offers two distance learning programs: an Associate of Science in Nursing and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing¹⁰. Coursework combines synchronous and asynchronous learning, while students complete laboratories, clinical experiences, and practicums in Puerto Rico under faculty supervision. Other undergraduate programs are 100% campus-based, although students may enroll in a limited selection of online courses. Since 2019, graduate programs have also been offered online through weekly Zoom sessions and asynchronous learning in Canvas, with optional face-to-face meetings for students in Puerto Rico.

Since adopting Canvas as the institutional learning management system in 2020, all undergraduate and graduate courses have remained on the platform, supporting course delivery across modalities. Canvas integrates Zoom, Panopto, SmartEvals, and discipline-specific applications, serving as the central platform for course materials, assignments, assessments, grades, attendance, and communication. Faculty routinely record face-to-face class sessions via Zoom and store them in Panopto for asynchronous review.

Sagrado provides distance education students with the same academic and student support services available on campus. Through Canvas and the student portal, students access advising, academic support, library services, and technical assistance from the Office of Information Technology and Integrated Systems (*S3-4-IT Service Desk Support to Distance Learning Nursing and Graduate Students*). The Madre María

¹⁰ These programs are also offered in a 100% campus-based modality.

Teresa Guevara Library provides full remote access to collections and real-time assistance through its online chat service.

Student identity verification is governed by the University's Policy on Identification and Authentication Systems (*S3-4-Policy on Identification and Authentication Systems*). Nursing courses requiring identity verification use Honorlock, integrated with Canvas, which incorporates photo identification, browser and desktop monitoring, room verification, suspicious behavior detection, and video recording. As an NC-SARA participating institution, Sagrado complies with interstate requirements for distance education.

According to IPEDS Fall 2024 data, 674 undergraduate and graduate students were enrolled exclusively in distance education courses, while 3,226 students –mostly from the Nursing Distance Learning Program—took at least one, but not all, of their courses through distance education. Among undergraduates, 547 students were enrolled exclusively online. At the same time, 2,810 took at least one distance education course, reflecting Sagrado's use of multiple instructional modalities while maintaining a substantial face-to-face component (*S3-4-Fall Enrollment by Distance Education Status*).

Sagrado continuously evaluates distance education through faculty certification, instructional design review, Quality Matters standards, student course evaluations, and oversight by the Pedagogical Innovation Unit. The University has identified an opportunity to strengthen the direct assessment of asynchronous course design by implementing more systematic mechanisms to collect faculty and student feedback, thereby informing future improvements in instructional design, faculty development, and student support.

Core Curriculum (Criterion 5). As part of the RBK Project, Sagrado redesigned its undergraduate Core Curriculum to provide all students with a shared educational experience grounded in the liberal arts, the Catholic intellectual tradition, and the institutional Mission (*S3-5-RBK Project: Core Curriculum Revision 2019*). Implemented in August 2020, the redesigned Core transformed General Education from a set of introductory requirements into an integrated four-year curriculum intentionally structured to develop the institutional competencies expected of every graduate. In doing so, it established a common academic foundation aligned with Sagrado's Mission of educating intellectually prepared, ethically grounded, and socially responsible graduates.

The Core Curriculum is coordinated by the School of General Education and comprises 63 credits required for all undergraduate programs¹¹ to support the development of durable human skills grounded in the liberal arts and humanistic traditions. The coursework addresses seven institutional competencies¹², including Critical Thinking, Communication, Research and Exploration, Ethical Reflection, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Leadership for the Common Good, and Digital Literacy (*S3-5-Core Curriculum Courses Description and Sequence*) and is organized as follows:

21st Century Skills (39 credits). This component develops competencies in critical thinking, communication, research and exploration, and ethical reflection

¹¹ Undergraduate Nursing programs follow a modified Core Curriculum to comply with CCNE credit requirements.

¹² See Footnote 2.

through multidisciplinary courses and learning experiences that emphasize active, creative, and engaged learning.

Leadership for the Common Good (6 credits). This component includes coursework to develop students' capacity for personal and collective leadership grounded in self-knowledge, contextual awareness, and commitment to the common good, while integrating justice, collaboration, solidarity, and ethical and theological reflection into academic, civic, and professional development. It also incorporates theology coursework on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition that encourages reflection on the broader transcendent dimensions of human activity.

Entrepreneurship (18 credits). This component requires students to complete a sequence of courses through which they design, develop, and execute a substantial project related to their disciplinary interests or broader social, creative, or professional goals. The sequence is grounded in a theoretical framework that understands entrepreneurship as a transferable skill and methodology applicable to diverse forms of innovation, including cultural and creative projects, scientific or social research, social entrepreneurship initiatives, or business ventures.

Student learning assessment of the institutional competencies follows the institutional assessment framework detailed in Standard V and is guided by a curricular assessment map that identifies where and when each competency is assessed across the Core Curriculum (*S3-5-Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes (Institutional Competencies)*).

The Core Curriculum has been continuously refined through institutional assessment, faculty review, and Academic Board governance while preserving its educational philosophy and overall curricular coherence.

In 2022, after evaluating the first years of implementation, the Academic Board approved revisions to the Entrepreneurship institutional requirements. These revisions streamlined the sequence while preserving its developmental progression from ideation through project execution and reducing the entrepreneurship requirement from 21 to 18 credits, resulting in the current 63-credit Core Curriculum (*S3-5-Core Curriculum Revision 2022*). The remaining 3 credits were assigned to the Major Concentration requirements.

In 2025, the Academic Board approved a comprehensive revision of the Communication Core Sequence based on assessment findings and faculty evaluation. The revision strengthened bilingual communication by introducing new communication courses, embedding Language Center experiences directly into coursework, implementing proficiency assessments aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and modernizing language instruction through an integrated blended-learning model. These revisions became effective in August 2025 and reinforced communication as a foundational institutional competency (*S3-5-Core Curriculum Revision 2025*).

Following five years of RBK Project implementation, Sagrado conducted a comprehensive review of the Core Curriculum informed by student learning assessment, academic research, and faculty reflection. In November 2025, the Academic Board approved a revised competency framework and an updated Core Curriculum sequence for implementation beginning in August 2026. The revision reaffirmed the competencies of Communication, Critical Thinking, Research and Exploration, and Innovation and Entrepreneurship; replaced Ethical Sense and Social Justice with

Ethical Reflection; formally established Leadership for the Common Good as an institutional competency; incorporated Digital Literacy as a cross-cutting competency embedded throughout the curriculum; and revised selected Core Curriculum courses to strengthen alignment among theology, ethics, leadership, and the University's Catholic mission. These revisions preserved the overall credit requirements and curricular structure while improving curricular coherence and alignment among institutional competencies, student learning outcomes, and Sagrado's Mission (*S3-5-Core Curriculum Revision 2026*).

Graduate Education (Criterion 6). Since 2019, Sagrado's graduate offerings have focused on graduate certificates and professional master's degrees. Graduate programs follow a quarterly academic calendar. Most programs consist of 24–33 credits and emphasize developing practical, industry-specific competencies.

As of August 2026, the graduate portfolio includes: the Graduate Certificate in Event Production and Marketing; the Master of Arts in Communication with a specialization in Storytelling; the Master of Arts in Design and Creative Production; the Master of Arts in Creative Writing; the Master of Arts in Journalism and Innovation; the Master of Arts in Public Relations and Integrated Communication; the Master of Science in Digital Marketing; the Master of Science in Applied Neuroscience; the Master of Science in Physical Performance and Health Promotion; the Master in Business Development and Management; the Master of Education in Learning, Media and Technology; and the Ph.D. in Creative Writing and Literature. Some programs include a capstone project requirement (*S3-6-Guide to the Capstone Project MA in Design and Creative Production; S3-6-Creative Writing Capstone Project Guidelines*).

Additionally, Sagrado's only research-oriented graduate offering is the Master's in Physical Performance and Health Promotion (*S3-6-Thesis Project Guide MS in Physical Performance*). Students must develop a research proposal and a thesis. A comprehensive program manual, guided by the IRB's ethical standards, outlines faculty responsibilities as research mentors and the structure and processes to be followed.

The percentage of graduate faculty holding terminal degrees appropriate to their disciplines has varied from academic term to academic term, reflecting ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining doctoral-prepared faculty in specialized areas. The University expects faculty assigned to teach graduate courses to hold a terminal degree in the relevant discipline and recognizes strengthening the proportion of doctoral-qualified faculty as an area for continued improvement. To achieve this goal, the institution continues implementing targeted recruitment and faculty development strategies to strengthen credentials and ensure compliance with accreditation and disciplinary standards. Between academic years 2022 and 2026, the proportion of unique faculty holding a doctoral degree rose steadily from 52.4% to 73.3%, reflecting the institution's sustained investment in recruiting and retaining qualified faculty with a terminal degree across its graduate offerings (*S3-6- Faculty Qualifications in Graduate Programs*). At the graduate level, faculty peer and student evaluation processes apply equally, as do student learning assessment processes.

In January 2026, MSCHE approved Sagrado's substantive change request to offer its first doctoral program, a Ph.D. in Creative Writing and Literature, scheduled to begin in Fall 2026. The Academic Board also approved a Ph.D. in Communications, which is currently seeking regulatory approval. To further strengthen graduate education, Sagrado has developed a dedicated facility and appointed an Assistant Vice President

and Dean for Graduate Studies, reporting to the Provost. As of Spring 2026, a proposal has been advanced to structure a new Graduate School that will centralize the academic and operational management, innovation, and growth of all graduate offerings. This initiative is aligned with *Sagrado 2030*, which envisions a Graduate School offering graduate certificates, professional and research-oriented master's degrees, and doctoral programs. As graduate education expands, the University recognizes the importance of continuing to strengthen research-related support structures, specialized advising, and library and scholarly resources necessary to sustain high-quality education.

Third-Party Providers (Criterion 7). Sagrado retains full responsibility for the quality, integrity, and academic oversight of all educational programs, regardless of whether external vendors provide technological platforms or specialized services. The University does not outsource the design, delivery, assessment, or awarding of academic credit to third parties. Faculty establish course learning outcomes, select instructional materials, evaluate student performance, assign grades, and determine whether external resources are appropriate to support student learning.

The selection and oversight of third-party providers are governed by the Policy for the Procurement of Goods and Services, which establishes institution-wide procedures to ensure that procurement decisions are conducted through transparent, ethical, and competitive processes, including the evaluation of vendor qualifications, institutional needs, contractual terms, financial considerations, and ongoing performance monitoring. The policy applies to all procurement activities, regardless of funding source, including agreements involving educational technologies and instructional support services (*S3-7-Policy for the Procurement of Goods and Services*).

Most third-party providers support the instructional process without providing educational content or exercising any academic authority. Canvas serves as the University's learning management system, while Zoom and Panopto support synchronous instruction and lecture capture. Turnitin provides plagiarism-detection and academic-integrity tools; Verificient Technologies (Proctortrack) and, since 2025, Honorlock support identity verification and remote proctoring for selected online assessments; the Duolingo English Test is used as a placement and proficiency assessment tool within the English language program; and Centro Danza provides specialized instructional facilities for dance courses (*S3-7-Compilation of Third-Party Providers Contracts*).

In all cases, Sagrado faculty remain fully responsible for course design, instruction, assessment, grading, and the awarding of academic credit; these providers function solely as technological, assessment, or facility resources that support the educational process.

Coursera was the only third-party provider that contributed instructional content. Beginning in September 2022, the University entered into a time-limited licensing agreement to integrate industry-recognized micro-credentials into selected undergraduate and graduate learning experiences under the RBK curricular model. The procurement process included an academic evaluation demonstrating that Coursera offered the breadth of content, Spanish-language availability, laboratory resources, and professional certificates that best aligned with the University's educational objectives, resulting in an approved exception to the requirement to obtain multiple competitive quotations.

Coursera content functioned exclusively as supplemental learning material within Sagrado courses and did not replace institutional instruction. In undergraduate education, micro-credentials were initially embedded in LID 301 (Leadership II) and later expanded to selected Core Curriculum courses before being limited again to LID 301¹³. Students completed a required number of faculty-approved micro-credentials selected from curated collections aligned with institutional competencies. In graduate programs, faculty incorporated selected Coursera professional certificates that supported disciplinary learning objectives. Throughout the initiative, Sagrado faculty determined how to integrate Coursera resources into the curriculum, establish course learning outcomes, verify student completion, evaluate student learning, and assign final grades. Sagrado awarded academic credit exclusively for successful completion of the University course—not for completing a Coursera credential.

Institutional assessment of the initiative—including analyses of student participation, curricular alignment, platform utilization, licensing costs, and student feedback—led to a phased reduction of the embedding beginning in academic year 2024–2025. Undergraduate use was narrowed to LID 301, graduate participation became optional, and the University announced the complete discontinuation of the Coursera agreement effective July 2026. The review concluded that although the initiative successfully expanded opportunities for industry-recognized micro-credentials, a more sustainable institutional model for short-form professional learning was needed. Sagrado is currently investigating alternative approaches that preserve faculty oversight while guaranteeing long-term financial sustainability and continued alignment with institutional learning outcomes (*S3-7-Cloud Based Course Access Licensing Agreement-Coursera*; *S3-7-Coursera Contract and Evaluation*; *S3-7-Documentation on Coursera Integration*; *S3-7-Compilation of Coursera Feedback and Notice of Elimination*).

Effectiveness of Student Learning Experiences (Criterion 8). Sagrado systematically evaluates the effectiveness of student learning experiences through institution-wide and program-level assessment processes that support continuous improvement. Sagrado assesses student learning through curricular maps, program assessment plans, and direct and indirect measures using both formative and summative approaches. Faculty and academic leadership review assessment results collaboratively and use them to strengthen curricula, improve teaching practices, and enhance student success.

Standard V provides a detailed description of the student learning assessment process, while Standard IV presents the assessment of student support services and student experiences, along with the corresponding supporting evidence. To facilitate the work of the evaluation team, the principal evidence relevant to this criterion is also included in the Standard III evidence inventory (*S5-3-Undergraduate Programmatic Competencies Assessment Results, Approaches, and Activities Examples*; *S4-6-Institutional Satisfaction Survey Results*; *S4-6-Start of the Semester Survey Results*; *S4-6-Graduating Students Exit Survey Results*).

Conclusion and Recommendations. Sagrado demonstrates that the design and delivery of the student learning experience are intentionally aligned with its Mission through the RBK Project, which provides a coherent academic framework integrating

¹³ Due to the curricular revision of the Core Curriculum as mentioned in Criterion 5, LID 301 is no longer part of the Core Curriculum requirements.

the Core Curriculum, academic programs, institutional competencies, and high-impact learning experiences. Academic governance, curricular development, faculty qualifications, and student learning resources operate as an integrated system that supports educational quality, student success, and continuous improvement. Throughout the Self-Study period, Sagrado also strengthened Academic Affairs' organizational capacity by creating new academic leadership structures, expanding faculty development and assessment processes, and reinforcing support for research, curricular innovation, and graduate education.

The chapter also demonstrates that Sagrado systematically reviews and improves its educational experience through evidence-based curricular revision, faculty evaluation, learning assessment, and investment in academic resources. Sagrado has strengthened learning environments, expanded high-impact educational experiences, maintained appropriate support for distance education, and enhanced library and student support services while continuing to invest in instructional quality despite a prolonged period of institutional recovery. Recent initiatives—including the revised Faculty Handbook, the new faculty evaluation framework, and the revised Core Curriculum—position the University to advance the next stage of its academic development. Sagrado seeks to gradually develop its graduate level offerings with the eventual goal of establishing a Graduate School.

No major compliance concerns were identified regarding Standard III. The Self-Study nevertheless identified the following opportunities for continued improvement:

1. Continue developing a sustainable, institution-wide tutoring model that extends support beyond externally funded initiatives.
2. Continue monitoring the adequacy of library, academic support, and specialized learning facilities as enrollment and graduate education expand, including developing dedicated facilities for the Dance Program.
3. Expanding access to comprehensive financial advising services remains a key institutional priority.
4. Continue strengthening research infrastructure, specialized advising, library resources, and other support services needed to develop graduate and doctoral education.
5. Implement more systematic mechanisms to evaluate the quality of asynchronous online course design and student learning experiences.
6. Continue increasing the proportion of doctoral-qualified faculty teaching graduate programs to support the gradual expansion of research-oriented graduate education and the eventual creation of a Graduate School.
7. Continue strengthening institutional processes for the periodic evaluation and documentation of third-party educational providers to support evidence-based decision-making.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

Introduction. Sagrado's Mission affirms the education of the whole person and recognizes that student success depends on more than academic instruction alone. Consistent with this commitment, Sagrado has developed an integrated Student-Centered Support Model that accompanies students from recruitment through graduation by coordinating admissions, advising, financial aid, wellness, leadership development, co-curricular engagement, career preparation, and spiritual development. During the Self-Study period, Sagrado strengthened this model through organizational restructuring, expanded student support services, and systematic assessment processes that reinforce belonging, retention, and degree completion. This chapter demonstrates how these coordinated structures and services support the student experience and advance the University's Mission.

