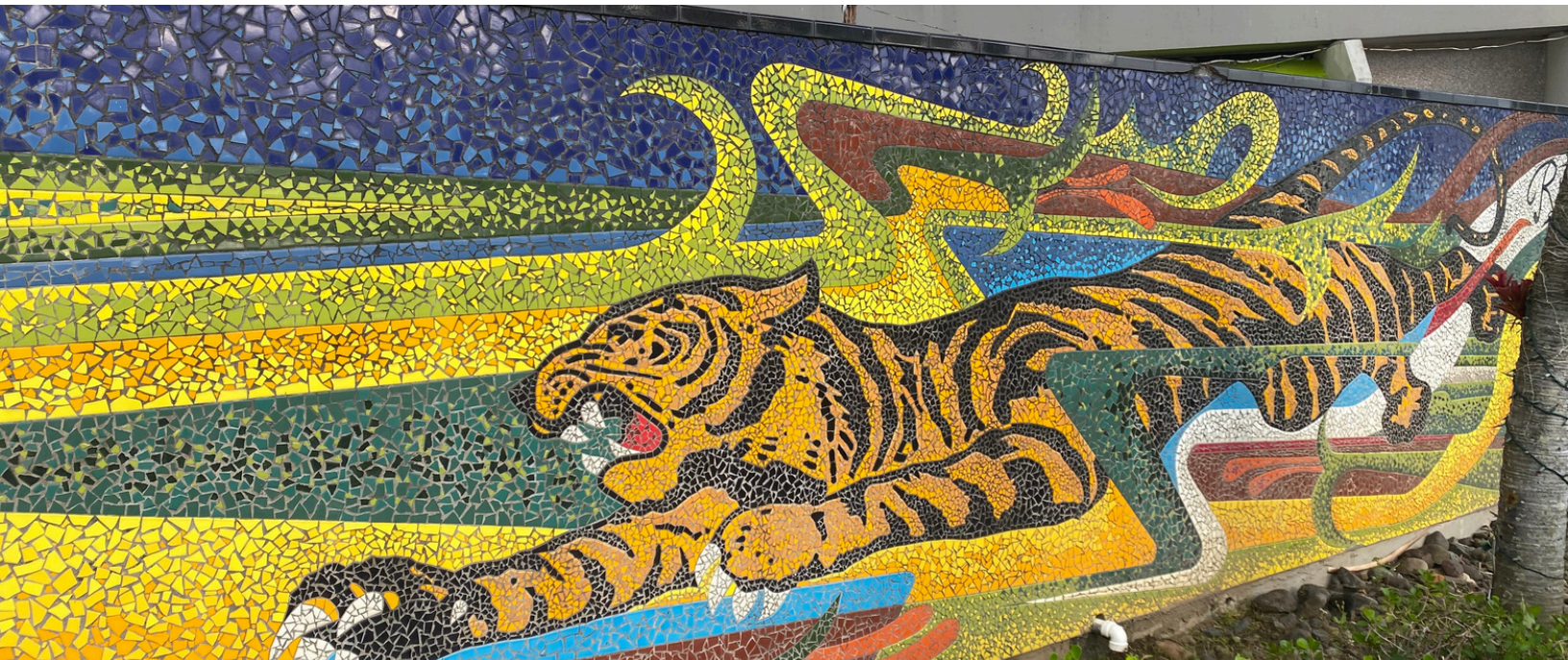




PUERTO RICO HETS CONFERENCE PARTNER SITE VISITS REPORT 2025

Montse Mendez
Coordinator of Leadership and Involvement



InterAmerican University - METRO Campus

Currently, the Residence Hall at METRO is managed by three full-time staff members, including Housing Director Nilka, and has the capacity to house up to 400 students. While there is no existing Resident Assistant (RA) structure, they are exploring the possibility of implementing one in the near future.

The students residing in the Residence Hall come from a variety of universities across Puerto Rico. Notably, most students at METRO live at home and commute to campus. It is worth mentioning that METRO and UPR are the only campuses on the island that offer on-campus housing.

Although METRO does not offer traditional meal plans, food vendors are contracted to operate in the inner courtyard. Security is robust, with a gate surrounding the building and two security guards on duty. Overnight guests are allowed by prior request and incur an \$80 nightly fee.



