

**SENT BY FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION**

**Mr. Donald Jimenez Cascante  
Secretario General  
Consejo Nacional de Ensenanza,  
Superior Universitaria Privada  
Ministerio de Educacion Publica  
Apdo 10087-1000  
San Jose  
Costa Rica**

**Dear Mr. Jimenez:**

Some time ago, the U.S. Department of Education wrote to inform your country about a law passed in the United States in 1992 that changed the eligibility criteria for U.S. students who wish to finance their medical education in a country other than the U.S. with a loan through our country's Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program. Eligible students must enroll in a medical school that is eligible to participate in the FFEL Program and that meets the accreditation or approval standards of the country in which the school is located.

Further, the accreditation or approval standards used by that country must have been reviewed by a panel of medical experts appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Education, which must have determined them to be comparable to the accreditation standards applied to medical schools in the United States. This panel of medical experts is known as the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA).

I am pleased to inform you that the NCFMEA, at its March 4, 1999 meeting, determined that the accreditation or approval standards used by the Consejo Nacional de Ensenanza Superior Universitaria Privada (CONESUP) to evaluate the medical schools in Costa Rica are comparable to those used to evaluate programs leading to the M.D. degree in the United States. The NCFMEA has requested that CONESUP submit annual reports of its accreditation activities, with the first report due January 14, 2000. This determination of comparability will remain in effect for a period of four years from the date of this letter. Prior to the expiration of that period, the NCFMEA will seek to confirm that your standards and procedures for accrediting/approving medical schools in Costa Rica are still comparable to the accreditation standards applied to medical schools in the United States. If so, its previous determination of comparability will be extended for another four-year period.

As a result of the determination of comparability by the NCFMEA, any medical school in your country that is accredited or approved by CONESUP may apply, if it has not recently done so, to the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the FFEL Program. If a medical school's application is approved, otherwise eligible students enrolled in the school who are either U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. may receive loans to finance their medical education through the FFEL Program.

2 – Mr. Donald Jimenez Cascante

The U.S. Department of Education needs a list of the medical schools in Costa Rica that have requested accreditation by CONESUP, and the status of each school (whether provisionally accredited, fully accredited, denied accreditation or scheduled for an accreditation review and the date of the anticipated review). In the event that there are any substantial changes to the standards or procedures used by CONESUP for approving, evaluating or accrediting medical schools, please immediately notify the U.S. Department of Education of these changes. In addition, please immediately notify the U.S. Department of Education if there are any changes with respect to the accreditation or approval status of any of the medical schools recognized by CONESUP.

Please send the requested information to the Director of the Accreditation and Eligibility Determination Division at the following address:

Dr. Karen W. Kershenstein, Director  
Accreditation and Eligibility  
Determination Division  
U.S. Department of Education  
Room 3915, ROB-3  
7th & D Streets, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20202-5244  
U.S.A.

If you have any questions concerning the above requests, Dr. Kershenstein can be reached at (202) 708-7417 (telephone), (202) 708-9469 (fax), and Karen\_Kershenstein@ed.gov (e-mail).

Medical schools that wish to participate in the FFEL Program may obtain the proper application forms from the Initial Participation Branch at the address listed above.

I want to thank you for taking the time to respond to our requests for information about your accreditation or approval standards for medical schools. I very much appreciate the interest you have taken in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Richard W. Riley

**U.S. Department of Education**



**Staff Analysis  
of the  
Standards Used by**

**Costa Rica**

**For the Evaluation of Medical Schools**

**March 4, 1999**

U.S. Department of Education  
Staff Analysis  
of the Standards Used by  
Costa Rica  
for the Evaluation of Medical Schools  
Prepared January 15, 1998

TAB A

Background

Costa Rica appeared on the agenda of the February 1997 and March 1998 meetings of the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA). At both meetings, the Committee determined that the country's standards for the accreditation/approval of medical schools were not comparable to those used to evaluate medical schools in the United States. During the February 1997 meeting, the Committee based its decision primarily on the lack of any response from the country to the Department's requests for information.