A Note on the Evolution of Student Support Structures. During the Self-Study period, Sagrado strengthened Student Affairs' organizational capacity to better respond to evolving student needs and to advance institutional priorities for student success. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Student Affairs prioritized students' immediate needs, focusing primarily on mental health, student engagement, and a sense of belonging, while also leading many of the University's retention initiatives.

The University also reorganized complementary student services to improve coordination and accessibility. The Internationalization and Sagrado Careers units were consolidated into the Center for Professional and International Experiences (CEPI), led by a single Director who reports to the Assistant Vice President for Curricular Development. Both services were co-located in a renovated one-stop center within the main academic building, improving student access to career development, professional experiences, and international opportunities.

Administrative student services were likewise strengthened through the creation of the Enrollment Management Unit, which centralized the Financial Aid Office, the Registrar's Office, and the Student Billing and Collections Unit under the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration. This reorganization improved response times, expanded digital services, streamlined administrative processes, and enabled the University to issue diplomas on commencement day for the first time in its history.

Finally, the former Integrated Communications Office was reorganized into two complementary units. The Chief Marketing and Admissions Officer leads the Marketing and Admissions Office, which reports to the Provost. The Chief Institutional Communication Officer leads the Office of Institutional Communication, which reports to the President.

Processes to Admit Students (Criterion 1). Sagrado maintains ethical and student-centered policies governing the recruitment, admission, and enrollment of undergraduate and graduate students. The Office of the Provost publishes admission requirements and procedures annually in the Institutional Catalog and makes them publicly available on the University's website¹⁴.

Admission criteria for first-time undergraduate students consider high school GPA and standardized test scores from the College Board Admission Test (PAA)¹⁵, SAT,

¹⁴ Links to the Institutional Catalogs are included in the Evidence Inventory URLs.

¹⁵ In Spanish: *Prueba de Aptitud Académica* (PAA).

or ACT. Sagrado establishes a minimum admission index based on a composite of these measures. The Admissions Committee evaluates applicants who do not meet the minimum index through a letter of intent and a formal interview. Admission requirements vary for transfer, graduate, international, and Distance Learning Nursing students. Under the Academic Board Bylaws, the Academic Board reviews and approves admission policies and requirements. Recent revisions demonstrate this continuous review process, including temporary admission policies adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic for applicants unable to submit PAA scores, revisions to transfer and Distance Learning Nursing Program admission requirements, and updates to program-specific admission and placement criteria in the School of Arts, Design and Creative Industries (*S4-1-Evidence of Regular Evaluation of Admissions Practices*).

Recruitment and admissions are coordinated by the Marketing and Admissions Office under the leadership of the Chief Marketing and Admissions Officer, with the support of the Executive Director for Admissions, a team of recruiters, specialized advisors for transfer, international, and Distance Learning Nursing students, an internal marketing team, and a marketing and advertising firm. Undergraduate recruitment begins each September through high school visits, campus tours, pre-university workshops, and open house activities. The Assistant Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies coordinates graduate recruitment and admissions. Recruitment for graduate programs and the Distance Learning Nursing Program operates year-round and focuses on adult and professional learners. The Office of Institutional Communication supports all recruitment and admissions activities.

Enrollment goals are established annually by the Provost and the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration and approved by the President, through a methodology that considers prior enrollment, expected graduates, historical retention and persistence rates, recruitment pipelines, inquiries, applications, historical conversion rates, and non-degree enrollment (*S4-1-Enrollment Projection Methodology*). The University evaluates admissions effectiveness through institutional enrollment reports and monitoring of yield rates for inquiries, applications, admissions, and enrollment (*S4-1d-Admissions Profile*). Recent data show stable yield rates and consistent enrollment conversion despite fluctuations in application volume, with women representing the majority of both applicants and admitted students. An Institutional Enrollment Committee reviews these findings, along with institutional retention and graduation rates (*see Table 1*), to evaluate and adjust goals and admissions and marketing practices as warranted.

As discussed in Standard II, the Provost and the President review all recruitment and marketing materials to ensure accuracy, transparency, and compliance with ethical practices (*S4-1-Sample Marketing, Admissions, and Recruiting Materials*). The University also prohibits incentive compensation for employees or third-party entities engaged in student recruitment, in accordance with Section 487(a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (*S4-1-Student Recruiting Activities and Awarding of Federal Financial Aid Policy*).

To expand educational opportunities, the University maintains academic collaboration agreements with graduate and professional health programs, including GUS Medical and Veterinary Schools, the Texila American University, Ross University, the University of Medicine and Health Sciences, the Notre Dame of Maryland University, Ponce Health Sciences University, the Carlos Albizu University, and the

University of the Incarnate Word (*S4-1-Compilation of Academic Collaboration Agreements*).

To support a successful transition to university life, all incoming students have access to a digital onboarding process that centralizes orientation resources for students and their families on the University website. The Student Code of Conduct (*S2-1-Student Code of Conduct*) outlines expectations, rights, responsibilities, and institutional policies applicable to all students.

Financial Aid Transparency (Criterion 1, a). As detailed in Standard II, Sagrado is committed to affordability and to providing clear, accurate, and transparent information about tuition, fees, and financial aid. The University participates in the College Cost Transparency Initiative and provides students and their families with standardized financial aid information to support informed enrollment decisions. Publicly available resources include tuition and fee schedules, cost of attendance, consumer information disclosures, FAFSA guidance, a Net Price Calculator, student financial aid indicators, average student loan indebtedness, and student loan cohort default rates (*S2-7b-Documentation on Cost of Attendance and Other*).

According to the IPEDS Student Financial Aid Survey (Academic Year 2023–2024), 81% of Sagrado's degree-seeking undergraduate students received grant or scholarship aid, 72% received Pell Grants, and 22% received Federal Direct Loans. Only 14% of regular undergraduate students, excluding those enrolled in the Distance Learning Nursing Program, borrowed through the Federal Direct Loan Program, with an average annual loan amount of \$4,124. The average Pell Grant award was \$6,144. For first-time, full-time undergraduate students, 94% received grant or scholarship aid and 77% received institutional grants or scholarships. For Academic Year 2024–2025, published undergraduate tuition and required fees for full-time students were \$6,406.

For the 2026–2027 academic year, the estimated cost of attendance for a full-time undergraduate student living on campus is \$24,630 annually (\$12,315 per semester), including approximately \$5,520 in tuition, \$1,910 in fees, \$2,400 for books, materials, and equipment, \$4,200 for housing, and \$4,000 for food, in addition to estimated transportation and personal expenses. The Average Net Price for full-time, first-time undergraduate students receiving grant or scholarship aid was \$13,211, reflecting the combined impact of federal, state, and institutional financial assistance in reducing students' educational costs.

IPEDS trend data indicate that, between 2018 and 2024, the percentage of undergraduate students receiving some form of financial aid remained consistently high, ranging from 70% to 89%, with 81% receiving aid in 2024. During the same period, the proportion of Pell Grant recipients increased from 64% to 72%, while the percentage of students receiving Federal Direct Loans declined from 41% to 22%. Institutional grant recipients also increased, from 25% to 36%, reflecting the University's continued investment in student affordability and persistence (*S4-1a Undergraduate Student Financial Aid Profile; S4-1a-Federal Direct Loans*). To complement need-based aid, Sagrado introduced the Sagrado Achievers merit scholarship in 2020 for continuing students with strong academic performance and expanded this initiative in 2025 through the Pre-Achievers distinction for incoming first-year students who enroll full-time.

Student borrowing outcomes further demonstrate responsible financial aid administration. According to the U.S. Department of Education, Sagrado's official

cohort default rates were 0.1% (FY2020), 0.0% (FY2021), and 0.0% (FY2022). The FY2023 draft cohort default rate is 0.4%, remaining well below federal accountability thresholds (*S4-1a-Summary and Compilation of Loan Student Cohort Rate Status 2020–2023*).

The Financial Aid Office supports prospective and enrolled students and their families through a comprehensive service model combining in-person, virtual, and technology-enabled assistance. Services include Pre-University Workshop and Open House presentations, virtual sessions, extended hours during peak periods, personalized outreach, and guidance on financial aid processes and eligibility. An AI-enabled chatbot provides 24/7 assistance, complemented by live agents during business hours. Between 2022 and 2025, the Office provided approximately 2,400 direct service interactions annually, while FAFSA completion remained consistently high at 83%-84% of enrolled students (*S4-1a-Trend Analysis of Attendance and Completion of Financial Aid Counseling Sessions or Other Services Designed to Educate Students*). During the review period, the Federal Title V Meaningful Advising Services (MAS) grant further supported these efforts by strengthening individualized financial advising and integrating the ECMC “Budgeting” and “Paying for College” courses for first-year students. In 2024, 164 students completed individual financial advising appointments (*S4-1a-Financial Literacy and Title V Meaningful Advising Services*). Together, these initiatives expanded access to financial guidance and strengthened financial literacy across the student experience. Expanding access to comprehensive financial advising services remains a key institutional priority.

College Readiness (Criterion 1, b). Sagrado uses College Board Admission Test (PAA) results to identify students requiring developmental coursework. Students scoring 500 or below in mathematics and enrolling in Biomedical Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, or Nursing must complete *MAT 101-Fundamental Mathematics*. Students entering the Ferré Rangel School of Communication who score 449 or below in reading and writing must complete *CMU 090-Language for Effective Communication*. Applicants to selected programs in the School of Arts, Design and Creative Industries who do not comply with the admission portfolio are required to complete the non-credit *ART 016-Visual Culture* before progressing to Major Concentration coursework.

The effectiveness of these developmental interventions is monitored through course pass rates, institutional retention, and graduation outcomes. Institutional data show that in the majority of these courses, the pass rate is above 80% and the retention rate is above 65%, providing evidence for assessing student progress and informing the continued improvement of college readiness initiatives (*S4-1b-Student Success Outcomes for Basic Skills Courses*).

Enhancing Retention (Criterion 1, c-d). To support student success from admission through graduation, Sagrado provides an integrated Student-Centered Support Model. Consistent with this commitment, for fiscal years 2021–2022 to 2024–2025, the University allocated 14% of total annual expenditures to student services (an average of \$6.5 million) and 11% to academic support (an average of \$5 million) (*S1-3d-Analysis of Expenditure Across Core Areas Aligned to Institutional Priorities*).

Orientation. New students participate in comprehensive orientation programs that help them transition to university life by introducing Sagrado's Mission, academic expectations, institutional policies, digital platforms, and available academic and student support services. Sagrado provides tailored orientations for first-year students, transfer students, international students, graduate students, and Distance Learning Nursing Students students. Orientation is reinforced through the Leadership for the Common Good Core Sequence, which entails two courses: 1) a First-Year course that introduces students to better practices for their well-being and academic success; and 2) a Third-Year course that reinforces students' career, financial, and post-graduation readiness (*S4-1c-Data on Attendance to Orientation and Advising Services*).

Integrated Advising Model. As part of the RBK Project, Sagrado implemented an integrated advising model in Spring 2021, grounded in National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) principles. The model brings together academic, career, and study-away advising with student support services to promote academic achievement, well-being, and career readiness. The Federal Title V MAS grant supported implementation by funding additional advisors, faculty development, and advising technologies. As implementation faced the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and declining institutional retention and graduation rates, the Provost convened and charged a Retention Task Force with designing a Strategic Plan for Persistence and Retention. The Retention Task Force participated in the 2022 NACADA Summer Institute (*S4-1c-Strategic Plan for Persistence and Retention*) and developed a plan with four institutional priorities: 1) proactive and inclusive advising; 2) strengthened faculty mentoring; 3) meaningful co- and extracurricular engagement; and 4) integrated financial support.

The University annually reviews degree completions by undergraduate and graduate program to identify trends, evaluate the effectiveness of student success strategies, and inform enrollment planning, academic resource allocation, and program improvement (*S4-1d-Completion by Program*).

Each student is assigned a primary Academic Advisor, who coordinates academic planning and referrals to financial aid, mental health, spiritual support, and reasonable accommodation services. Career Advisors, housed within the Center for Professional and International Experiences (CEPI), provide career planning, graduate school preparation, résumé and portfolio development, interview preparation, job-search assistance, and support for internships, and other programs such as the Disney College Program, the Fulbright Program, and the Peace Corps Prep Certificate. Career advising services remain available to alumni throughout their professional careers. A dedicated Study Away Advisor supports international exchange opportunities.

All advisors work collaboratively through the *Mi Ruta (My Pathway)* framework, which organizes student development across four stages: Exploration and Adjustment, Strengthening and Integration, Empowerment, and Transition. Through the Symplicity platform, students schedule appointments, track milestones, and access employment opportunities, while advisors maintain a shared advising record to facilitate coordinated interventions. Advisors serving Federal TRIO SSS and SSSD programs follow the same advising model and framework. As the model continues to evolve, the University has identified a need to increase academic and career advising capacity and further integrate Symplicity with the Jenzabar SIS to streamline advisors' workflows, reduce time spent navigating separate systems, and improve student support efficiency.

Wellness and Early Intervention. Academic advising is complemented by a network of integrated wellness and support services coordinated primarily through the Office of Student Affairs. The Student Wellness Unit coordinates and provides psychological counseling services through partnerships with graduate psychology students from Carlos Albizu University and Ponce Health Sciences University, under the supervision of licensed professionals. The Yes U Can Student Assistance Program further strengthens this capacity by expanding access to free, confidential, 24/7 counseling and support for mental health, substance use, legal, and financial concerns. The University also promotes prevention and well-being through mental health workshops, health fairs organized with the Nursing Program, the annual faculty-led Mental Health Awareness Day, and access to fitness facilities and activities that encourage healthy lifestyles. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sagrado launched *(Nos)Cuidamos*¹⁶, a campus-wide initiative focused on prevention, self-care, and collective well-being, which is scheduled to resume in Fall 2026.

These services are complemented by spiritual counseling and food security initiatives coordinated by the Sophia Center, including CoMesa, which provides food assistance, referrals, and accompaniment to students experiencing food insecurity. Three campus dining facilities and the Sagrado Market, opened in January 2026 to serve the growing residential community, further support food security. Student support services are connected through the University's Early Alert System, which enables faculty and advisors to identify students experiencing academic or personal challenges and refer them to appropriate resources. During 2022–2023, the University processed 2,787 early alerts, informing ongoing improvements to outreach and intervention strategies (*S4-1d-Early Alert System Analysis*).

Support for Specific Student Populations. Sagrado maintains policies and procedures designed to promote equitable access, student well-being, and academic success among diverse student populations. The Equal Opportunity for Students with Disabilities Policy establishes procedures for requesting, implementing, and reviewing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary aids (*S2-7a-Equal Opportunities Policy for Students with Disabilities Policy*). The Policy Regarding the Name Chosen by Students supports student identity affirmation and belonging (*S2-7a-Policy Regarding the Name Chosen by Students*). The Military Leave of Absence Policy safeguards educational continuity for military-affiliated students (*S4-1d-Policy on Student Military Leave of Absence*), while the Procedure for Re-Entry from a Medical Leave of Absence or Withdrawal facilitates a safe and successful return to academic study (*S4-1d-Procedure for Re-Entry from a Medical Leave of Absence or Withdrawal for Medical or Health Reasons*). The Protocol for the Prevention and Intervention of Risk Situations on Campus (*S4-1d-Protocol for the Prevention and Intervention in High-Risk Situations on Campus*) further supports student safety. The Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy establishes academic standards and advising interventions that promote responsible use of financial aid, continued academic progress, and timely degree completion (*S4-1d-Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy*).

Students can also access academic and administrative services through the mi.sagrado.edu portal, where they can request program changes, transcripts, minor concentrations, grade appeals, financial aid reviews, reasonable accommodations, and

¹⁶ Meaning “We Take Care of Ourselves and Each Other,” reflects the initiative’s emphasis on both individual self-care and collective well-being.

University withdrawals, facilitating timely access to services that support academic progress and persistence.

Disaggregating and Analyzing Student Achievement Data (Criterion 1, e). Sagrado systematically disaggregates and analyzes student achievement data to monitor student success and inform institutional decision-making. The Data Management Unit prepares undergraduate and graduate indicator reports, while the Academic Researcher prepares student learning and student experiences assessment reports. During active enrollment periods, executive leadership and other collaborators monitor enrollment and retention indicators daily. The University recognizes an opportunity to improve by integrating these reports into a centralized institutional dashboard. To address this need, the first phase of the Sagrado Data Warehouse project began in the 2025–2026 academic year. Once implemented, the platform will consolidate student achievement and operational data into a single source of information, providing real-time analytics to strengthen planning, assessment, and evidence-based decision-making.