Housing contracts are available on both a semester and annual basis, with room options ranging from 1 to 3 bedrooms. Each apartment is equipped with a kitchen, refrigerator, and in-unit laundry. Additionally, there are lounges on every floor and elevators for convenience.



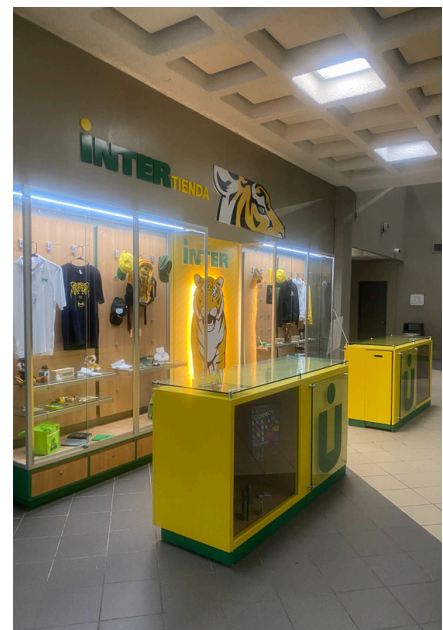
International students at METRO, particularly those participating in exchange programs, tend to study in popular areas such as Psychology, Business, Nursing, and Biology, as these disciplines offer the most English-taught courses. Most exchange students come from the U.S. Mainland, though METRO also hosts students from countries like Colombia, Argentina, Spain, and several African nations. It is noteworthy that many U.S. universities refer to exchange programs in Puerto Rico as “Study Away” rather than “Study Abroad.”

1/15/2025

InterAmerican University - METRO Campus

METRO has a strong tutoring program that compensates student tutors with a \$500 stipend for up to 12 hours of work per week. The tutoring services primarily focus on Math, Economics, and Language, with the specific offerings depending on the classes available and the tutors' expertise. Professor Paul, who oversees the program, mentioned that 2-3 exchange students typically serve as tutors, often in English, given that many Puerto Rican students have varying levels of proficiency in the language.

This tutoring initiative is supported by a Title 5 grant, which helps with retention, success, and graduation rates. METRO has been an established institution since 1912 and currently enrolls approximately 4,000 students, with over 100 agreements with partner institutions.



During our meeting, Dr. Below, Dr. Skinner, Aven, and I introduced the concept of a Higher Education Exchange Program. The METRO staff responded positively, expressing enthusiasm for the idea. However, due to the absence of an RA structure, they would be unable to facilitate the exchange in the exact format we envisioned.

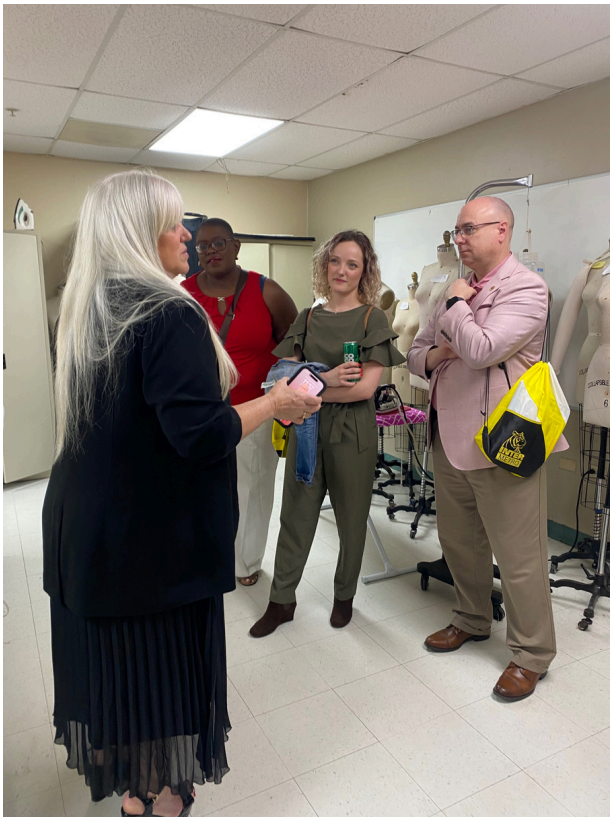
Nonetheless, I see a promising opportunity for our students to participate in METRO's tutoring program, potentially with housing included, given their available residence hall. Additionally, their exchange students could still engage in internships within our campus offices, offering them a housing benefit, even if they are not assigned as RAs.