After the Secretary informed Costa Rica of the Committee's decision following the February 1997 meeting, the Department received a formal request from the country that the Committee reconsider that decision at its March 1998 meeting. The request was accompanied by supporting documentation, some written in Spanish and some in English, and the country's response to Part II of the questionnaire. Department staff attempted to obtain a translation of the Spanish documents but was not able to do so in time for the meeting. Therefore, staff used only the documents provided in English and the country's response to Part II of the questionnaire to prepare the Department staff analysis. After reviewing these materials at its March meeting, the NCFMEA again determined that the Costa Rican system for the evaluation of medical schools was not comparable to the U.S. system, based primarily on concerns it had related to two statements contained in Article 3 of the Costa Rican Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) that appeared to indicate that the process for evaluating medical education in Costa Rica did not provide for a regular reevaluation of the medical schools. Those statements are as follows:

"That in the absence of surveillance and inspection regulations, CONESUP [Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Superior Universitaria Privada] does not carry out a systematic process of permanent evaluation of the development of the Medicine and Surgery program."

"That the criteria upon which the Medicine and Surgery program was authorized were basically based on the requirements of the law and regulation in force in CONESUP, as a confirmation that the minimal conditions are met for the beginning."

Another factor in the Committee's decision to reaffirm its previous decision of noncomparability was the fact that the documents the country provided in English did not provide enough information for the Committee to determine the breadth and depth of the site visits conducted at the medical schools.

After the March 1998 meeting, Costa Rica submitted another request for reconsideration and provided both additional information and a full response to the Department questionnaire. That request is the subject of the Department staff analysis that follows.

It should be noted that in anticipation of submitting another request for reconsideration, Costa Rica began to modify some of its practices and procedures and to clarify existing policies so as to provide the NCFMEA with a better understanding of the standards and processes it uses for the accreditation/approval of medical schools. Although the country maintains that it has always performed a regular review of its medical schools, government officials nevertheless pulled together all of the laws, practices, and regulations governing the oversight of these schools, from the different government entities that maintain oversight functions, and compiled them into single set of documents. In the course of this activity, the officials eliminated the two statements listed above from the Regulating Code of 6693 that had been a major concern of the NCFMEA when it reviewed Costa Rica in March 1998.

Currently, there are six universities in Costa Rica that offer medical education. One is a public institution (the University of Costa Rica), while the other five are private (Universidad Internacional de las Americas (International University of the America); Universidad de Iberoamerica (University of the Iberoamerica); Universidad Autonoma de Centro America (Autonomous University of Central America); Universidad Hispanoamericana (Hispanic American University); and Latin University (approved in May 1998).

The one public institution is controlled by the National Chancellors Council (CONARE), which is not seeking to have its system for the evaluation of the university's medical school reviewed by the NCFMEA for comparability. According to the country, the University of Costa Rica was created by the Constitution of the Republic of Costa Rica, Article 84 of which gives the university absolute autonomy to regulate itself.

The five private institutions are controlled by the National Council of Private Higher University Education (CONESUP), the entity that authorizes (private) medical education in Costa Rica and seeks to have its system of oversight of these five institutions reviewed for comparability. The five institutions may seek to establish the eligibility of their medical schools to participate in the Federal Family Loan Program if the standards and processes used by CONESUP to accredit/approve them are determined to be comparable to those used to evaluate medical schools in the U.S.

It is important to note that in addition to the oversight of the six medical schools provided by the appropriate legal entities in Costa Rica (CONARE and CONESUP), all six institutions - because they graduate doctors who will practice medicine in Costa Rica - must undergo a compliance review by other entities that are involved in the completion of the medical degree, which includes clinic assignments in designated clinics, teaching facilities, and hospitals, and must be in compliance with their regulations as well. For example, the Center for Strategic and Informational Development in Health and Social Security (CENDEISS) is the agency in charge of granting authorizations for the use of clinical fields in the Health Teaching Entities. The Board of Directors of the Costa Rican Social Security System administer the regulations for CENDEISS. Thus, this agency becomes involved in monitoring the medical schools' compliance with its regulations, beginning with the second year of the medical program, because students begin their clinicals at this point.