Retention and Graduation. Sagrado monitors student achievement through first-year retention, graduation, and transfer-out rates, as shown in Table 1 and Table 6. Institutional leadership and academic units review these indicators annually to assess progress toward strategic enrollment and completion goals and to inform advising, resource allocation, and student success initiatives. Longitudinal IPEDS completion reports (2018–2019 through 2023–2024) provide evidence of student outcomes and guide strategies to strengthen degree completion across academic units. The University also prepares an annual Student Enrollment Profile that disaggregates enrollment by academic unit, age, gender, geographic origin, ethnicity, race, family income, FAFSA completion, Pell Grant eligibility, and federal loan participation (*S4-1e-Student Enrollment Profile*). International enrollment is reported separately (*S4-1e-International Student Enrollment Data*).

Transfer Credits and Alternative Learning (Criterion 2). Policies and procedures regarding transfer of credits and assessment of prior learning experiences are available in the Institutional Catalog and on Sagrado's website¹⁷. Transfer-in undergraduate students have remained steady at 7%–9% of total undergraduate enrollment, as reported in IPEDS. As shown in the table below, the lowest rates were recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic years.

TABLE 13. SAGRADO'S TRANSFER-IN DATA

IPEDS Collection Year	Full-Time Transfer-In	Part-Time Transfer-In	Grand Total
2024	382	24	406
2023	276	34	310
2022	248	76	324
2021	193	54	247
2020	233	44	277
2019	316	48	364

Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment Reports.

¹⁷ Links to the Institutional Catalogs are included in the Evidence Inventory URLs.

In 2024, Sagrado implemented the Transfer Evaluation System (TES) from CollegeSource to streamline equivalency reviews, using a self-service tool that enhances transparency. As part of its continuous improvement efforts, the University updated its Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) policy and procedure in 2024 to align with American Council on Education best practices. The PLA policy recognizes college-level learning acquired outside traditional classrooms and supports equity for non-traditional and adult learners. Available to undergraduate and graduate students, PLA may be pursued via a challenge examination or a portfolio submission (*S4-2-Policy for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA); S4-2-Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning*).

A specialized admissions advisor serves as the primary point of contact for this population, while the Registrar's Office oversees credit evaluation. As part of the Sagrado 2030 Strategic Plan ("*Sagrado 2030*"), a working group was established in Spring 2025 to design the transfer student journey from recruitment through graduation. As standard procedure, the Academic Board approves any changes to the transfer credit policy. It communicates them to staff, who have a point of contact for questions (*S4-2-Evidence of Orientation to Staff About Transfer Credits*). Sagrado recognizes the need to provide recurrent training for faculty and student support staff to strengthen their understanding of the distinct characteristics and needs of transfer and non-traditional students and their capacity to support these populations effectively.

Student Records (Criterion 3). Sagrado complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and all applicable federal and local regulations governing the access, custody, and protection of academic records (*S4-3-FERPA Notice*). The Registrar's Office holds primary responsibility for FERPA compliance (*S4-3-Safekeeping of Academic Records*).

All active students receive an annual FERPA notification via institutional email that outlines their rights and responsibilities regarding educational records. This information is also available on Sagrado's official website, Institutional Catalog, and in mi.sagrado.edu. New students and their families learn about these protections during recruitment, admissions, and orientation activities, ensuring transparency and awareness from initial contact through enrollment.

The University has an Information Privacy Policy applicable to students, faculty, and staff, which regulates access to restricted, confidential, and public information. The policy covers student records, Social Security numbers, professional license data, health information protected under HIPAA, research data governed by the Common Rule, and financial records subject to the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. To further safeguard institutional data, Sagrado implemented a Cybersecurity Policy in 2023 that classifies all electronic information as confidential and assigns shared responsibility for data protection across the campus community. The Office of Integrated Technology and Information oversees implementation, and all faculty and administrative staff complete mandatory certification training (*S4-3-Information Privacy Policy; S4-3-Cybersecurity Policy and Procedure*).

Extracurricular Activities (Criterion 4). Sagrado's Mission promotes students' holistic development as persons committed to building communities of solidarity, justice, and peace. Consistent with this commitment, the 2022 Strategic Plan for Persistence and Retention identifies co- and extracurricular engagement as a key strategy to strengthen student success. As discussed in Standard II, institutional surveys on students' sense of belonging and well-being inform the planning of student

organizations, residence life, athletics, wellness initiatives, and campus-wide activities led by the Office of Student Affairs. While participation and student feedback are regularly reviewed, Sagrado has identified systematically assessing the educational impact of these experiences as an opportunity for continuous improvement.

Student Leadership. Students enjoy full freedom of association within a framework of mutual respect and tolerance. Student organizations operate under institutional policies and must obtain official recognition (*S2-2-Student Organizations Guide*). Each organization submits a semester work plan to the Office of Student Affairs and assumes responsibility for its activities. The academic year begins with an induction ceremony in which student leaders and faculty mentors reaffirm their shared commitment to leadership and accountability.

Student engagement has grown significantly since the reopening of campus after the pandemic, with recognized organizations increasing from 22 in 2022–2023 to more than 60 in 2025–2026. These organizations represent all academic schools, including chapters of national and professional associations such as Sigma Beta Delta and the American Marketing Association, whose chapter received national recognition at the 2025 International Collegiate Conference. The Student Council, elected annually, receives leadership training, convenes two Student Assemblies each year, and coordinates additional student life initiatives. Together, these organizations and shared governance opportunities reinforce leadership development, belonging, and meaningful engagement beyond the classroom (*S2-2-Student Life Guide*).

Housing and Residential Life. As one of the few private universities in Puerto Rico offering on-campus housing, Sagrado views residential life as integral to student belonging and holistic development. Consistent with *Sagrado 2030* goal of becoming a global and residential campus, the University expanded housing capacity from 550 to 850 beds across 13 facilities following a \$2 million investment in 2025–2026. Resident Advisors, a Residents Council, and programs that promote community, leadership, wellness, and independent living support residential life, guided by the University Residence Guide (*S2-2-University Residence Guide*). As capacity has grown, the University has also strengthened infrastructure and 24/7 campus security while identifying the need to continue updating operational protocols for weather-related and utility service disruptions in view of the larger residential footprint.

Transportation. Transportation services support student mobility and safety through the Dolphy Shuttle, which connects campus with the Tren Urbano station and serves approximately 8,000 passengers monthly. To address parking constraints resulting from enrollment and residential growth, the University has expanded leased parking and promoted shared transportation. Sagrado is also the first university in Latin America to participate in the Uber Campus program, providing transportation and food-delivery vouchers to support student mobility and food security. Resident students have weekly transportation to supermarkets. As high-impact learning experiences continue to expand, increasing transportation capacity for off-campus academic activities has been identified as an opportunity for improvement.

Campus-Wide Engagement and Recognition. Sagrado maintains a well-established calendar of co-curricular traditions that enrich academic life and strengthen community, including the Women in Science Speaker Series, Creative Industries Symposium, Communication Month, Business Speaker Series, Entrepreneurship Week, Theater Week, Design and Animation Days, International

Education Week, the Nursing Capping Ceremony, and the Opening-of-the-Semester Mass. These events foster intellectual engagement and a sense of belonging. Student recognition has also expanded beyond commencement to include semester-based recognition of Sagrado Achievers and Honor Roll students. The institution recognizes honorees institution-wide and provides digital badges that support professional visibility and identity development.

Athletics. Sagrado has been a member of the Puerto Rico Interuniversity Athletic League (LAI) since 1979. The University's teams, the *Delfines del Sagrado* (Sagrado's Dolphins), compete in volleyball, beach volleyball, basketball, soccer, tennis, track and field, swimming, dance, and color guard. Athletics is an integral component of student life, promoting physical wellness, leadership, teamwork, discipline, and institutional engagement.

The Athletics Program reports to the Office of Student Affairs and is led by the Director of Athletics and Recreational Activities. It operates under the same academic, fiscal, and administrative policies that govern all University programs and aligns with the University's Mission and institutional policies, including the Brand Manual. The Policy for Sports Scholarships for Student-Athletes and the Student-Athlete Regulations establish eligibility requirements, academic expectations, scholarship criteria, and standards of ethical conduct and sportsmanship (*S4-4-Policy for Sports Scholarships for Student-Athletes; S4-4-Student-Athlete Regulations; S4-4-Athletic Scholarship Agreement Template*).

Approximately 200 student-athletes participate annually in the Delfines del Sagrado program. The program monitors participation and scholarship data by sport and student characteristics to support academic success, compliance, and resource planning (*S4-4-Student Headcount by Sport; S4-4-Data on Student-Athletes Scholarships*). Student-athletes have maintained a cumulative GPA above 3.0 for the past seven academic years, reaching 3.31 in 2025–2026, demonstrating strong academic performance alongside athletic participation.

The University provides on-campus athletic facilities and leases specialized venues as needed for training and competition. Athletics also contributes to campus life through traditions such as the Lighting of the Flame Ceremony, Pep Rally, and Athletic Gala, fostering school spirit and student engagement. Sagrado's commitment to student-athlete success is reflected in six consecutive LAI Commissioner's Cup championships among institutions with fewer than 6,000 students, illustrating the University's emphasis on academic achievement, holistic development, and competitive excellence.

Third-Party Providers (Criterion 5). Sagrado retains full responsibility for the quality, integrity, and oversight of all student services, including those provided by third parties. Institutional policies, contractual agreements, and administrative oversight govern external providers to ensure a consistent, high-quality student experience.

The Policy for the Procurement of Goods and Services governs the selection, contracting, and evaluation of third-party providers and requires transparent, competitive procurement processes; assessment of institutional needs and vendor qualifications; clearly defined contractual responsibilities; and ongoing performance monitoring. Each contract is assigned to a responsible University office that oversees implementation, approves modifications, and verifies deliverables before payment. All

providers must comply with applicable laws and University policies, and no agreement delegates responsibility for academic programs, instruction, student learning assessment, grading, or the awarding of academic credit (*S3-7-Policy for the Procurement of Goods and Services*).

The University maintains third-party agreements supporting institutional operations in the following areas (*S4-5-Sample of Third-Party Agreement*):

- Student Information and Administrative Systems: Jenzabar, Inc. (Student Information System); Blackbaud, Inc. (Award Management Services); Transfer Evaluation System (CollegeSource).
- Technology Infrastructure: Business Intelligence of Puerto Rico Corp.
- Student Support: APS OptiMind – OPTIMIND Managed Behavioral Healthcare Organization, Corp. (Student Assistance Program); Universidad Carlos Albizu (Clinical Psychology Practicum Agreement); Ponce Health Sciences University (Clinical Psychology Practicum Agreement).
- Campus Operations and Facilities: St. James Security Services, LLC; Antilles Cleaning Services/Fuller Group; CBM Capital Building Maintenance, Inc.; Las Brisas Property Management LLC.
- Auxiliary Services: FAZAA Food Services Corporation; Express Coach, Inc.; Centro de Tenis Honda.
- Marketing and Communications: Populicom, Inc.; The Big Think Group.

Psychological services illustrate Sagrado's approach to third-party partnerships: external providers expand institutional capacity without replacing institutional responsibility. Counseling services are complemented by the Yes U Can Program, provided by APS OptiMind, and by affiliation agreements with Carlos Albizu University and Ponce Health Sciences University, whose graduate psychology students complete supervised clinical practice on campus. Sagrado's licensed psychologist oversees clinical operations, service quality, institutional compliance, and professional and ethical standards, while the partner universities retain responsibility for their students' academic evaluation.

Evaluation of third-party providers varies depending on the services provided. In general, performance is reviewed during contract renewal, with the responsible institutional office assessing service quality, compliance with contractual obligations, and institutional needs before recommending renewal. Some providers are also subject to additional evaluation mechanisms. For example, the Office of Information Technology and Integrated Systems (ITI) and the Yes U Can Program are assessed annually through the Institutional Satisfaction Survey. In addition, residence operations and maintenance providers—Las Brisas Property Management (LBPM)¹⁸ and CBM Capital Building Maintenance—are monitored through weekly operational reports and regular performance reviews conducted by the Director of Residential Operations. Nonetheless, the University has identified an opportunity to strengthen the systematic evaluation of third-party providers that directly affect the student experience.

Assessment of Student Support Services (Criterion 6). Sagrado administers three recurring institutional surveys that assess the student experience at different points in the student lifecycle. The Beginning-of-Semester Survey evaluates

¹⁸ Las Brisas Property Management provided services to the University for only one year during the period under review. The monitoring practices described in this section applied throughout its contractual term.

institutional readiness and service effectiveness at the start of each term; the Institutional Satisfaction Survey assesses the quality, accessibility, responsiveness, and communication of academic and student support services throughout the academic year; and the Graduating Students Exit Survey Report captures graduating students' perceptions of their academic experience, student services, career preparation, and post-graduation plans (*S4-6-Start of the Semester Survey Results; S4-6-Institutional Satisfaction Survey Results; S4-6-Graduating Students Exit Survey Results*).

To complement these recurring assessments, the Office of the Provost administered the Survey on Awareness, Use, and Evaluation of Student Services in Spring 2026 to 1,395 students. Unlike the Institutional Satisfaction Survey, this instrument assessed not only satisfaction but also students' awareness and utilization of individual services, including those supported by third-party providers. While students who used the services generally reported positive experiences, awareness and utilization of several services remained relatively low, identifying opportunities to strengthen service visibility and refine future assessment. As discussed in Criterion 5, the findings will also inform the development of a more systematic institutional framework and performance indicators for evaluating third-party providers (*S4-6-Survey on Awareness, Use, and Evaluation of Student Services, 2025-2026*).

Survey findings are complemented by continuous qualitative feedback gathered through meetings with the Student Council, student-athletes, and residential students, as well as through two annual Student Assemblies.

Conclusion and Recommendations. Sagrado demonstrates that student support is intentionally integrated into the educational experience and aligned with its Mission of educating the whole person. Throughout the Self-Study period, the University strengthened its Student-Centered Support Model to enhance student belonging and success further. The Office of Student Affairs leads the Student-Centered Support Model, supported by the Enrollment Management Unit, the Center for Professional and International Experiences, the Sophia Center, the Student Wellness Unit, and the Athletic Program, among other collaborators. Admission processes, financial aid, advising, wellness services, residence life, student leadership, athletics, and co- and extracurricular opportunities collectively foster student success.

This chapter also demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to evidence-based improvement. Student achievement indicators, institutional surveys, and satisfaction assessments routinely evaluate the effectiveness of student services and inform planning, resource allocation, and organizational improvements. Initiatives such as the integrated advising model, the *Mi Ruta (My Pathway)* framework, and expanded residential services illustrate the University's capacity to use assessment findings to strengthen the student experience.

The University identified no major compliance concerns with Standard IV. The Self-Study identified the following opportunities for continuous improvement:

1. Continue strengthening academic and career advising capacity and further integrate Symplicity with the Jenzabar SIS to streamline advisors' workflows, reduce time spent navigating separate systems, and improve student support efficiency.
2. Provide recurrent professional development for faculty and staff on the needs of transfer and non-traditional students.

3. Develop more systematic assessment of the educational impact of co- and extracurricular experiences on student learning, belonging, and persistence.
4. Continue expanding transportation capacity to support high-impact learning experiences beyond campus.
5. Refine residential operations protocols to strengthen preparedness for weather-related and utility disruptions in view of the larger residential footprint.
6. Increase student awareness and utilization of available support services through more coordinated communication and outreach strategies, while continuing to assess awareness, use, and satisfaction.
7. Strengthen the institutional framework for the periodic assessment of third-party providers, using performance indicators appropriate to the nature of the services provided.

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Introduction. Sagrado's Mission calls for graduates who can contribute responsibly to society, requiring systematic assessment of student learning and institutional effectiveness. Through the RBK Project, the University has strengthened its culture of evidence to ensure that educational practices remain aligned with the Mission and responsive to evolving needs. Assessment findings inform curricular revisions, faculty development, and decision-making processes that sustain academic quality. This chapter demonstrates how systematic assessment supports continuous improvement and reinforces the alignment between educational outcomes and the Mission.

Student learning outcomes (Criterion 1). Student learning outcomes align with the University's Mission and are structured around the institutional competencies. Sagrado assesses these competencies through institutional learning outcomes embedded in the Core Curriculum and program-level learning outcomes across undergraduate and graduate programs, which are aligned with the institutional competencies. These measurable outcomes guide curriculum design, co-curricular learning experiences, and assessment processes, reflecting Sagrado's commitment to both professional preparation and integral human development.

