III. THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGIES: AN OVERVIEW

On August 11, 2014, Chancellor Carlos Severino-Valdés appointed Dr. José Sánchez-Lugo, Ed.D., Professor at the GSIST, an Educational Technology Specialist, as Director of the Graduate School of Information Sciences and Technologies. Prior to this appointment the following officers served as Acting Directors: Dr. Luisa Vigo-Cepeda, Professor (from 2008-2012); Dr. Mariano Maura-Sardó, Retired Professor (from 2012-2013); Dr. Carlos Suárez-Balseiro, Associate Professor (from 2013-2014). The COA had been requesting the University to appoint a Director for the School. The appointment of a Director's request was accomplished.

A. Brief history of the founding and development of the School

The roots of the University of Puerto Rico, Graduate School of Information Sciences and Technologies, can be traced back to 1969, as the result of a training institute for university librarians held the previous year. In 1970, the University Senate and the Board of Higher Education officially recognized the Institute as the basis for the establishment of a Graduate School of Librarianship at the University.

As a result of the curriculum revision approved by University authorities in 1989, the School changed its name in 1990 to the Graduate School of Library and Information Science. It is administratively under the aegis of the Dean of Academic Affairs, along with the Graduate School of Planning and the School of Communication. At the same time, it responds to the guidance and directives of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, as do other graduate programs on campus. The Master's degree in Library and Information Science (MLS) was first accredited by the American Library Association in 1989.

Beginning in 1995, the School initiated an extensive curriculum revision. The impetus for this revision came from recognized changes and trends in the information field, calling for the preparation of a new information professional able to work effectively in diverse information environments. In order to update and align its academic offerings with important changes in the field, societal needs and student interests, an analysis of factors in the School's internal and external environment was undertaken. Key documents were examined, and a series of focus groups were held to identify areas in the curriculum which needed to be strengthened and revised.

The broadening of the field, the increased demand for new and nontraditional services, and the focus on information technology, clearly indicated that the School's program needed to be reassessed and revised. As a result of this curriculum revision, the name of the School was changed in 2000 to the Graduate School of Information Sciences and Technologies (GSIST). In addition to the Master's program, post-masters and post-bachelors certificates were added. The School participated in the Kaliper Project, which served to focus and reaffirm many of the changes that had occurred, between 2001-2007, in the context of changing trends in library and information science education.

During the accreditation process, in 2007, the School reexamined its curriculum in the light of new trends in the information industry and feedback from students, graduates, faculty and practitioners. This action was informed in the 2008 Program Presentation. Continuing developments and changes in the field, as well as specific proposals and projects undertaken by the School, led to update its curriculum.

Program assessment findings between 2008-11, coming from student questionnaires and exit interviews, revealed the following major weaknesses or needs of the curriculum:

- Its lack of flexibility for students structuring their own program of study

- Dispersed workshops of 1 or 2 credits with topics that should be integrated into related courses

- Lack of integration of the technology component of the curriculum

- Too many graduation requirements (comprehensive exam, thesis or project, a portfolio)

- Lack of variety among elective courses, need for new electives and offerings

- Need for greater quality and depth of courses

- Need to integrate students to faculty research projects or provide for more research activities within the courses.

The curriculum update to the Master of Information Science (MIS), at the UPR-GSIST sought to eliminate the indicated weaknesses.

The GSIST updated curriculum was submitted for consideration to the University Administration in 2011. The curriculum's update was approved by the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, on April 2011. The updated curriculum was implemented in the Fall semester of 2011.

The program now consists of two tracks, one in Library and Information Sciences (LIS), and the other in Knowledge management (KM), and the degree to be earned is MIS (Master of Information Sciences) The content matter of core and required courses have been revised and new courses have been introduced to reflect changes in the field. Although there are two tracks within the same MIS degree, a single graduate profile has been conceived since the aim is that all graduates share common capabilities, albeit with different areas of emphasis.

The Master in Information Science (MIS), which is an academic and professional program, is offered to full and part-time students. In the master's program, students learn to identify information needs of diverse user-communities; to evaluate, acquire and organize resources; to create new content, products and services; to manage and preserve information in various formats; to implement a variety of tools and technologies; and to facilitate equal access to information and knowledge. With these core competencies in place, the GSIST wants to move forward and seize the

opportunities offered by KM, both for individual career development and advancement of LIS. The decision of establishing a track in Knowledge Management responds to GSIST's interest in widening the scope of preparing information professionals within the trends of the knowledge society.