### Summary of Findings

Based on its analysis of the available information, including the country's response to the Department questionnaire, the documents previously submitted by the country in Spanish that Department staff had translated, and further documentation requested by Department staff during its review of the country, e.g., standards, procedures, Law 6693, etc., Department staff concludes that Costa Rica appears to have a system in place that substantially meets the guidelines established by the NCFMEA. Specifically, the standards and processes used by CONESUP to evaluate the five private medical schools in Costa Rica appear to be reasonably comparable to those used to evaluate medical schools in the United States.

### Staff Analysis

The National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation is charged with determining whether the standards of accreditation used by a foreign country to accredit medical schools offering programs leading to the M.D. (or equivalent) degree are comparable to standards of accreditation applied to M.D. programs in the United States.

In making this determination, the Committee uses the following guidelines which it has determined provide an appropriate framework for the thorough evaluation of medical schools offering programs leading to the M.D. (or equivalent) degree. The Committee wishes to make it clear that these are in fact guidelines and that a foreign country's review and approval process can differ substantially from these guidelines and still be determined to be comparable to the standards used in the United States, provided the foreign country can demonstrate that its standards and processes of evaluation are effective alternatives to those used in the United States.

## **PART I: Accreditation/Approval Standards**

### **1. Objectives**

**The accreditation/approval process used by the foreign country should determine whether the educational mission of the medical school serves the general public interest and whether its educational program is appropriate in light of the mission and objectives of the school. Approval should not be granted if it is determined that the educational program is inconsistent with the mission and objectives of the school.**

**The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the program is legally authorized to provide medical education in the country in which it is located. Approval should not be granted to a program that is not legally authorized to provide such education.**

#### **The General Public Interest**

**In its response to the Department questionnaire, Costa Rica indicates that Article 9 of the Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) states, "Within the terms of this law, private universities, as private higher education institutions, will enjoy complete freedom in education, in scientific research and the dissemination of culture. They will contribute to the study and solution of national problems, for which they will establish obligatory community work programs or social services that are equivalent or similar to the ones in place at public universities."**

#### **The Medical School's Mission and Objectives**

**Because of Article 9 of Regulating Code for 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP), Costa Rica maintains that "every school of medicine and surgery in the country must state, in its mission, its commitment to instruction, research, patient care and to serve the general public interest."**

#### **Legal Authorization**

**Costa Rica indicates that medical schools are required to be legally authorized. In its response to the Department questionnaire, it states further that "According to Regulating Code 6693 of November 27, 1981, it is mandatory for the functioning of private universities and for the careers they offer, among them medicine and surgery, the prior authorization from the Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Superior Universitaria Privada (CONESUP)(National Council for Private University Higher Education Studies). Additionally, the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice, in vote number 7494-97, given on November 11, 1997 at 3:15 pm, states that for a private university to operate, authorization from the Costa Rican Government is required."**

## **2. Governance**

**The accreditation/approval process should determine whether there is an appropriate accountability of the management of the institution to an ultimate responsible authority external to and independent of the institution's administration. Approval should not be granted if the school lacks such a system of external accountability.**

In its response to the Department questionnaire, Costa Rica describes the governance of medical schools as being independent from the institution's administration. Specifically, "every school must have, at least, its own Academic Council composed by professors, student representatives and administrative staff of the school. These members must comply with the academic requirements stated in Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP)." The country further requires that student representatives be among the best students and aspire to high moral and ethical principles.

The Academic Council is in charge of the following:

- Formulating institutional policy;
- Strategic planning, and achievement of the mission and objectives;
- Publishing policies regarding conflicts of interest for the board and institution;
- Appointing the dean and exercising control through that individual;
- Ensuring that the meetings are maintained and the minutes are registered;
- Recommending the destination of funds from the institution's administrations for school purposes; and
- Developing and monitoring succession of plans.

Medical schools are regulated according to their financial administration by the Law of Foundations No.5338 and the Law of Associations No.218, which subjects them to the current accounting and tax systems of the country before the Ministerio de Hacienda (Ministry of the Interior) and the Contraloria General de la Republica (The Regulating Authority). For example, Article 15 of the Law of Foundations states that "The Administrative Board will provide, on the first day of January of each year, an

accounting report of the activities of the foundation to the Contraloria General de la Republica (The Regulating Authority).