Student learning outcomes are assessed through course-embedded assignments. Assessment is operationalized through curricular maps that specify where and how learning outcomes are introduced, reinforced, and mastered across the course sequence. These maps promote vertical and horizontal coherence, guide faculty, and inform systematic curricular reviews (*S5-1-General and Programmatic Student Learning Outcomes Maps*). At the program level, each program's Graduate Profile articulates the knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of graduates, aligns with the institutional competencies, and is submitted to the Puerto Rico Board of Postsecondary Institutions as part of the academic program approval process. Programs with or aspiring to specialized accreditation align their learning outcomes with the standards of their respective accrediting bodies, ensuring that graduates meet disciplinary and professional expectations and demonstrate the University's institutional competencies.

Organized and Systematic Assessments and Defined Student Learning Outcomes (Criterion 2, a). Over the past decade, Sagrado has consolidated a systematic process for assessing student learning outcomes. This process has evolved through ongoing refinements to institutional competencies, program-level curricular maps, assessment instruments, and governance structures. Recommendations from the previous MSCHE cycle—such as formalizing program review processes, strengthening faculty development, and documenting the use of assessment results—have informed key institutional improvements.

In 2018, Sagrado established an independent unit to oversee institutional assessment. Subsequent evaluation indicated the importance of situating assessment functions within the Office of the Provost to strengthen faculty engagement and integration with curricular processes. Institutional restructuring aligned these functions, culminating in the creation of the Academic Researcher role in 2022 to coordinate both student learning assessment and institutional surveys. In 2022, the University approved the Student Learning Assessment policy and its procedure, establishing a comprehensive framework that defines assessment as a continuous cycle of goal setting, evidence collection, analysis, and improvement across curricular and

co-curricular contexts (*S5-2a-Student Learning Assessment Policy & Procedure for the Assessment of Student Learning*).

Although implementation of the RBK curriculum began in 2020, its formal student learning assessment cycle began in 2022, following the approval of the assessment policy and procedure and after the most disruptive years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The cycle spans four academic years, with the first complete assessment cycle under the RBK Project concluding in academic year 2025–2026¹⁹.

As indicated in Criterion 1, student learning assessment is implemented at two levels: (1) assessment of institutional competencies through the Core Curriculum (*Institutional Learning Outcomes*); and (2) assessment of program-level outcomes across undergraduate and graduate programs (*Programmatic Learning Outcomes*). Curricular maps for the Core Curriculum and for each academic program identify where competencies are introduced, reinforced, and mastered, guiding the integration of assessment activities within specific courses. Faculty participate in a structured collaborative process that includes designing and validating assignments and rubrics, collecting data, discussing results, and identifying curricular or pedagogical improvements.

Assessment approaches vary by discipline while remaining aligned with institutional competencies and active learning principles. For example, the School of General Education emphasizes written and analytical assignments; the School of Business incorporates simulations, case analyses, and capstone projects; the School of Arts, Design, and Creative Industries prioritizes creative production and reflective practice; the Ferré Rangel School of Communication integrates media production and strategic communication projects; and the School of Health and Sciences focuses on scientific reasoning, applied research, and professional simulations. Graduate programs emphasize applied analysis and professional reporting. Once approved, assessment activities are incorporated into standardized course blueprints within the Canvas LMS, supporting consistent implementation across course sections. Canvas collects student learning assessment data. Each academic term, the Academic Researcher, with support from the Pedagogical Innovation Unit, collects, analyzes, and presents Canvas data to each school in a report.

Direct measures are complemented by indirect evidence, such as the First Destination Survey (described in Standard I), the Student Sense of Belonging Survey (described in Standard II), and the Graduating Students Exit Survey Report (described in Standard IV). The University also develops and administers targeted surveys, as needed, to assess the effectiveness of specific curricular and co-curricular components, including the Language Center and the Leadership and Entrepreneurship components of the Core Curriculum (*S5-2a-Compilation of Indirect Measures Surveys, Analyses and Results*).

Preparing Students for Successful Careers and Meaningful Lives (Criterion 2, b). As will be detailed in Criterion 3, assessment results show that students consistently achieve the institutional competencies and program learning outcomes, meeting the institutional benchmark. To complement these direct measures of learning, Sagrado monitors student success indicators—including retention,

¹⁹ Although assessment data for the 2022–2026 cycle have been collected, the University is currently conducting the longitudinal and comparative analysis of the complete cycle. Therefore, the comprehensive results were not available for inclusion in the Self-Study and will be available for presentation during the MSCHE evaluation visit.

graduation, transfer-out, professional licensure, and post-graduation outcomes shown in Table 1, Table 6, and Table 7—to evaluate students' progress toward degree completion. Sagrado continues to strengthen post-graduation data collection and expand outcome measures to include graduate admission and professional licensure results.

Over the last two years, Sagrado has embedded professional readiness across its academic programs through capstone projects, applied research, client-based assignments, performances, and professional portfolios. At the undergraduate level, these experiences occur in professional practice courses in Psychology, Social Work, and Exercise Science. The School of Arts, Design, and Creative Industries implemented a Professional Practices requirement for all its bachelor's degrees that was evaluated (*S5-2b-High-Impact Practices in Creative Education: Assessing Experiential Learning through Course-Embedded Practicums*). At the graduate level, programs include a capstone, thesis, or final project requirement. As part of the Sagrado 2030 Strategic Plan (*"Sagrado 2030"*), these experiences will be expanded systematically across all academic programs and must be integrated into the learning assessment process. Sagrado also seeks to integrate the assessment of service-learning, community engagement, and volunteer experiences to document better how these high-impact practices contribute to students' civic preparation, ethical reflection, and commitment to meaningful lives in fulfillment of the Mission.

Communication of Assessment Results (Criterion 2, c). The University consolidates assessment findings into reports to ensure consistency, validity, and longitudinal tracking across programs. Results are reviewed at multiple levels, discussed in faculty meetings, and shared each semester with institutional leadership and the Board of Trustees to inform evidence-based decisions regarding curriculum, syllabi, strategies to strengthen student learning, and alignment with strategic priorities (*S5-2c-Evidence on Assessment Results Meetings*).

To strengthen institutional awareness, in 2022 the University collaborated with Elemento 360, a student-led communications firm from the Ferré Rangel School of Communication, to develop a campus-wide campaign highlighting the institutional competencies. Students designed logos representing each competency, which were integrated into the University's website, displayed on digital monitors, and incorporated into faculty and administrative presentations. In 2023, the University introduced digital badges for students who completed a sequence of courses aligned with institutional competencies, enabling them to showcase these achievements on professional platforms such as LinkedIn (*S5-2c-Institutional Competency Awareness Campaign*).

A continued area for improvement is systematically engaging students with aggregate assessment results. While faculty discuss assessment activities and their results with students within individual courses, the University has not yet established a systematic process for sharing and discussing aggregated findings with students. Strengthening this practice would help students understand how assessment results inform curricular improvement and provide opportunities for their participation in the continuous improvement of the educational experience.

Use of Assessment Results to Improve Educational Effectiveness (Criterion 3). At Sagrado, student learning assessment results are disaggregated by academic level (undergraduate and graduate), school, program, and course, enabling the identification of trends, strengths, and areas for improvement. The Academic

Researcher analyzes course-level results and consolidates the findings into program- and school-level reports that support faculty review, curricular decision-making, and institutional planning. Because Canvas aggregates direct assessment results at the course or section level and does not permit disaggregation by demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, first-generation status, or disability), the University complements these findings with indirect measures that allow demographic analyses and provide additional insight into the student experience. As noted in Criterion 2, these indirect measures are used alongside direct evidence to inform continuous improvement.

Sagrado has adopted a common institutional benchmark across academic units, requiring at least 70% of students to achieve an average score of 3 or higher on a four-point rubric. This approach has strengthened comparability of results and clarified expectations across programs.

The following section presents assessment results for: (1) institutional competencies through the Core Curriculum (*Institutional Learning Outcomes*); and (2) program-level outcomes across undergraduate and graduate programs (*Programmatic Learning Outcomes*).

Assessment Results of Institutional Competencies Through the Core Curriculum (Institutional Learning Outcomes). The University assesses student learning of institutional competencies through course-embedded direct measures using common institutional rubrics and performance benchmarks. Supporting documentation (*S5-3-Undergraduate Institutional Competencies Assessment Results, Approaches and Activities Examples*) presents detailed achievement levels, assessment instruments, and longitudinal findings.

Assessment findings between 2023 and 2025 demonstrate sustained student achievement across the institutional competencies in the Core Curriculum and have been used for its curricular improvement (*S5-3-Undergraduate Institutional Competencies Assessment Results And Improvement Actions; S3-5-Core Curriculum Revision 2022; S3-5-Core Curriculum Revision 2025; S3-5-Core Curriculum Revision 2026*).

Beyond informing course-level revisions, assessment findings also prompted a review of the institutional competencies. In 2026, the Academic Board approved four principal changes: (1) formal definitions for each institutional competency were established and ratified; (2) Leadership for the Common Good was formally recognized as an institutional competency, acknowledging that the Leadership sequence had been part of the Core Curriculum since 2020 but had not previously been assessed as a distinct competency; (3) Ethical Sense and Social Justice was redefined as Ethical Reflection and separated from theology coursework, thereby strengthening the distinction between competency assessment and theological formation; as part of this realignment, the theology course was incorporated into the Leadership for the Common Good sequence; and (4) Digital Literacy was adopted as a transversal competency to be developed and assessed across all academic programs. These changes strengthened alignment among the institutional competencies, student learning outcomes, and Sagrado's Catholic identity without altering the Core Curriculum's overall structure.

Because these changes occurred after the assessment period, this chapter reports results for the original five competencies. The new four-year assessment cycle that will start in academic year 2026–2027 will use the new competency framework, but the

University expects to maintain longitudinal consistency because four of the five original competencies remain the same, and the changes to the remaining one are not so material as to prevent comparison.

Assessment Results of Undergraduate Programmatic Learning Outcomes. Sagrado assesses student learning across all undergraduate programs. Each academic program has a graduate profile that outlines the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students are expected to master upon completing their degree in their discipline. For learning assessment, each program aligned its graduate profile with the institutional competencies, identifying how those competencies are expressed to accomplish program-level outcomes. Using curricular maps, faculty identified the courses in which each competency is expected to be developed and the program outcome accomplished. Faculty also designed discipline-specific assessment activities and rubrics and collected direct evidence of student learning. At the end of each academic term, the Academic Researcher prepared program-level assessment reports and shared them with the corresponding academic school to support faculty review and continuous improvement.

Overall, undergraduate program-level assessment results demonstrate strong student achievement across the University's academic schools. Undergraduate program-level outcomes aligned with the Ethical Sense and Social Justice competency consistently met institutional benchmarks across all four schools, with achievement ranging from 85% to 100%. Outcomes aligned with the Critical Thinking competency also performed strongly (75%–99%), meeting benchmarks in all schools except for mixed results in the School of Arts, Design and Creative Industries.

Undergraduate program-level outcomes aligned with the Innovation and Entrepreneurship competency showed high achievement in the School of Business and the Ferré Rangel School of Communication (85%–100%), with more variable results in the School of Arts, Design and Creative Industries and the School of Health and Sciences, reflecting differences in program competencies. Communication and Research and Exploration showed the greatest variation across schools, with mixed results concentrated in the Ferré Rangel School of Communication and the School of Arts, Design and Creative Industries (*S5-3-Undergraduate Programmatic Assessment Results, Approaches and Activities Examples; S5-3-Undergraduate Programmatic Assessment Results And Improvement Actions*).

Assessment Results of Graduate Programmatic Learning Outcomes. At the graduate level, Sagrado follows the same assessment framework and process used for undergraduate programs. Since the 2023–2024 academic year, the Ferré Rangel School of Communication and the School of Business have implemented systematic assessment in selected graduate programs. Direct measures include analytical essays, research reports, case analyses, presentations, and applied projects evaluated using common assessment criteria aligned with program outcomes. Curricular maps and assessment plans for the remaining graduate programs will be implemented during the 2026–2027 academic year, positioning the University to report comprehensive assessment results for all graduate programs in the next reaccreditation cycle.

Across the assessed graduate programs, results demonstrate strong student achievement of institutional competencies. Graduate program-level outcomes aligned with the Ethical Sense and Social Justice and Research and Exploration competencies consistently met or exceeded institutional benchmarks, reflecting students' ability to

apply ethical reasoning and conduct rigorous inquiry within professional contexts. Likewise, program-level outcomes aligned with the Innovation and Entrepreneurship competency also performed strongly, particularly in applied and project-based assignments requiring the development of feasible and socially relevant solutions.

Program-level outcomes aligned with Communication and Critical Thinking generally met benchmark expectations, although some variability was observed depending on the assessment task. Communication performance was strongest in applied and production-oriented assignments, while greater variation appeared in advanced academic writing requiring precision and abstraction. Similarly, Critical Thinking results were strongest in structured analytical tasks, with more variability in assignments requiring synthesis, evidence evaluation, and complex decision-making. (*S5-3-Graduate Programmatic Competencies Assessment Results, Approaches and Activities Examples*) presents detailed results, assessment approaches, and examples of student work.

Third-Party Assessment Services (Criterion 4). Sagrado retains full responsibility for designing, implementing, analyzing, interpreting, and using student learning assessments. However, institutional and program-level direct assessment is conducted through course-embedded activities and standardized rubrics in Canvas LMS, with results extracted and consolidated by the Academic Researcher into institutional-, school-, and program-level reports (*S5-4-Agreement Instructure-Canvas*).

As part of the revised Communication Core Sequence implemented in 2025–2026, Sagrado incorporated the Duolingo English Test (DET) as a standardized measure of English language proficiency aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), complementing the course-embedded assessment of the Communication competency (*S5-4-Cloud Based English Testing Licensing Agreement-Duolingo*). Students in GCM 112, GCM 102, and GCM 201 complete the remotely proctored DET at the conclusion of each course, providing CEFR proficiency levels that allow Sagrado to monitor English language development across the sequence.

Initial results showed that most students clustered at the B2 level, with proficiency increasing across the sequence toward the expected B2–C1 levels. Faculty reviewed these findings in March 2026 and identified an important distinction between the two assessment measures. While course-embedded assessment indicates that most students achieve the expected Communication learning outcomes, DET results reveal greater variability in English language proficiency. This finding underscores the value of using multiple measures and the need to strengthen triangulation, validation, and calibration across assessment evidence to improve the consistency and reliability of conclusions about student learning.

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Assessment (Criterion 5). In addition to using assessment results to improve curricula and student learning, the University regularly reviews the effectiveness of its assessment policies, procedures, activities, rubrics, and reporting processes. Faculty feedback collected throughout each assessment cycle informs revisions to institutional assessment practices.

As an example, the Student Learning Assessment Policy and the Procedure for the Assessment of Student Learning underwent two revisions during the current assessment cycle. The first, approved in 2021–2022, focused on strengthening

institutional consistency (*S5-5-Academic Board Certification of Approval of the Institutional Learning Assessment Policy 2021–2022*). During the first year of implementation, the Academic Researcher found that using four different benchmark targets across course levels limited the comparability of assessment results. In October 2023, the Academic Researcher proposed a unified institutional benchmark, which the deans unanimously endorsed and the Academic Board subsequently approved.

A second revision, approved by the Academic Board in May 2024, refined definitions, clarified assessment procedures, and formally incorporated practices that had already emerged through faculty implementation across the academic schools. The revised policy similarly strengthened documentation criteria and clarified institutional responsibilities throughout the assessment process. The updated policy and procedure are available through the University institutional portal (*S5-5-Academic Board Certification and Proposal of Changes to the Institutional Learning Assessment Policy*).

With the first four-year learning assessment cycle completed at the end of academic year 2025–2026, the Academic Researcher is conducting a comprehensive longitudinal and comparative analysis of the cycle, followed by a meta-assessment of the learning assessment system. The meta-assessment will examine assessment activities, rubrics, benchmarks, reporting processes, and policy implementation through document analysis, sampling of assessment instruments, and faculty and student focus groups. Findings from both processes will inform improvements in the quality, validity, consistency, and usefulness of student learning assessment. This meta-assessment will take into account the change in the institutional competencies framework approved in the academic year 2025–2026 and lay the foundation for maintaining longitudinal consistency in the new four year assessment cycle.

Conclusion and Recommendations. Sagrado demonstrates that student learning assessment is an institutionalized process aligned with its Mission and integrated throughout the educational experience. Institutional competencies, program learning outcomes, curricular maps, standardized rubrics, and common assessment policies provide a coherent framework for evaluating student learning across undergraduate and graduate programs. Since the formal assessment cycle under the RBK curriculum began in 2022, faculty and academic leadership have systematically reviewed assessment results and shared them with the Board of Trustees to inform curricular and pedagogical improvement and institutional planning. The first complete four-year assessment cycle concluded in academic year 2025–2026, providing the foundation for a comprehensive longitudinal and comparative analysis now underway.