Follow up: Aven has reached out to Mariela (International Coordinator at METRO) to discuss the possibility of this exchange program related to the Tutoring position for SEMO students and the Residence Hall position for METRO students. (1/28)

1/15/2025

EDP University

During our visit to EDP, several key insights were shared regarding their academic model, student support systems, and collaboration opportunities.



EDP staff spoke very highly of their experiences working with SEMO, particularly with Rhonda. They expressed gratitude for her support and recognized SEMO as a warm and welcoming institution that reminds them of Latino culture. Lisa specifically thanked Aven for her assistance and Spanish language skills, which have been instrumental in fostering a positive relationship.

Leslie highlighted that the Title 5 grant supports tutoring services at EDP in key areas, including Math, Spanish, Financial Literacy, and English. Spanish is a general education (Gen Ed) requirement in Puerto Rico, and EDP offers associate programs alongside bachelor's degrees. Their academic model is unique, focusing on introducing the most challenging classes upfront and gradually transitioning to easier courses later in the program. For example, students begin learning design techniques by hand before progressing to digital mediums.

General education requirements at EDP total 30 credits for a bachelor's degree. Student enrollment is managed in a cohort model, where Gen Ed and core courses are deliberately combined from the start. Jose referred to this approach as a "Career Ladder," emphasizing its intentionality in aligning foundational courses with career pathways.



1/15/2025

EDP University

EDP's foundation is committed to ensuring that students from all backgrounds can access opportunities, doing everything possible to support their diverse student population. Staff mentioned grants from the Senate and HIP Agency that are not currently available but could provide future opportunities for funding collaboration.

One challenge raised was related to the differing financial aid timelines between Puerto Rican schools and SEMO. Specifically, students at EDP do not receive their financial aid funds until after February 13th, which falls after SEMO's Spring Semester enrollment deadline. This timing discrepancy has caused difficulties for some exchange students in the past. However, staff expressed appreciation for Aven's efforts in helping mitigate these issues.



Follow Up: None for me as far as I am aware. Dr. Below and Aven mentioned touching base to resolve/ improve the SFS issue.

1/15/2025

InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico Bayamon Campus

Dean - Grace Gomez

Professor - Yadira Nieves

Professor - Dr. Vizcarrondo

Lawyer - Felix Velazquez

Ariangelis, our current exchange student at SEMO, came from this campus through our partnership with KFVS.

Grace explained that outside of the English-taught pilot courses, exchange students from SEMO must be fluent in Spanish to study at Bayamón. This requirement was the reason Rachel, one of our applicants, was redirected to METRO, where she could take courses in English instead. However, professors at the meeting noted that if more than ten students request an English version of a course, they could arrange for English course materials in advance.



Dr. Buck introduced new ideas for collaboration, including a professor exchange or a joint class project, which received positive feedback from faculty. They agreed that identifying the right students and professors would be key to making these initiatives successful.

Grace inquired about funding scholarships through Telemundo and sought clarification on whether SEMO could offer exclusivity. Dr. Buck reassured her that it would operate similarly to the KFVS scholarships under the existing agreement. Grace also raised additional questions about the budget and financial assistance for students. The possibility of dual enrollment was also mentioned, which could help students fulfill credit requirements, whether they are enrolled at SEMO or Bayamón.

1/15/2025

InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico Bayamon Campus



Grace had a printed email listing attendees and took note of SEMO's delegation, also asking whether Dr. Vargas would be attending the following day. We informed her that he would not be present, as he would be attending the HETS conference instead. We were given a tour of the campus, with a particular emphasis on the Media and Communications department. The facilities were well-equipped with professional-grade equipment, and their sound studio was especially impressive.