B. General description of the School, in terms of vision, mission, goals, objectives, curriculum, projects, students, faculty, facilities, and administration

Within the previous program, until May 2011, the School offered a Master's degree program, which consisted of 38 credit hours, divided into core courses, required courses, electives and a thesis or project. The five core courses (14 credit hours) included CINF 6005 Social Exchange of Information; CINF 6010 Diagnostics of Information Needs, Clients and Services; CINF 6100 The Information Industry: Resources and Services; CINF 6200   Organization and Retrieval of Information (basic); CINF 6300 Information Technology.

The six required courses (14 credit hours) included Development of Information Skills (CINF 6016); Information Access Policies (CINF 6106); Organization and Retrieval of Information (advanced CINF 6205); Management of Information Services (CINF 6400); Leadership: Theory, style and application (Workshop CINF 6405); Research Methods applied to the Information Field (CINF 6600). In addition, students had 7 credit hours to distribute in elective courses within the school or in other faculties.

The seven credits were assigned for electives (which could be taken outside the School), and the final three credits were devoted to the required thesis or research project. In addition, students were required to pass a comprehensive exam after completing the core courses, and before beginning the thesis or research project. In the process of completing their coursework and thesis or research project, students were required to document their experience and accomplishments in an electronic Professional Portfolio. They were also required to respond to a satisfaction survey questionnaire once a year and to participate in an exit interview focus group before graduation.

In addition to the Master's degree program, the School offered six certificate programs, based on demand. They were three post-bachelor's certificates: Teacher-Librarian aimed at current and prospective school librarians; Electronic Resources Analyst, focusing on information technology managers; and Archival and Records Management, aimed at training archive personnel and directors in public and private institutions. The three post-master's certificates included: Academic Library Administrator, focusing on leadership and management competencies for academic librarians; Legal Information Specialist, focusing on updating knowledge and skills of professionals working in law libraries; and Information Services Consultant, aimed at information technology entrepreneurs. The Teacher-Librarian's post-bachelor's certificate program was the largest and most important, since it responded to the directives of the Puerto Rico Department of Education to prepare certified school library media specialists to work in public school libraries throughout the Island. The School has always aligned its vision to the vision stated by the University of Puerto Rico System and the Río Piedras campus, in the documents entitled *Ten for the*

decade (*Diez para la década*: *Agenda para la planificación en la Universidad de Puerto Rico*, 2005, and *Vision University 2016* (*Visión Universidad 2016: Plan estratégico*, 2006). The *Manual for Strategic Planning, Allocation of Resources and Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness* as well as the *Work Plan* of the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research have also provided an institutional framework and guidance for the School's formulation of its vision, mission, goals and objectives. The School's vision projects the highest aspiration of the program. The School's mission statement incorporates five elements: education, research, products, services and dissemination of information. The School's stated six goals reflect its commitment to academic excellence, the professional field, and the community in general. The twenty-nine specific objectives focus on the students knowledge acquisition and competencies development, curriculum, faculty and alumni development, administration, physical resources and facilities.

At the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015, there are 97 students (full and part time) currently enrolled in the Master's degree and certificate programs. Fifty five (55) students (53.35 %) of these are enrolled in the Master's program. Seventy (70) new students were admitted to the various programs for the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015. Thirty nine (39) of these new students entered the Master's program in August 2014. The rest will be taking courses in one of the certificate programs.

The School currently has seven (7) full-time faculty members (including the Director). At the moment there are seven (7) part-time adjunct faculty members teaching courses, but others may be contracted as needed.

The GSIST is physically located on the third floor of the main campus José M. Lázaro Library building. The facilities include four classrooms (three of which are also equipped as computer laboratories); individual offices for each faculty member; office space for administrative staff, student assistants, the OERI-Observatorio de Estudios Relacionados con la Información, the School's research unit; a faculty meeting room; a computer laboratory; a technology staff area; storage rooms and an adjacent Library Science and Informatics Library (BCBI), a part of the University Library System.