Assessment findings have already informed revisions to Core Curriculum sequences, the institutional competency framework, program requirements, and opportunities for undergraduate research and high-impact professional experiences. The University has also strengthened its assessment system by adopting a common institutional benchmark, refining assessment policies and procedures, and incorporating standardized external measures, such as the Duolingo English Test, to complement course-embedded assessment. After completing the first four-year cycle, the longitudinal and comparative analysis will be followed by a comprehensive meta-assessment of the assessment system to identify further opportunities to strengthen the validity, consistency, and usefulness of assessment practices.

No major compliance concerns were identified with respect to Standard V. The Self-Study nevertheless identified the following opportunities for continued improvement:

1. Complete the implementation of systematic assessment across all graduate programs.
2. Strengthen the assessment of high-impact learning experiences, including professional practice, service-learning, community engagement, and volunteer experiences, through common assessment processes and rubrics.
3. Establish a systematic process for engaging students in reviewing and discussing aggregate assessment results to strengthen their understanding of how assessment informs continuous improvement.
4. Continue expanding post-graduation outcome measures and participation in indirect assessment instruments to provide more comprehensive evidence of educational effectiveness.
5. Enhance the capacity to disaggregate direct assessment results by student characteristics to support deeper analyses of equity and student achievement.
6. Complete the longitudinal and comparative analysis of the first four-year assessment cycle and the subsequent meta-assessment of the institutional learning assessment system, using the findings to strengthen further the validity, consistency, and usefulness of assessment practices.

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

Introduction. Sagrado aligns planning, resource allocation, and institutional assessment to advance its Mission and ensure institutional effectiveness. Throughout the Self-Study period, Sagrado faced challenging operational scenarios but strengthened the integration of strategic planning, budgeting, governance, and assessment, creating a coherent framework that links institutional priorities to decision-making and continuous improvement. As discussed in the Self-Study Introduction, during the review period, Sagrado had to face successive external challenges –Hurricane Maria (2017), earthquakes in southwestern Puerto Rico (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2023), and Hurricane Fiona (2022)–and then the sudden federal policy and financing changes in the higher education sector. This challenging context forced Sagrado to operate in a crisis-management mode during most of the review period. Sagrado has demonstrated the ability to overcome these challenges and recover to a stronger financial position. The chapter documents how, amid these challenges, Sagrado has continued to strengthen evidence-based planning processes, align financial and human resources with strategic objectives, and integrate facilities, infrastructure, and technology investments into its long-term strategic direction.

Mission-Driven Planning, Institutional Effectiveness, and Continuous Improvement (Criteria 1-3). Planning and implementation responsibilities are distributed through clearly defined governance and administrative structures. Organizational structures for the University, the Board of Trustees, the Academic Board, the Administrative Board, and the Student Council document institutional responsibilities for planning, implementation, oversight, and shared governance (*6-1-Institutional Organizational Chart; S6-1-Board of Trustees Structure; S6-1-Academic Board Structure; S6-1-Administrative Board Structure; S6-1-Student Council Chart*).

When major institutional initiatives require cross-functional coordination, Sagrado also establishes special committees to lead planning and implementation. Between 2017 and 2020, the RBK Project represented Sagrado's most significant institutional transformation initiative. Three institution-wide committees coordinated its implementation and engaged faculty, staff, and students. The Academic Architecture Committee led the redesign of the academic experience; the Student Communication and Orientation Committee coordinated institutional communication and student transition activities; and the Infrastructure, Technology, and Compliance Committee oversaw improvements to learning environments, technological capacity, and institutional assessment systems (*S1-1d-RBK Project Documentation*).

As established in Standard I, Sagrado's Mission underpins institutional planning and decision-making. Through an integrated planning framework, Sagrado translates strategic priorities into annual institutional priorities, unit objectives, assessment processes, and resource allocation, ensuring alignment between the Mission, institutional effectiveness, and continuous improvement. This framework is currently guided by the Sagrado 2030 Strategic Plan ("*Sagrado 2030*"), which establishes Sagrado's long-term priorities in five strategic goals: (A) Strengthening the Academic and Student Journey; (B) Becoming a Global University; (C) Building a Graduate and Professional Platform of Excellence; (D) Strengthening Institutional Identity and Promoting Sagrado's History, Mission and Catholic Values; and (E) Increasing Growth

and Sustainability (*S6-3-Sagrado 2030 Strategic Plan*). The development of *Sagrado 2030* further demonstrates Sagrado's inclusive planning process. Led by a Steering Committee chaired by the Provost, the process engaged faculty, staff, students, alumni, community leaders, executive leadership, and the Board of Trustees through structured consultations informed by demographic trends, the higher education landscape, results from previous strategic plans, institutional assessment findings, and a comprehensive gap analysis (*S1-1a-University President Report to the Board of Trustees on Strategic Planning Process—Sagrado 2030*).

Strategic plans are operationalized through an annual planning cycle that translates these long-term goals into measurable institutional and unit-level objectives. At the beginning of each academic year, the President establishes the annual institutional priorities that translate strategic plans into measurable goals (*S6-1-Compilation of Institutional Priorities from 2019-2020 to 2025-2026*). Academic and administrative units then develop annual Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) aligned with these priorities. Each OKR identifies expected outcomes, measurable indicators, implementation timelines, responsible personnel, and assessment measures, ensuring that unit-level planning directly supports institutional goals while providing a framework for monitoring progress (*S6-1-Crosswalk of Strategic Plans, President's Priorities and Unit/Division Objectives/Results*)²⁰.

Executive leadership monitors OKR implementation throughout the academic and fiscal year through executive leadership meetings, quarterly reports, and annual unit reports. Unit leaders document progress, identify implementation challenges, and adjust priorities as needed to improve institutional effectiveness. Sagrado's performance evaluation process operationalizes this framework by incorporating unit-level OKRs into individual performance plans. As a result, employee evaluations assess each individual's contribution to unit objectives and institutional priorities, creating a direct line of accountability from the strategic plan to individual performance. Samples of performance evaluations are available upon request.

At the beginning of each academic year, the Academic Board and the Administrative Board also receive institutional priorities to guide their work. Within their respective areas of responsibility, they review institutional data and assessment findings, evaluate proposals, recommend policy and procedure modifications when appropriate, and provide feedback on strategic initiatives and institutional priorities.

Each year, the President presents a comprehensive institutional performance report to the Board of Trustees that documents progress toward institutional goals and identifies priorities for the coming year. These reports include institutional accomplishments and key performance indicators, including undergraduate and graduate enrollment, first-time full-time retention and graduation rates, persistence, total revenues, endowment value, cohort default rates, post-graduation outcomes, student learning assessment results, student satisfaction, and sense of belonging (*S6-3-Compilation of President's Reports to the Board of Trustees on Compliance with Institutional Objectives; S6-3-Compilation of President's Reports on Financial Results and Institutional Priorities*).

²⁰ It must be pointed out that during the 2020 earthquakes in southwestern Puerto Rico and the COVID-19 pandemic, the University temporarily adopted a more agile monitoring model based on quarterly institutional priorities and weekly executive leadership meetings. This approach supported rapid decision-making while maintaining academic continuity, institutional operations, and progress on strategic initiatives.

The annual assessment of institutional goals and institutional indicators has informed decisions such as expanding student support services, revising the institutional competencies addressed by the Core Curriculum, strengthening professional learning experiences, redesigning faculty workload policies, enhancing academic advising, implementing the Student Success Journey, and establishing the priorities incorporated into *Sagrado 2030*, as discussed in Standards III and IV. To further strengthen implementation, the University is introducing the *Sagrado 2030* Tracker, an institutional dashboard that integrates implementation milestones, institutional indicators, and assessment findings, enabling executive leadership to monitor progress, identify emerging needs, and make timely, evidence-based adjustments throughout the planning cycle.

These continuous assessment processes ensure that institutional planning remains responsive to Sagrado's evolving student population. As discussed in Standard I, student demographics, together with enrollment, retention, graduation, and student success indicators, inform priorities, resource allocation, and initiatives to strengthen access, persistence, and educational outcomes. During the Self-Study period, these included integrated advising, tutoring and mentoring, federally funded support programs, bilingual education, professional learning experiences, expanded residential capacity, and the Student Success Journey, while monitoring faculty and staff capacity in relation to enrollment growth and institutional priorities. See Table 1, Table 8, and Table 9 for student and human resources data.

Financial Planning and Budget (Criterion 5). Sagrado maintains a financial planning and budgeting process that ensures that operating, personnel, technology, facilities, and capital investments directly support institutional goals.

Sagrado's budgeting process is formal, systematic, and participatory. Coordinated annually by the Office of Finance, the process follows an established calendar that includes budget planning guidelines, training for academic and administrative units, deadlines for operating and capital budget submissions, governance review, and Board of Trustees approval. Units prepare standardized operating, personnel, technology, facilities, and capital requests using a common institutional budget template. Throughout the fiscal year, the Office of Finance monitors budget-to-actual performance, prepares variance analyses, and recommends adjustments when necessary. Unit leaders remain accountable for monitoring expenditures within their approved budgets and reporting significant variances. Since FY2024, Sagrado has implemented an activity-based budgeting model (*S6-5-Budget Process*).

Sagrado documents its budgeting process through annual operating and capital budgets approved by the Board of Trustees each fiscal year. Collectively, the FY2020 through FY2026 operating and capital budgets demonstrate consistent application of Sagrado's budgeting methodology and align annual resource allocations with institutional priorities (*S6-5-Compilation of Operational and Capital Budget, from 2019–2020 to 2025–2026; S6-5-Compilation of Sample Unit Budget Requests for FY2024-2025; S6-5-Key Revenue Activity Lines 2019-2025*).

Because enrollment drives institutional revenues, the budget cycle starts with enrollment projections prepared by the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, with support from the Enrollment and Data Management units. Enrollment projections use a standardized methodology that integrates official headcount data, expected graduates, historical persistence rates, and admissions funnel

performance (*S4-1-Enrollment Projection Methodology*). The University reviews historical enrollment trend analyses and enrollment forecasts annually to validate assumptions about persistence, graduation, program growth, and new student recruitment. These analyses provide the empirical basis for revenue projections and support multi-year institutional planning (*S6-5-Summary of Data and Statistics 2024-2025*).

The President and Provost review enrollment projections before they serve as the basis for tuition revenue assumptions in the annual budget. The University monitors actual enrollment throughout the academic year and reports it regularly to executive leadership and the Board of Trustees. For the development of the Master Plan (see Criterion 10) and subsequent budget processes, Sagrado prepared program-level five-year enrollment forecasts that became the basis for multi-year financial planning and capacity analysis (*S6-5-Five-Year Enrollment Forecast 2023-2027*).

Financial planning extends beyond the annual budget through multi-year forecasting and capital planning. Sagrado prepares rolling five-year enrollment and financial forecasts that evaluate expected revenues, expenditures, operating results, and financial capacity using assumptions regarding enrollment growth, tuition, auxiliary revenues, grants, fundraising, investment income, compensation, facilities, and operating costs. These forecasts enable institutional leadership and the Board of Trustees to assess long-term financial sustainability, evaluate potential risks, and align future investments with projected institutional capacity. Capital planning follows the same strategic approach: every capital project must identify the Strategic Plan priority it supports before funding is approved. Between FY2020-2021 and FY2024-2025, Sagrado invested more than \$24.4 million in capital projects aligned with successive strategic plans, including investments supporting academic quality, financial sustainability, facilities, and institutional infrastructure (*S6-5-Five-Year Financial Forecast 2026-2031; S6-5-Capital Budget Alignment with Strategic Plans 2017-2020 and 2022-2024*).

Long-term financial planning also includes periodic evaluations of the University's financing strategy. In FY2026, the Board of Trustees commissioned an external evaluation of Sagrado's financing structure to assess debt capacity, financing alternatives, and the University's ability to support strategic investments in student housing and campus infrastructure while maintaining long-term financial sustainability. This analysis informed decisions regarding future capital financing and further demonstrates the institution's systematic assessment of financial capacity (*S6-5-Presentation to the Board of Trustees about the Financing Structure Evaluation*).

Sagrado's financial management framework is governed by a comprehensive Financial Policy that establishes responsibilities, internal controls, budgeting procedures, accounting standards, financial reporting requirements, and compliance with applicable federal and Commonwealth regulations. The Policy for the Procurement of Goods and Services further promotes responsible stewardship of institutional resources (*S6-5-Financial Policy; S3-7-Policy for the Procurement of Goods and Services*).

As part of the Self-Study review, Sagrado recognizes that developing multi-year operational budgets and expanding understanding of how strategic priorities translate into operational and capital investments will further enhance long-term planning,

facilitate more proactive decision-making, and strengthen institutional engagement and shared accountability.

Adequate Resources (Criterion 6). Sagrado maintains sufficient human resources to support academic programs, student services, and administrative operations. Human resource planning is integrated into the annual budgeting process and informed by enrollment projections, academic program needs, and institutional priorities. Throughout the Self-Study period, Sagrado has maintained a stable workforce while adapting staffing levels to support enrollment growth, new academic initiatives, and evolving institutional priorities. During the three-year COVID-19 pandemic, Sagrado retained its entire workforce and did not implement any employee furloughs; instead, it provided counseling and other support to faculty and staff who may have needed it during this difficult period. As shown in Table 8 and Table 9, human resources data reported through IPEDS document faculty and administrative staffing levels and support Sagrado's ongoing workforce planning process.

Between FY2020–2021 and FY2024–2025, Sagrado invested \$142.7 million in its Program Activities (or core educational functions) and \$85.8 million in administrative Supporting Activities: 34% of total expenditures were dedicated to instruction, 14% to student services, 11% to academic support, 3% to student financial aid, and 38% to administrative (supporting) activities. (*S1-3d-Analysis of Expenditure Across Core Areas Aligned with Institutional Priorities*).

As detailed in Standard III, and further explained in Criterion 10, Sagrado also maintains the physical and technological infrastructure necessary to support face-to-face, hybrid, and distance education, including classrooms, laboratories, libraries, student housing, instructional technologies, and digital learning platforms.

Financial Resources and Development Plans (Criterion 7). Sagrado's financial position is documented through independently audited financial statements prepared annually by the independent accounting firm Galíndez LLC in accordance with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). The FY2025 audit reports total assets of approximately \$84.0 million, total net assets of \$53.1 million, and total operating revenues exceeding \$53 million, reflecting a stable financial position and continued institutional growth. Annual Form 990 filings further document the University's revenues, expenditures, governance, and compliance as an independent nonprofit institution (*S6-7-Compilation of Audited Financial Statements, from June 30, 2021 to 2022–June 30, 2024 to 2025; S6-7-Form 990 from June 30, 2022 to June 30, 2025*). Over the past five fiscal years, Sagrado has achieved positive financial results, with net assets increasing each year by an average of approximately \$4.8 million. Total net assets grew 51% over the five years, from \$35.2 million to \$53.1 million, while bonds payable declined from \$16.7 million to \$12.7 million. The transfer of Sagrado's Defined Benefit Pension Plan in FY2025–2026 to a group annuity policy is also expected to strengthen the balance sheet further.

The institution monitors financial sustainability through a comprehensive set of ratios appropriate for independent higher education institutions. As evidenced in the Financial Resources and Ratio Analysis, Sagrado's Composite Financial Index (NACUBO CFI) reflects the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic period, declining from 3.45 in FY2021 to 2.02 and 2.17 in the two subsequent fiscal years, a period during which Sagrado received federal pandemic-related support. The subsequent recovery to a CFI of 3.80 in FY2024 and FY2025 reflects a return to a stronger, more stable financial

position that has been sustained and is less dependent on temporary relief funding. During FY2025, Sagrado reported a Primary Reserve Ratio of 40%, Net Operating Revenue Ratio of 6%, Return on Net Assets Ratio of 10%, Viability Ratio of 1.54x, Capitalization Ratio of 18%, Debt Service Coverage of 5.43x, a 6% tuition discount rate, and an instructional expense of \$144.73 per credit hour (*S6-7-Financial Resources and Ratio Analysis–2021–2022 to 2024–2025*). While some of these figures are presented to the Board of Trustees in a disaggregated manner through the audited financial statements (Single Audit reports), these indicators are being fully incorporated into regular reporting to the Board of Trustees.

External credit ratings corroborate a stable financial profile. Moody's has consistently affirmed Sagrado's Ba3 issuer rating with a stable outlook, while S&P Global Ratings has maintained a BB rating with a stable outlook. Both ratings are below investment grade, a common position for a tuition-driven institution, particularly given Puerto Rico's overall fiscal situation. The stable outlooks reflect the agencies' assessment that Sagrado's finances are prudently managed. They recognize Sagrado's stable liquidity, manageable leverage, and sound financial management. The U.S. Department of Education Financial Responsibility Composite Score for Sagrado has likewise remained stable at 3.0 for the last four fiscal years, after increasing from 2.91 in FY2021 (*S6-7-U.S. Department of Education Composite Score 2021–2025*).