Follow Up: Albert Troche who has the equivalent of my role at Bayamon found me at the HETS conference and gave me his contact info. Email sent to schedule a virtual meeting. (1/29)

1/15/2025

Sagrado Corazon

International Director - Lorena Franco

Strategic Projects - Laura Mattei

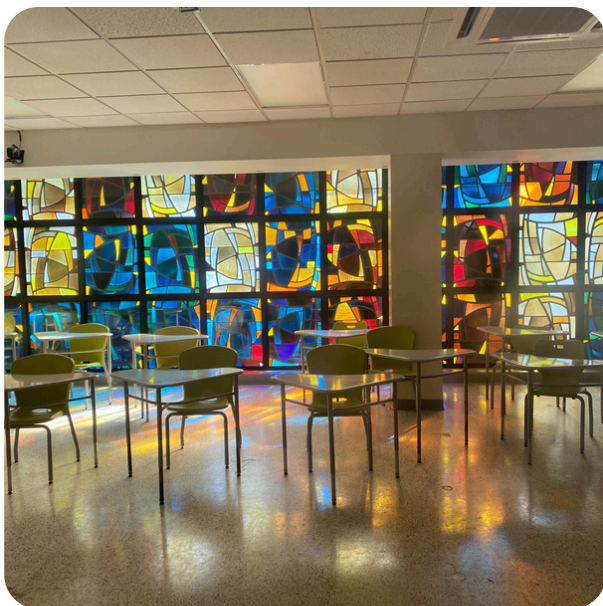
Leadership for Journalism - Maria Colon

Sagrado Corazón expressed great satisfaction with their partnership with SEMO, noting that exchange students have had positive experiences. However, a key concern raised was the financial barrier preventing more students from participating, particularly the cost of housing.

To address this, it was clarified that SEMO's on-campus housing requirement can be waived for Media Exchange students. If students prefer to live off-campus, Aven offered assistance with apartment searches. Dr. Buck and Aven also emphasized the importance of exchange students feeling comfortable reaching out for support before and during their time at SEMO.

I had the opportunity to introduce the Higher Education Exchange Program, which was met with enthusiasm. Lorena, who participated in an RA Exchange program at Penn State, spoke highly of the experience and believes that Sagrado students would be very interested in a similar opportunity.

Sagrado's staff mentioned that March would be an ideal deadline for student nominations for exchange programs.



SEMO students who would thrive at Sagrado should ideally have some level of Spanish proficiency. While some courses are offered in English, course selection would determine language requirements. Sagrado's residence halls have positions similar to SEMO's RA program, and there are also off-campus housing options nearby.

The exchange program could be structured as a semester-long or year-long experience.

1/16/2025

Sagrado Corazon

Sagrado offers a Spanish Intensive Summer Program that SEMO students could benefit from. Details include:

- Level: A2 or B1
- Duration: 3 weeks (Monday-Friday, 9 AM - 12:30 PM)
- Includes: Breakfast, lunch, housing, and 3-4 cultural experiences
- Credits: 45 hours of Spanish, which can result in a certificate or be used to “test out” of Spanish credits.

If the Higher Education Internship program moves forward, it would require an addendum to the current agreement with Sagrado. Additionally, while Sagrado students currently do not have a meal plan, one could potentially be incorporated into the agreement for SEMO students participating in the Internship Exchange.

The staff provided a tour of the residence halls and invited Dr. Buck, Aven, and me to lunch, which they generously covered. Their hospitality was warm and welcoming.



Sagrado is in an ideal location, just a 15-minute walk from the beach and close to Santurce, Puerto Rico's artistic and cultural hub.



During lunch, they shared details about their academic approach:

All students take coursework in professionalism, internationalization, and volunteering.

Every student completes at least 12 credits in Entrepreneurship, ensuring they gain practical skills alongside their academic studies.

I found these elements to be valuable additions to the curriculum, integrating academic learning with real-world applications.

Follow Up: Email sent to Laura Mattei cc Aven with the presentation for the Higher Ed Internship Exchange Program (1/21). We got a response with time availabilities for a meeting (1/29). Aven will reply copying Dr. Skinner and Kendra to see if they want to be involved.

1/16/2025

INTERAmerican School of Aeronautics

Dean - Jonathan Velazquez, Ph.D

- Air Traffic Control (ATC) Courses: Offered as part of the aviation curriculum.
- Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Program: Launching in May/August; some courses fall under the School of Engineering due to necessary equipment requirements.
- Flight Training: Aviation flight practice is conducted through Bayamón.
- Language of Instruction: The School of Aeronautics offers all courses in English.
- UAS Collaboration: SEMO has an established UAS Bachelor's program, and Puerto Rico is interested in sending students to SEMO for UAS courses.
- Aviation Management Major: Both SEMO and InterAmerican offer an Aviation Management major.
- Flight Training Benefits for Exchange Students:
 - Puerto Rico students can gain experience with stable IMC (Instrument Meteorological Conditions) in Missouri's weather.
 - Missouri students can benefit from learning flight techniques in Puerto Rico's wind conditions.
 - Puerto Rico provides a unique opportunity for island-hopping flight practice.
- Industry Connections: InterAmerican has many graduates who go on to work at JetBlue.
- Additional Aviation Opportunities: Bayamón also offers a Minor in Aviation.



MINOR IN ATC (AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL) AT BAYAMON:

Intro to Aeronautics + Space
Aviation Fundamentals
English Proficiency for Aviation Professionals
Principles of Air Traffic Control
Aviation Meteorology
ATC 1 - Tower Operation
ATC 2 - Radar Operation
ATC 3 - En-Route and In Terminals

1/16/2025

INTERAmerican School of Aeronautics

UNMANNED & AUTONOMOUS AVIATION

Autonomous vs. Unmanned: There is a distinction between the two.

Also referred to as "Urban Air Mobility."

UAS (Unmanned Aircraft System) is a growing field and considered the "next big thing" in aviation.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE & REQUIREMENTS

40-45% of the program at Bayamón is online or outside of aviation coursework.

Students must complete MEL (Multi-Engine Land) flight practices before graduating.

A difficult entry exam filters applicants due to high demand and limited aircraft.

Students must pass the theory test before beginning flight courses. 33% of applicants fail the exam.

108 students recently started the program; they do not begin flight training until their second year.

Rigorous academic standards:

Private Pilot Theory requires an A or B to pass; a C is considered failing.



AIRCRAFT FLEET

Bayamón owns

and operates

the following aircraft:

Piper PA-44 Seminole

Diamond DA42 Twin Star

Piper PA-34 Seneca

Piper Archer (PA-28-181)

Piper Arrow (PA-28R-201)

FACULTY &

ACCREDITATION

ABET Accreditation: The program is accredited by

the Accreditation Board for Engineering and

Technology for aviation-related engineering and

technology programs.

Challenges in hiring instructors:

Bayamón cannot hire from a federally owned

ATC tower.

Their current instructors are from a privately

owned tower nearby.

ATC (Air Traffic Control) courses must be taught

by a CPC (Certified Professional Controller).

These instructors can be adjuncts but not tenure-

track faculty.

1/16/2025

INTERAmerican School of Aeronautics

EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES

Most compatible exchange areas for InterAmerican students at SEMO:

Junior or Senior level coursework

Aviation Management, UAS, and ATC programs.

CFI (Certified Flight Instructor) Exchange with JetBlue is in place.

Our ATC tower in Cape Girardeau is city-owned.

INDUSTRY & REGULATIONS

Puerto Rico has one of the oldest ATC programs in the nation, following:

FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) regulations

ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) guidelines

Southwest Airlines has paused hiring recently.

IGI (Inertial Guidance Instrument) or IGS (Inertial Guidance System) was mentioned in discussions.

LEADERSHIP & ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

Bayamón will undergo a provost and assistant provost change soon.

Leadership titles in Puerto Rico differ from the U.S. mainland:

Example: Deans in PR are equivalent to provosts in the U.S. mainland system.

Follow Up: Miranda, Aven and Johnathan agreed upon their follow up items. For me, I would love to collaborate with our SEMO Aviation Program. I implemented a Flight School theme for The First Year Leadership Program Monday Cohort and a visit of our cohort to SEMO's simulator next Fall could be a great real life connection for the students.

1/16/2025