In addition to tuition and fees, financial resources include federal and private grants, auxiliary enterprises, philanthropy, investment income, and endowment earnings, as documented in the audited financial statements and annual Form 990 filings. Sagrado is institutionally independent and does not rely on financial support from a parent or related entity. Policies governing the development of externally funded proposals ensure grants align with Sagrado's Mission, strategic priorities, and institutional approval processes before submission (*S6-7-Policy for the Development of Proposals with External Funds and Procedure for the Development of Proposals with External Grants*).

Long-term financial stability is further supported through prudent endowment management and philanthropy. The Endowment Fund Investment Policy establishes governance responsibilities, investment objectives, asset allocation guidelines, performance evaluation procedures, and oversight by the Finance and Investments Committee of the Board of Trustees. Complementing this framework, the Donor Restricted Endowment Fund Policy establishes procedures for classifying, investing, and administering donor-restricted funds in accordance with donor intent and applicable accounting standards. The Naming Gifts Policy further strengthens philanthropic development by establishing consistent institutional guidelines for recognizing endowed funds supported through private philanthropy (*S6-7-Endowment Fund Investment Policy; S6-7-Donor Restricted Endowment Fund Policy; S6-7-Naming Gifts Policy*).

The Board of Trustees, through its Finance and Investments Committee, oversees financial planning and develops and approves the annual operating and capital budgets, reviewing financial assumptions, investment performance, and budget proposals before recommending them to the full Board for approval.

Fiscal Responsibility and Audits (Criterion 8). The audited financial statements for the period under review by this Self-Study each received an unmodified ("clean") audit opinion, confirming that the University's financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, its financial position, operating results, and cash flows.

Each audit also includes the auditors' evaluation of significant accounting estimates, internal controls relevant to the audit, and required communications with those charged with governance.

Consistent with professional auditing standards, the external auditors provide an annual Management Letter (SAS 114 and 115) to the Audit Committee and the Board of Trustees, summarizing the audit scope, independence, significant risks, accounting policies, estimates, internal control considerations, and other matters relevant to the Committee's oversight responsibilities (*S6-8-External Auditors Management Letter (SAS 114 and 115), from June 30, 2022 to June 30, 2025*).

Sagrado maintains a formal process to monitor and address audit recommendations. The Internal Auditor, who reports directly to the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees, tracks the status of all external audit issues and periodically reports progress to the Audit Committee. During the review period, the auditors identified no material weaknesses. Observations reported as other matters in the management letters mainly relate to timeliness of direct loan reconciliations and fiscal year closing procedures, as well as the need to strengthen controls over the physical inventory of fixed assets. Management has implemented corrective actions accordingly (*S6-8-Follow-up to External Audit Issues 2021–2025*).

In May 2025, following analysis and consultation with legal, financial, and actuarial advisors, the Board of Trustees approved a pension risk transfer for the University's frozen Defined Benefit Pension Plan. Funded through a \$20.8 million transfer from the Pension Plan Fund and an additional \$2.2 million from unrestricted endowment assets, the transaction moved all remaining benefit obligations to Universal Life Insurance Company (ULICO) through the purchase of a group annuity policy, eliminating ongoing actuarial, regulatory, and administrative risks while stabilizing future cash flows. (*S6-8-Financial Statement – June 30, 2025, Note 12*).

Decision-Making Processes (Criterion 9). As described in Standards II and VII and illustrated through the institutional and governance organizational charts presented in Criterion 1, decision-making authority is distributed across the Board of Trustees, the President and the executive leadership team, the Academic Board, the Administrative Board, and academic and administrative units, ensuring appropriate oversight, coordination, and institutional effectiveness.

Shared governance is implemented through formal governance bodies that meet regularly under established bylaws and annual work plans. The Board of Trustees provides fiduciary oversight and approves major institutional policies and strategic decisions; the Academic Board recommends academic policies, new programs and revisions to curricula, learning assessment programs, and faculty matters; and the Administrative Board reviews administrative policies, budget proposals, and strategic plans. Sample agendas and meeting minutes demonstrate the regular review, discussion, deliberation, and formal decision-making within each governance body (*S6-9-Sample Meeting Agenda for Board of Trustees; S6-9-Sample Meeting Minutes for Board of Trustees; S6-9-Sample Meeting Agenda for Academic Board; S6-9-Sample Meeting Minutes for Academic Board; S6-9-Sample Meeting Agenda for Administrative Board; S6-9-Sample Meeting Minutes for Administrative Board*).

Decision-making also incorporates faculty participation through regular meetings with full-time faculty, which provide opportunities to discuss academic initiatives,

assessment results, curricular revisions, and institutional priorities before implementation (*S6-9-Sample Minutes Full-Time Faculty*).

Facilities, Infrastructure, and Technology Planning (Criterion 10).

Within the emergency management context of the Self-Study period, Sagrado has made a sustained effort to maintain a facilities, infrastructure, and technology planning process that addresses immediate operational needs while advancing Sagrado's long-term strategic vision, always in alignment with its Mission. The Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration oversees these functions, supported by the Academic Operations unit within Academic and Student Affairs. Both organizational structures resulted from institutional assessment processes that identified the need for stronger coordination among academic planning, enrollment management, budgeting, capital planning, and facilities management, thereby enhancing institutional effectiveness. Regular reports are presented to the Physical Infrastructure and Technology Committee of the Board of Trustees to inform the Committee of progress or to seek approval for capital projects and major technology and facilities operations implementations.

Sagrado's 34-acre urban campus includes academic buildings, laboratories, libraries, student support facilities, administrative offices, student residences, athletic facilities, and community participation spaces that support all instructional modalities. Institutional assets are documented through the University's property inventory, campus map, and lease portfolio (*S6-10-List of University Properties; S6-10-Campus Map; S6-10-List of Leases*).

Sagrado's facilities planning has supported the continued modernization of learning environments across all academic schools. Since 2020, Sagrado has renovated classrooms to support collaborative and active learning; expanded specialized laboratories, studios, simulation environments, and performance spaces; strengthened library and learning commons facilities; established the Pedagogical Innovation Unit and a centralized Academic Advising and Career Counseling Center; enhanced residential facilities; and developed or upgraded the headquarters for four of its academic schools. Recent investments have also improved specialized facilities, including the Experimental Theater, the Chemistry Laboratory, Music Rooms, the Center for Academic Research, and graduate education facilities. After returning to campus following the COVID-19 pandemic, Sagrado also invested in expanding and enhancing green spaces as areas for student gathering and community engagement. These institutional investments were later strengthened in 2025 through the *Sagrado Urban Forest* project, funded by the Hispanic Access Foundation, which supports campus sustainability, expands tree canopy, and integrates experiential learning and environmental stewardship into the University's physical development.

These investments have expanded Sagrado's capacity to support experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, research, student success, and community engagement across all instructional modalities. Technology infrastructure has likewise been strengthened through major investments in broadband capacity, learning technologies, cybersecurity, enterprise systems, and classroom audiovisual equipment, including a \$3 million Broadband Grant awarded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to expand digital connectivity on campus and in the surrounding Santurce community (*S6-10-Compilation of Physical Infrastructure Reports from 2021-2025*).

Long-term physical development is informed by the most recent Campus Master Plan, which establishes a long-term vision for campus renewal, resilience, sustainability, mobility, and academic development (*S6-10-Presentation to the Board of Trustees about the Campus Master Plan Process by Marvel*; *S6-10-Presentation to the Board of Trustees about the Resilient and Green Campus Master Plan by Marvel*). The Master Plan design included several capacity analysis exercises, growth projections, and community consultations. Marvel Designs led this process. This is the same firm that prepared Sagrado's previous Master Plan in the 1990s. The project ran from 2022 to 2024 and culminated in a presentation to the Board of Trustees, which approved the plan. The plan accounted for the fact that many of Sagrado's buildings and structures were built decades ago—the University has been in its current location since 1906—and that some of the oldest buildings are national historical landmarks. The plan thus includes upgrades to physical and systems infrastructure, as well as plans for future campus development in anticipation of *Sagrado 2030*. So far, most of the work has focused on the underlying infrastructure and systems. A presentation of the Campus Master Plan's future vision to the community is forthcoming.

During the Self-Study period, Sagrado had to respond to the immediate needs from the impacts of Hurricane Maria (2017), the earthquakes in southwestern Puerto Rico (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2023), and Hurricane Fiona (2022), relying mostly on federal recovery funds, grants, and other funding opportunities as they became available. Capital investments were defined and prioritized annually based on pressing institutional needs, the available resources, and regulatory requirements. All of these efforts followed the guiding vision that informed and was later reflected in the Master Plan. An annual approach to capital improvements has also guided Sagrado's management of maintenance needs, including deferred maintenance. Every annual operational and capital budget includes funding for maintenance upgrades and projects (*S6-10-Compilation of Capital Budgets, 2021–2025*). Institutional planning has begun incorporating infrastructure and maintenance upgrades to be funded through FEMA Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation grants approved after Hurricane Maria. Still, implementation began only in 2026, nine years after the hurricane. These upgrades include window replacements, roof sealing, pavement improvements, and structural improvements to select campus buildings.

This capital planning is integrated with Sagrado's budgeting and financial planning processes. Annual capital budgets document investments in facilities, infrastructure, technology, deferred maintenance, and strategic projects throughout the Self-Study period. After overcoming the impact of the pandemic, Sagrado has developed longer-term planning horizons and adopted a rolling Five-Year Capital Plan and a Five-Year Financial Forecast to guide its budget processes and the definition of multi-year priorities for capital improvements, and thus ensure that infrastructure investments remain in line with institutional capacity and programmatic priorities (*S6-10-Five-Year Capital Plan*; *S6-5-Five-Year Financial Forecast 2026–2031*).

Sagrado's Information Technology Master Plan guides technology planning and sets priorities for infrastructure modernization, cybersecurity, enterprise systems, business intelligence, digital transformation, and instructional technologies (*S6-10-Information Technology Master Plan 2023-2028*). Implementation is also monitored through periodic technology reports presented to the Physical Infrastructure and Technology Committee of the Board of Trustees, documenting progress on network

modernization, ERP implementation, cybersecurity, CRM deployment, Smart Campus initiatives, Data Warehouse development, and instructional technology improvements (*S6-10-Compilation of Technology Reports, 2021-2025; S6-10-Evaluation and Recommendation for Integrated Infrastructure and Technology New Model June 8, 2021*). Sagrado's IT Device Refresh Plan further establishes systematic replacement cycles for computers, servers, classroom technology, and other institutional equipment, ensuring technology resources remain current and aligned with instructional and operational needs (*S6-10-IT Device Refresh Plan 2025-2029*).

Systematic space-utilization analyses also inform facilities planning. Academic Operations periodically evaluates classroom occupancy, laboratory capacity, scheduling efficiency, and specialized instructional spaces to optimize institutional facilities use and support enrollment growth. These analyses have informed scheduling adjustments, expanded use of alternative instructional modalities, and planning for programs with specialized infrastructure needs, including Nursing and Fashion Design (*S6-10-Space Utilization Analysis 2025-2026*).

Sustainability and resilience are integrated throughout facilities and technology planning. Capital investments incorporate energy-efficient equipment, building automation systems, broadband expansion, technology modernization, and infrastructure renovations that strengthen business continuity and sustainable stewardship. These priorities also appear in the Campus Master Plan and Sagrado's technology planning initiatives, reinforcing Sagrado's commitment to a strong, sustainable campus (*S1-4-Carnegie Sustainability Application Decision*).

As a lessee, Sagrado leases facilities that expand institutional capacity for academic and student life activities, including the Centro Danza Enterarte dance studios for instructional use, residential facilities for Nursing students, overflow parking for students and staff, and tennis courts and soccer practice facilities for sports teams (*S6-10-Sample of Lease Contracts –Sagrado as a lessee–*). As a lessor, Sagrado also manages leased institutional facilities that advance its educational Mission, strengthen community partnerships, and optimize the use of campus assets. These include classroom and administrative facilities leased to Leap Social Enterprise for a pre-college program and Espacio-A for a K-12 alternative school, office space leased to the Boys and Girls Club of Puerto Rico, and athletic facilities leased to diverse sports clubs (*S6-10-Sample of Lease Contracts –Sagrado as a lessor–*).

Sagrado also contracts selected third-party providers for key business functions while retaining institutional oversight and responsibility for service quality, including Business Intelligence for IT operations, Fazaa Food Services for dining, Antilles Cleaning and CBM Capital Building Maintenance for campus and residence maintenance, St. James for security and paramedic services, Jenzabar for the student information system (SIS), and the National Student Clearinghouse for educational data exchange (*S6-10-Sample Third Party Provider Contracts*).

Institutional facilities, operations, and technology are further protected via comprehensive commercial and special-lines insurance programs that are reviewed and renewed annually, and approved by the Finance and Investments Committee of the Board of Trustees. Coverage includes commercial property, business interruption, general liability, crime, equipment breakdown, cyber liability, professional liability, directors and officers liability, fiduciary liability, employment practices liability, and other specialized coverages appropriate for higher education operations.

(S6-10-Compilation of Insurance Program Summary for Commercial and Special Lines, from 2022-2023 to 2026-2027).

Despite significant operational challenges throughout the review period, Sagrado continued to modernize and expand its physical infrastructure to support its Mission, strategic priorities, and sustained enrollment growth. The Self-Study also identified opportunities to further strengthen institutional capacity by improving communication regarding major capital projects; expanding the use of integrated dashboards to support infrastructure, technology, space, and deferred maintenance planning; further integrating business continuity into institutional planning; strengthening long-term facilities condition assessment; and continuing to advance sustainability initiatives aligned with the Campus Master Plan and *Sagrado 2030*.

Compliance with Title IV and Other Regulations (Criterion 11). Sagrado fully complies with its responsibilities under Title IV of the Higher Education Act and applicable federal and Commonwealth of Puerto Rico regulations through established policies, regular monitoring, required reporting, and successful completion of federal and state compliance reviews. As described in Standards II and IV, Sagrado maintains comprehensive policies governing financial aid administration, satisfactory academic progress, student identity verification for distance education, and required consumer disclosures.

Sagrado's continued eligibility to participate in Title IV programs is documented in its Statement of Accreditation Status (*S6-11-Statement of Accreditation Status*), which confirms that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education reaffirmed its accreditation in 2019 and that the next Self-Study Evaluation is scheduled for 2026–2027. Institutional eligibility is further evidenced by the current Program Participation Agreement (*S6-11-Program Participation Agreement*), effective through December 31, 2027, and the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (*S6-11-Eligibility and Certification Approval Report*), which confirms Sagrado's status as a private, nonprofit institution authorized to participate in Pell Grants, Federal Work-Study, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and the Federal Direct Loan Program. As a nonprofit institution, Sagrado is not subject to the federal 90/10 revenue requirement applicable to proprietary institutions.

Sagrado systematically monitors the federal indicators used to assess institutional financial responsibility and administrative capability. Official student loan cohort default rates also remain exceptionally low, with rates of 0.1% (FY2020), 0.0% (FY2021), and 0.0% (FY2022), while the FY2023 rate of 0.4% remains in draft status (*S6-11-Student Loan Cohort Rate, from FY2020 to FY2023; S4-1a Summary and Compilation of Loan Student Cohort Rate Status 2020-2023*). Throughout the Self-Study period, Sagrado was not placed under Heightened Cash Monitoring (HCM) and remained fully eligible to participate in Title IV programs without restrictions.

Federal oversight further demonstrates sustained compliance. The University's Program Review Determination (*S6-11-Program Review Determination*) concluded that all findings had been satisfactorily resolved, that appropriate corrective actions had been implemented, and that no further action was required. Likewise, the Single Audits for fiscal years 2022 to 2025 reported no findings or questioned costs related to federal financial assistance programs, demonstrating effective internal controls and compliance with Uniform Guidance requirements.

Compliance with Commonwealth of Puerto Rico regulations is similarly documented through annual filings and independent oversight. Sagrado submits its Annual Corporation Reports to the Puerto Rico Department of State (*S6-11-Annual Corporation Reports to PR Department of State, from 2022 to 2025*) and required nonprofit tax filings through Puerto Rico Form 480.70 (*S6-11-Puerto Rico Tax Form 480.70, from 2022 to 2025*). In addition, independent audits conducted for the Puerto Rico Board of Postsecondary Institutions (*S6-11-Independent Auditors' Reports to PR Board of Postsecondary Institutions 2022–2025*) reported unmodified opinions with no audit findings, questioned costs, or sanctions related to the administration of state student financial aid programs. Sagrado also maintains a current Use Permit (*S6-11-Use Permit by PR Permit Management Office OGP AY2022–2023 to 2026–2027*) authorizing the operation of its classrooms, laboratories, administrative offices, library, student residences, student center, theater, and other campus facilities.

Periodic Assessment (Criteria 12-13). Sagrado evaluates resource adequacy and utilization continuously through annual budget development, quarterly financial monitoring, enrollment projections, institutional effectiveness indicators, and capital planning processes. Throughout the fiscal year, actual revenues and expenditures are compared with budget projections, enabling institutional leadership to identify variances, adjust expenditures as necessary, and assess whether available resources continue to support Sagrado's Mission and strategic objectives.

The institution monitors performance through a combination of Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) and institutional indicators measuring enrollment, retention, graduation, financial performance, fundraising, and operational effectiveness. The President, the Provost, and the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration review these results regularly, ensuring findings directly inform planning and resource allocation decisions.

Assessment and planning are further strengthened by engaging external expertise when specialized analyses are required. During the Self-Study period, Sagrado engaged Marvel Designs to develop a resilient and sustainable long-term Campus Master Plan, providing the Board with planning scenarios for future campus development and infrastructure renewal. This Master Plan provides the long-term vision of campus development.

Similarly, Sagrado regularly engages independent experts to strengthen financial stewardship and long-term sustainability. External advisors have supported evaluations of investment management services, endowment and retirement fund performance, financing alternatives, accounting practices, audit readiness, and enterprise technology planning (*S6-12-Presentation to the Board of Trustees about the Evaluation of Proposals for Advisory and Investment Management Services; S6-12-Presentation to the Board of Trustees by MPC Capital Group for the Savings Plan Fund; S6-12-Finance, Accounting and Audit Consulting Services*). These consultant reports provide independent analyses that inform Board deliberations, improve institutional decision-making, and strengthen Sagrado's planning and resource allocation processes.

The Board of Trustees plays a central role in assessing institutional effectiveness and resource utilization. Annual reports of the Board, Finance and Investments Committee, and Physical Infrastructure and Technology Committee document recurring reviews of operating and capital budgets, investment performance, endowment management, debt financing, insurance coverage, infrastructure priorities, technology

investments, campus safety, and major capital projects before recommendations are approved or forwarded for Board action (*S6-13-Annual Report of Actions Taken by the Board 2023–2024*; *S6-13-Annual Report of Actions Taken by the Board 2024–2025*; *S6-13-Annual Report of Actions Taken by the Finance and Investments Committee 2023–2024*; *S6-13-Annual Report of Actions Taken by the Finance and Investments Committee 2024–2025*; *S6-13-Annual Report of Actions Taken by the Physical Infrastructure and Technology Committee 2023–2024*; *S6-13-Annual Report of Actions Taken by the Physical Infrastructure and Technology Committee 2024–2025*). These discussions demonstrate that governing bodies routinely evaluate institutional evidence before authorizing significant financial commitments, capital expenditures, financing strategies, technology investments, and institutional priorities.

During Board and committee deliberations throughout the Self-Study period, trustees reviewed the progress of strategic initiatives, monitored implementation of approved projects, assessed investment performance, evaluated financing alternatives for student housing and capital improvements, considered technology modernization priorities, reviewed infrastructure recovery efforts, and refined governance and financial policies in response to changing institutional conditions. These discussions show that planning is an iterative process of evaluation, implementation, and refinement.

Overall, Sagrado demonstrates an institutional planning process characterized by strong alignment between strategic priorities, assessment, budgeting, and governance oversight. Institutional strengths include active Board engagement in reviewing institutional performance; effective use of external expertise to support specialized planning and investment decisions; and regular evaluation of infrastructure, technology, financial, and operational priorities. Nonetheless, Sagrado is committed to strengthening this process by implementing integrated institutional dashboards, enhancing business continuity planning, and broadening communication of planning assumptions and resource allocation decisions across the University community.

Conclusion and Recommendations. Sagrado demonstrates that planning, resource allocation, and institutional assessment are integrated into a comprehensive institutional effectiveness framework aligned with its Mission and strategic plans. The institution translates priorities into annual Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), supported by systematic assessment processes and linked to budgeting, governance, and resource allocation. The University regularly reviews institutional performance through key performance indicators, annual institutional reports, and governance processes involving executive leadership and the Board of Trustees, ensuring planning remains evidence-based and focused on continuous improvement.

This chapter also demonstrates Sagrado's capacity to align financial, human, physical, and technological resources with institutional priorities while maintaining responsible fiscal stewardship and long-term sustainability. Throughout the Self-Study period, Sagrado strengthened its financial planning processes, modernized academic and student facilities, expanded technology infrastructure, enhanced organizational structures supporting institutional effectiveness, and successfully balanced long-term strategic priorities with the operational challenges resulting from successive emergencies, including hurricanes, earthquakes, the COVID-19 pandemic, and changes in federal higher education policies and funding priorities. These efforts have enabled Sagrado to continue advancing its Mission while responding to evolving institutional needs and supporting post-emergency enrollment growth.

No major compliance concerns were identified regarding Standard VI. The Self-Study nevertheless identified the following opportunities for continued improvement:

1. Continue strengthening long-term financial planning by implementing rolling multi-year operational budget projections.
2. Expand the integration of institutional data systems by developing dashboards that support monitoring of infrastructure performance, technology utilization, space utilization, deferred maintenance, and operational efficiency.
3. Continue strengthening communication on institutional priorities, resource allocation decisions, and major capital projects to enhance transparency and shared governance further.
4. Further integrate business continuity and institutional resilience into planning processes, building on lessons learned from successive operational emergencies throughout the Self-Study period.
5. Continue advancing sustainability initiatives related to energy efficiency, environmental stewardship, and resilient campus infrastructure, aligned with the Campus Master Plan and *Sagrado 2030*.

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Introduction. Governance and leadership at Sagrado provide clearly defined authority, accountability, and organizational capacity to advance the University's Mission and strategic priorities. The governance model differentiates the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees, the Academic Board, the Administrative Board, and the President while promoting shared governance through the participation of faculty, administrators, staff, and students. Supported by an independent, engaged governing board, qualified executive leadership, and an effective administrative organization, Sagrado maintains the structures and processes needed to support academic quality, financial sustainability, strategic decision-making, and continuous institutional improvement. This chapter demonstrates the effectiveness of these structures through clearly defined reporting relationships and systematic assessment of governance, leadership, and administrative effectiveness.

Governance Structure (Criterion 1). Sagrado maintains a governance structure that clearly defines authority, accountability, and shared responsibility for institutional decision-making. As an independent, nonprofit Catholic institution incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1943, Sagrado operates under a governance framework that distinguishes governing, advisory, and executive responsibilities while ensuring broad participation by faculty, administrators, staff, and students in matters appropriate to their respective roles. Sagrado remains in good legal standing as a nonprofit corporation and complies with all corporate filing requirements established by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (*S1-1a-University Bylaws; S7-1-University Articles of Incorporation; S7-1-Certificate of Good Standing*).

Sagrado's governance structure is organized around three complementary bodies: the Board of Trustees, the Academic Board, and the Administrative Board.

The Board of Trustees serves as Sagrado's legally constituted governing body and exercises ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the institution. It establishes institutional policy, approves the Strategic Plan, annual operating and capital budgets, new academic programs, major institutional investments, and other strategic initiatives, and appoints and evaluates the President. In fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities, the Board oversees institutional strategy, financial sustainability, academic quality, legal compliance, risk management, technology, facilities, and student success through a clearly defined committee structure consisting of the Executive; Academic Affairs and Honorary Degrees; Audit; Development and University Relations; Finance and Investments; Institutional Governance; Physical Infrastructure and Technology; and Student Affairs and Enrollment Committees (*S6-1-Board of Trustees Structure*).

Shared governance is exercised primarily through the Academic Board and the Administrative Board, ensuring meaningful participation by faculty, administrators, and students in institutional decision-making. The Academic Board serves as Sagrado's official policy and advisory body for academic affairs. Membership includes ex officio administrators, elected full-time faculty representatives from each academic unit and the faculty at large, and elected student representatives from every academic school, in addition to the President of the Student Council. Amendments approved in May 2025 expanded faculty eligibility to serve as delegates, strengthening representative participation and reinforcing Sagrado's commitment to inclusive academic governance. Academic Board delegates are elected through formal institutional elections governed by

the Board's Bylaws, serve defined terms, report regularly to their constituencies, and participate through standing committees and plenary meetings held at least twice each semester (*S7-1-Academic Board Bylaws; S7-1-Academic Board Rules and Procedures*).

The Administrative Board complements this governance structure by advising on institutional planning, financial management, administrative policies, operational effectiveness, and institutional initiatives. It comprises senior institutional administrators serving ex officio, including the President and executive officers responsible for finance, academic affairs, student affairs, organizational development, institutional planning and research, and development, along with representatives elected by the faculty, administrative personnel, and the Student Council. Faculty and staff representatives are selected through an open institutional call for nominations followed by electronic voting, ensuring broad participation and representative governance across Sagrado's principal constituencies in institutional planning and administrative decision-making (*S7-1-Administrative Board Regulations*).

Faculty participation extends beyond formal governance bodies through school meetings, full-time faculty meetings (*Claustro*), and standing institutional committees that provide opportunities to discuss academic policies, assessment results, strategic planning initiatives, accreditation, and institutional effectiveness. These multiple avenues of participation reinforce Sagrado's shared governance model by ensuring that faculty contribute to institutional planning and academic decision-making beyond their elected representation on the Academic Board.

Student participation is similarly embedded throughout Sagrado's governance framework. The President of the Student Council serves as an ex officio member of the Academic and the Administrative Boards. At the same time, each academic school elects one student representative to participate in Academic Board deliberations. Beyond formal representation on institutional governance bodies, the Guide for Student Organizations establishes the Student Council, the Residential Council, and recognized student organizations as formal mechanisms for students to represent their peers, communicate with faculty and institutional leadership, participate in policy discussions, and contribute to campus life. The Guide defines eligibility requirements, election procedures, elected officers' responsibilities, reporting obligations, annual planning requirements, and oversight by the Dean of Students, ensuring student organizations operate within a transparent governance framework while promoting responsible student leadership (*S2-2-Student Organizations Guide; S7-1-Sample Regulations for Student Organizations*).

Sagrado's President presides over both boards and oversees overall institutional administration and implementation. Institutional administration is organized into three integrated divisions aligned with the Sagrado 2030 Strategic Plan ("*Sagrado 2030*"): Academic and Student Affairs, led by the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs; Finance and Administration, led by the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration; and Institutional Support, whose units report directly to the President. This organizational structure establishes clear reporting relationships, delineates executive responsibilities across the University, and promotes coordinated implementation of institutional priorities while maintaining appropriate accountability (*S6-1-Institutional Organizational Chart*).

Board of Trustees (Criterion 2). The Board of Trustees is Sagrado's legally constituted governing body and exercises ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the

University fulfills its Mission, pursues academic excellence, maintains its financial sustainability, and serves the public interest. As established in the Board's bylaws and committee regulations, the Board provides policy-level oversight of institutional planning, academic quality, fiscal management, institutional risk, and long-term sustainability while delegating responsibility for the University's day-to-day operations to the President and executive leadership. The Board of Trustees is chaired by Samuel Céspedes Sabater, Esq., a capital partner of McConnell Valdés, one of Puerto Rico's leading law firms. He has served as a trustee since 2017 and as Chair since 2024.

The Board comprises 22 trustees whose collective expertise reflects Sagrado's commitment to diverse perspectives and independent governance. Current trustees represent higher education, law, finance, accounting, business, technology, philanthropy, nonprofit leadership, architecture, communications, health, and the arts, as well as representatives of the Religious of the Sacred Heart and the Archdiocese of San Juan, providing a broad range of professional experience relevant to Sagrado's Mission and strategic priorities (*S7-2-Board of Trustees*).

Trustees are selected through a structured nomination and election process designed to ensure integrity, independence, diversity of expertise, and commitment to Sagrado's Mission. The Institutional Governance Committee evaluates prospective trustees using formally approved selection criteria that emphasize ethical leadership, fiduciary responsibility, the absence of any conflicting personal or financial interests, a commitment to higher education, and complementary professional competencies. The Board periodically reviews the desired profile of its membership to maintain an appropriate balance of expertise in areas such as academic affairs, finance, law, business, philanthropy, technology, facilities, organizational development, and healthcare (*S7-2b-Criteria and Profile of the Members of the Board of Trustees; S7-2-Sample Ballot Reelection and Election of Trustees of the Board*).

The Board conducts its work through eight standing committees—Executive; Academic Affairs and Honorary Degrees; Audit; Student Affairs and Enrollment; Finance and Investments; Development and University Relations; Physical Infrastructure and Technology; and Institutional Governance—each operating under formally approved procedures, annual work calendars, and committee regulations. Committee recommendations are presented to the full Board for consideration and approval, ensuring systematic review of institutional priorities before the Board adopts major policy decisions (*S7-2a-Procedures Manual for the Standing Committees of the Board of Trustees*).

The Board meets regularly throughout the academic year, with committee meetings preceding Board meetings to facilitate informed deliberation and policy development. Board agendas, committee reports, and meeting minutes document active oversight of institutional planning, approval of strategic initiatives, review of institutional objectives, authorization of new academic programs, approval of major institutional policies, review of audited financial statements, capital investments, compliance matters, and other issues central to the University's governance responsibilities (*S7-2-Sample Meeting Agenda for Board of Trustees; S7-2-Sample Meeting Minutes for Board of Trustees; S7-2-Annual Report of Actions Taken by the Board 2023–2024; S7-2-Annual Report of Actions Taken by the Board 2024–2025*).

Consistent with MSCHE expectations, the Board exercises oversight rather than administrative authority. Institutional operations are delegated to the President, who

serves as the University's Chief Executive Officer and is responsible for implementing Board-approved policies and strategic priorities. The Board appoints the President, conducts regular performance evaluations through the Executive and Institutional Governance Committees, establishes presidential objectives, and reviews the President's annual performance while supporting the President's authority to manage the institution independently.

The Board also exercises policy-level oversight of academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Through the Academic Affairs and Honorary Degrees Committee, trustees review proposals for new academic programs and receive reports on student learning assessment, enrollment trends, market analyses, institutional assessment, accreditation, and other indicators of educational quality before forwarding recommendations to the Board for action. Committee reports further demonstrate the Board's review of the fulfillment of the institutional Mission and major academic initiatives, reinforcing its responsibility for safeguarding academic quality (*S7-2d-Sample of Annual Reports of Actions Taken and Matters Discussed*).

The Finance and Investments Committee and the Audit Committee exercise financial stewardship. The Board reviews annual audited financial statements, investment reports, budget performance, cash flow analyses, federal compliance audits, pension and savings plan audits, IRS filings, and recommendations related to institutional risk management before taking formal Board action. Committee reports demonstrate systematic oversight of fiscal integrity and long-term financial sustainability (*S7-2e-Sample of Annual Report on Actions Taken—Finance and Audit Committee*).

To preserve impartiality and public trust, Sagrado maintains a comprehensive Conflict of Interest Procedure applicable to trustees, executive officers, faculty, staff, contractors, vendors, and other institutional representatives. Trustees complete annual conflict-of-interest disclosure forms and must disclose any actual, potential, or perceived financial, employment, contractual, or family conflicts. Individuals with a conflict must recuse themselves from deliberations and decisions involving the affected matter. The procedure establishes formal review and reporting mechanisms to ensure that Board decisions remain independent and free from undue influence (*S2-4-Procedure for the Disclosure of a Conflict of Interest; S2-4-Sample Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form*).

The Board further demonstrates its commitment to continuous improvement through periodic self-evaluation. Guided by the Institutional Governance Committee, trustees assess Board performance across multiple dimensions, including Mission stewardship, strategic planning, financial oversight, Board composition, committee effectiveness, relationships with the President, and engagement with institutional stakeholders. Evaluation results identify strengths and areas for improvement and generate specific recommendations that inform subsequent governance practices, committee work, and Board development (*S7-2-Board of Trustees Self-Evaluation Results and Recommendations December 17, 2024*).

University President (Criterion 3). The President serves as the University's Chief Executive Officer and is appointed by, reports directly to, and is evaluated by the Board of Trustees. The President can attend the Board's meetings, ensuring effective communication between governance and administration while preserving the Board's independence.

President Gilberto J. Marxuach-Torrós, Esq., possesses credentials and professional experience aligned with Sagrado's Mission and institutional priorities. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies, *summa cum laude*, from the University of Notre Dame and a Juris Doctor from Yale Law School. Before assuming the presidency, he developed an interdisciplinary career spanning private legal practice, public service—including service as Chief Legal Counsel to the Governor of Puerto Rico—and executive leadership in higher education and nonprofit organizations (*S7-3b-President's Curriculum Vitae*). He joined Sagrado in August 2014. Under his leadership, Sagrado has successfully navigated recovery from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other institutional challenges, implemented the RBK Project academic transformation, and adopted *Sagrado 2030*.

The President has the authority and autonomy necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of the position. Working within policies established by the Board, he leads institutional planning, recommends strategic priorities, allocates institutional resources, appoints and supervises senior administrators, and directs the implementation of Board-approved policies and institutional initiatives. A qualified executive leadership team—including the Executive Vice Presidents and chief area officers—supports him and oversees academic affairs, finance, operations, student affairs, enrollment, legal affairs, and institutional advancement. Through regular meetings and established governance processes, the President coordinates institutional planning, monitors organizational effectiveness, and ensures progress toward Sagrado's Mission and strategic goals.

The President maintains regular communication with the Board of Trustees through written reports, committee meetings, and quarterly Board meetings. He also communicates routinely with faculty, staff, and students through institutional forums and shared governance structures, promoting transparency, collaboration, and institutional alignment.

The Board of Trustees evaluates the President through a formal policy based on nationally recognized governance practices recommended by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). The Presidential Evaluation Policy establishes both annual and comprehensive periodic evaluations led by the Institutional Governance Committee and approved by the Board. The evaluation process includes the President's self-assessment; a review of institutional performance and strategic objectives; and assessments of academic quality, financial sustainability, stakeholder relationships, leadership effectiveness, and progress toward the Strategic Plan. At certain junctures, the institution conducts a 360-degree evaluation to incorporate feedback from multiple institutional constituencies (*S7-3a-Presidential Evaluation Policy*). The Board completed the President's most recent annual evaluation during the 2024–2025 academic year. The report is available upon request.

To ensure continuity of leadership, the Board of Trustees has adopted a delegation-of-authority policy. Through a Corporate Resolution, the Board authorizes the President, in the event of a temporary absence or inability to discharge all or part of the responsibilities of the office, to delegate specific responsibilities, authorities, and powers to members of the President's Executive Committee, including the Provost and other senior officers. If the President cannot make such a delegation, the Board retains the authority to assign these responsibilities to ensure uninterrupted institutional leadership and operations. This succession framework supports institutional continuity

while preserving the Board's oversight responsibilities (*S7-3d-Corporate Resolution on Delegation of Authority and Leadership Succession*).

An Effective Administrative Organization (Criterion 4). Sagrado maintains an administrative organization that is appropriately structured, staffed, and resourced to support the President in advancing Sagrado's Mission and strategic priorities. As described in Criterion 1, the University's organizational structure clearly defines reporting relationships, functional responsibilities, and lines of authority through formally approved organizational charts and governance documents, ensuring accountability, transparency, and coordinated institutional management (*S6-1-Institutional Organizational Chart*).

Institutional leadership is organized into three integrated divisions aligned with *Sagrado 2030*: Academic and Student Affairs, Finance and Administration, and Institutional Support. This structure enables coordinated planning across academic, financial, operational, enrollment, technology, and student affairs while maintaining clear administrative accountability. Since 2022, Sagrado has refined its administrative organization to respond to enrollment growth, increased regulatory requirements, infrastructure expansion, and long-term financial sustainability. One of the most significant changes was the 2025 restructuring that integrated Finance and Operations under the leadership of an Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, and Student Affairs with Academic Affairs under the leadership of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. Previously, two important steps were the creation of the Office of Compliance, Audit, and Institutional Integrity, and the establishment of the Strategic Business Initiatives Unit to strengthen institutional sustainability through business and commercial ventures.

Within Academic Affairs, administrative capacity has similarly expanded to support institutional transformation. Academic Directors were redesignated as Deans, clarifying leadership authority within each school, while four Assistant Vice Presidents were appointed to lead Academic Operations, Academic Research and Grants, Curriculum Development, and Graduate Studies, respectively.

Sagrado's leadership team possesses the experience, credentials, and functional expertise necessary to support the Chief Executive Officer in fulfilling institutional responsibilities (*S7-4-Institutional Leadership Curriculum Vitae*). Executive leaders represent diverse professional backgrounds in higher education, finance, law, accounting, engineering, information technology, communications, organizational development, research, student affairs, enrollment management, and academic leadership. Collectively, they provide the knowledge and administrative capacity required to oversee academic quality, fiscal stewardship, regulatory compliance, enrollment management, institutional advancement, technology, facilities, and student success. Each executive position is full-time, supported by qualified professional staff, and assigned clearly defined responsibilities consistent with institutional priorities (*S7-4-Administrative Capacity of Leadership Team*).

Executive leadership coordinates institutional priorities through continuous communication. An Administrative Committee regularly reviews capital projects, information technology initiatives, operational improvements, and institutional infrastructure, and assigns follow-up actions across responsible units (*S7-4-Sample of Minutes for the Administrative Committee*). The Strategic Enrollment Committee convenes as needed to closely monitor enrollment processes that require

interdepartmental coordination (*S7-4-Sample of Minutes for the Strategic Enrollment Committee*). Moreover, the Provost and the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration hold weekly meetings with the President to advance strategic projects and discuss progress on enrollment management, infrastructure, technology, assessment results, and resource allocation. Administrative leaders regularly engage with faculty and students through direct services or campus events. Executive officers participate in the Academic Board, Administrative Board, the full-time faculty meetings (*Claustro*), and planning sessions as needed. Faculty and administrative staff serve on the Administrative Board.

Sagrado systematically evaluates the effectiveness of its administrative personnel, including the leadership team, through the Performance Evaluation Process administered by the Office of Organizational Development and Human Resources. Supervisors and employees establish annual performance objectives aligned with institutional priorities using the ADP performance management platform, receive training on performance documentation and effective evaluation practices, and are assessed using standardized institutional competencies, including service excellence, productivity, teamwork, and communication. Institutional leaders are also subject to this process; evaluation reports are available upon request (*S7-4f-Performance Evaluation System for Exempt Employees 2022-2023; S7-4f-Performance Management Systems Supervisors 2024-2025; S7-4f-Performance Management Steps to Create Objectives; S7-4f-Competencies and Their Definitions: Exempt and Non-Exempt Employees*). These evaluations support continuous professional development, reinforce accountability, and generate assessment data that inform administrative improvement. Feedback from supervisors and employees has also identified opportunities to streamline the Performance Evaluation Process and to strengthen the alignment between performance outcomes and the University compensation and recognition practices.

Institutional integrity is further reinforced through conflict-of-interest disclosure procedures applicable to employees involved in hiring, contracting, procurement, and institutional decision-making. The Conflict of Interest Certification requires disclosure of financial, contractual, employment, and family relationships that could affect institutional impartiality and establishes procedures for recusal whenever potential conflicts arise (*S2-4-Procedure for the Disclosure of a Conflict of Interest*).

Periodic Assessment (Criterion 5). Sagrado uses multiple mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration, including Board self-assessment, presidential and institutional leadership evaluations, employee performance evaluation, and institutional surveys. The 2025 Institutional Climate Study provides a comprehensive assessment of organizational effectiveness from the employee perspective, examining leadership, communication, collaboration, professional development, engagement, and organizational culture (*S2-2-Institutional Climate Study*). Results show a generally positive organizational climate: 82% of respondents reported overall satisfaction with the University, 82% reported overall satisfaction with the University, 79% reported satisfaction with their work units, 97% reported confidence in the quality of their work, and 92% agreed that their units contribute to Sagrado's strategic objectives.

The study also identified opportunities to strengthen cross-unit communication, participation in decision-making, professional development and recognition, and

physical and technological infrastructure. Differences between supervisors' self-assessments and employee perceptions provided additional insights into feedback, collaboration, and communication. These findings inform the priorities of the Office of Organizational Development and Human Resources beginning in 2026–2027.

Sagrado also engages external consultants to provide specialized, independent assessments of areas critical to institutional effectiveness and to inform leadership and Board decision-making. Recent examples include evaluations of the University's financing structure, fundraising and development capacity, endowment investment performance, and infrastructure procurement and project implementation (*S6-5-Presentation to the Board of Trustees about the Financing Structure Evaluation*; *S7-5-Presentation to the Board of Trustees by Michael Kaiser for Development and University Relations*; *S7-5-Presentation to the Board of Trustees by MPC Capital Group for Endowment Fund*). These engagements provide external expertise and recommendations that complement Sagrado's internal assessment processes.

Constituent feedback further complements these assessments. As discussed in Standards II and IV, recurring institutional surveys, including the Institutional Satisfaction Survey, provide evidence regarding the effectiveness of administrative services, with findings reviewed by institutional leadership.

Conclusion and Recommendations. The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that Universidad del Sagrado Corazón maintains an effective governance and leadership structure that supports institutional integrity, accountability, and Mission fulfillment. Governance responsibilities are clearly distributed among the Board of Trustees, the Academic Board, the Administrative Board, and the President. In contrast, shared governance mechanisms ensure meaningful participation by faculty, administrators, staff, and students. The Board exercises independent fiduciary oversight through established policies, committee structures, conflict-of-interest procedures, regular self-evaluation, and systematic evaluation of the President. Executive leadership has the qualifications, administrative capacity, and organizational support needed to implement institutional priorities, and the administrative structure has evolved to respond effectively to institutional growth, strategic initiatives, and increasing operational complexity. Finally, recurring assessment processes—including Board self-evaluation, presidential evaluation, administrative performance evaluations, and the Institutional Climate Study—provide systematic evidence that informs organizational improvement and institutional planning.

The Self-Study process also identified opportunities to strengthen governance and administrative effectiveness further. Based on the evidence presented in this chapter, Sagrado has identified the following priorities:

1. Enhance the efficiency of the administrative Performance Evaluation Process while strengthening the relationship between performance outcomes, professional development, recognition, and compensation practices.
2. Continue implementing actions identified through the 2025 Institutional Climate Study to strengthen cross-unit communication, employee engagement, leadership development, and organizational effectiveness.
3. Maintain periodic assessments of governance, leadership, and administration to ensure that institutional decision-making remains evidence-based and responsive to emerging institutional needs.

Conclusion

The 2026 Self-Study provided Sagrado with an opportunity to evaluate not only its compliance with the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation, but also the effectiveness of the institutional transformation undertaken during one of the most consequential periods in its history. The process engaged faculty, administrators, staff, students, and the Board of Trustees in a comprehensive institutional reflection and reaffirmed that Sagrado's Mission continues to guide academic innovation, governance, planning, resource allocation, assessment, and student development. More than an accreditation exercise, the Self-Study became an opportunity to examine how effectively Sagrado has translated its Mission into educational practice, organizational structures, and evidence-based decision-making. Grounded in a 145-year educational tradition inspired by the Society of the Sacred Heart in Puerto Rico, Sagrado demonstrates sustained commitment to intellectual inquiry, ethical reflection, and social responsibility.

One of the principal findings emerging from the Self-Study is Sagrado's ability to respond strategically to unprecedented external challenges while continuing to advance its Mission. During the accreditation cycle, Puerto Rico experienced Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the 2020 earthquakes, the COVID-19 pandemic, demographic decline, and increasing financial and regulatory pressures affecting higher education. These events required immediate operational responses while simultaneously prompting Sagrado to rethink its long-term direction. Throughout this period, Sagrado strengthened its emergency preparedness and business continuity processes, expanded digital learning and administrative technologies, invested in campus infrastructure, enhanced student support services, and reinforced institutional planning. Rather than interrupting institutional progress, these challenges accelerated organizational learning and strengthened Sagrado's capacity for resilience, adaptation, and innovation.

The Self-Study documents significant academic transformation through the implementation and continued refinement of the RBK Project, which reimaged the undergraduate educational experience beginning in 2020. The RBK Project established a coherent curricular framework integrating the liberal arts, disciplinary knowledge, entrepreneurship, leadership, research, and experiential learning to develop durable human skills and institutional competencies. Subsequent assessment of the Core Curriculum, institutional competencies, and academic programs has generated evidence that informed curricular revisions, strengthened educational coherence, and reinforced alignment between academic programs and Sagrado's Mission. Together, these initiatives have positioned academic quality and student learning at the center of institutional planning and continuous improvement.

An equally important accomplishment documented throughout the Self-Study has been the maturation of Sagrado's culture of assessment. Across the seven standards, assessment has evolved from discrete activities into an integrated institutional system supporting planning, budgeting, curriculum development, governance, student success, and administrative decision-making. During the accreditation period, Sagrado strengthened institutional assessment policies, standardized learning assessment processes, expanded the use of direct and indirect measures, implemented comprehensive assessment plans across academic and administrative units, and increasingly integrated assessment findings into planning and resource allocation. As a result, assessment now serves not only to demonstrate effectiveness but also to drive

institutional improvement and innovation. The first complete four-year assessment cycle under the RBK curriculum concluded in academic year 2025–2026; the resulting longitudinal and comparative analysis, together with the subsequent meta-assessment of the assessment system itself, is currently underway and will be shared with the visiting team as it becomes available.

The review also demonstrates Sagrado's sustained investment in faculty development as a critical component of educational quality. Faculty members have assumed increasingly active roles in curriculum redesign, assessment, pedagogical innovation, research, grant development, and experiential learning. New academic leadership structures, expanded support for scholarly activity, and a redesigned faculty model—including differentiated pathways for teaching, research, and impact projects—reflect Sagrado's commitment to aligning faculty responsibilities with institutional priorities while strengthening student learning, research capacity, and academic excellence. As the University's graduate and doctoral offerings continue to expand, strengthening full-time faculty capacity—both in overall number and in the proportion of faculty holding terminal degrees—remains a priority for sustaining this progress.

Collectively, the seven standards demonstrate a high degree of institutional integration. The Mission provides the foundation for institutional priorities; ethical principles guide governance and decision-making; the RBK Project establishes a coherent educational model; comprehensive student support services promote persistence and student success; systematic assessment informs educational effectiveness and institutional planning; integrated planning aligns institutional resources with strategic priorities; and governance and administrative structures provide the leadership, accountability, and organizational capacity necessary to sustain institutional quality. Rather than functioning independently, these systems reinforce one another through shared planning, evidence-based decision-making, and a common commitment to Mission fulfillment.

The Self-Study also identified opportunities that will continue guiding institutional improvement. These include strengthening integrated institutional data systems, expanding assessment of graduate education and co-curricular learning, continuing to strengthen faculty scholarship and research capacity, refining governance and administrative processes, enhancing long-term sustainability planning, and continuing to improve student success strategies for an increasingly diverse student population. The University will also continue simplifying the Performance Evaluation Process to make it easier to administer and more clearly connected to professional development and recognition. These priorities reflect an institutional commitment to continuous improvement grounded in evidence and aligned with Sagrado's Mission.

Ultimately, this Self-Study confirms that Universidad del Sagrado Corazón possesses the governance, leadership, academic quality, financial stewardship, assessment capacity, and institutional resilience necessary to fulfill the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation. More importantly, it demonstrates that Sagrado has emerged from a period of profound institutional and societal disruption with a renewed academic vision, strengthened organizational capacity, an increasingly mature culture of assessment, enhanced leadership, modernized infrastructure, and integrated planning processes. The accomplishments documented throughout this Self-Study—including the implementation of the RBK Project, the strengthening of institutional assessment,

investments in faculty development, the evolution of governance and administrative structures, Sagrado's successful response to successive emergencies, and the sustained recovery and growth in student enrollment that has accompanied these institutional transformations—have established a strong foundation for the next stage of institutional development. Together, these achievements reflect not only Sagrado's resilience, but also its growing capacity to innovate, attract students, and fulfill its educational Mission in a rapidly changing higher education environment.

In this sense, *Sagrado 2030* is more than a continuation of previous initiatives; it marks the beginning of a new chapter in Sagrado's history. The transformation achieved during this accreditation cycle has positioned Sagrado to move from a period defined by resilience and institutional renewal to one focused on sustainable growth, academic distinction, and expanded impact. Building upon strengthened governance, a mature culture of assessment, an innovative academic model, continued enrollment growth, modernized infrastructure, and a renewed investment in faculty excellence, Sagrado is well positioned to deepen academic excellence, expand research and innovation, strengthen community engagement, advance institutional sustainability, and increase its contribution to Puerto Rico. Guided by its Mission and supported by a culture of evidence, collaboration, and continuous improvement, Sagrado enters this new stage with the organizational capacity, leadership, strategic direction, and shared commitment necessary to continue forming graduates who exercise intellectual freedom and moral conscience, to build communities of solidarity, justice, and peace in service of the common good.

Appendix I - Disclosure on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In accordance with MSCHE guidance on transparency in accreditation materials, the University discloses the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in developing this Self-Study.

AI tools, including large language models, were used in a limited, supportive capacity to assist with drafting, editing, and refining narrative text and to improve clarity, organization, and consistency across sections. AI tools also supported translating materials originally developed in Spanish into English and reviewing and correcting grammar and language usage in English-language sections.

AI tools were not used to generate original assessment data, analyze institutional data, or produce independent evaluative conclusions. All content included in this Self-Study reflects institutional data, processes, and findings developed and validated by University personnel.

Human oversight guided the drafting process to ensure accuracy, alignment with institutional evidence, and compliance with MSCHE standards. In this context, AI supports efficient document preparation while the institution retains full responsibility for the content, analysis, and conclusions presented.