Further, Article 21 of the Law of Associations No.218 states that "The administrative and fiscal exercise of associations will be one year in duration. In the first fifteen days of each association exercise, the board will meet ordinarily to hear the reports of the President, the Auditor, and the Treasurer, about the dealings during the last immediate exercise."

### **3. Administration**

**The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the administration of the school is effective and appropriate in light of its mission and objectives. Approval should not be granted if it is determined that the administration is ineffective or inappropriate in light of the stated mission and objectives.**

**The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the chief academic official of the medical school is qualified by education and experience to provide leadership in medical education. Approval should not be granted if the chief academic official's credentials and training background are not appropriate for fulfilling his or her responsibilities.**

**The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the faculty are appropriately qualified to teach and are involved in decisions involving admissions and curriculum. Approval should not be granted to schools that fail to demonstrate appropriate faculty qualifications and faculty involvement in admissions and curriculum development and delivery.**

#### **Effective and Appropriate Administration**

In its response to the Department questionnaire, Costa Rica indicates that schools of medicine "must have an adequate and appropriately credentialed full-time administrative staff to ensure the success of the school." Administrative organization must have clear lines of authority, responsibility, and communication, and principal officers must be qualified by training and experience relative to their assigned responsibilities. In addition, schools must have full-time support staff qualified by training and experience relative to their assigned responsibilities.

#### **Chief Academic Official of the Medical School**

Costa Rica cites Article 14 of the Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) as requiring the chief academic officer or dean to be qualified by training and experience to direct the development of the education program. The dean must have

at least the degree of the Licentiate and have academic experience in national or foreign universities of no less than eight years. Specifically, Article 14, requires "the Provost, Deans and Diprovost of academic units or their equivalents to possess, as a minimum, the degree of Licentiate and have experience in nation or foreign universities for no less than ten, eight and four years respectively. With regards to any other university academic authority, the degree of Licentiate will be required as a minimum and academic experience of four yours. Those who substitute Provost, deans, or academic unit Diprovosts, will fulfill the same requirements asked of these."

#### Faculty

Article 6(c and ch) of Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 27051-MEP) requires that institutions be staffed by necessary teaching personnel suitably trained to carry out their activities. In addition, they must have sufficient qualified professional staff to fill the university administrative positions called for in the bylaws. Further, Article 11 of Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP), Chapter II (Authorization for the Operation of Private Universities), requires that institutions submit "a list of faculty along with their courses of instruction, their rank, academic experience, publications, and other meritorious activities proper of university faculty."

Department staff cannot determine the extent of involvement by faculty in the design of the curricula. However, Article 3(c) of the same law authorizes CONESUP to approve "the schools and their courses of study once they have been subjected to study by the National Higher Education Planning Office (Oficina de Planificacion de la Ensenanza Superior (OPES).

#### **4. Educational Program**

**The accreditation/approval process should examine whether the educational program of a medical school is of sufficient length to meet the mission and objectives of the school and to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become a qualified physician. Approval should not be granted to a school that does not provide an educational program of at least 32 months in duration.**

**The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the curriculum provides an education in the sciences basic to medicine, a variety of clinical subjects, and various ethical, behavioral, and socioeconomic subjects pertinent to medicine. Approval should not be granted to a school whose educational program does not provide such a broad-based curriculum.**

The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the requirements for successful completion of the program of medical education conform to commonly accepted standards, with a particular focus on clerkships (or their equivalent) and other forms of clinical training. Approval should not be granted if such training is of insufficient breadth, is not conducted in suitable medical facilities, or is not adequately supervised.

#### Length of Program

In its response to the Department questionnaire, Costa Rica states that "the medical education program must be based upon a realistic set of general and specific educational objectives for the basic and clinical sciences and must be of appropriate length and content to cover the essential education required in the basic and clinical sciences. Clear educational objectives must be developed for each course, clinical experience, and area of study, and they must be revised on a periodic basis, and disseminated to appropriate parties." In addition, in accordance with "The Nomenclature Agreement for Degrees and Titles for Higher Education," signed by members of the National Council of Provests, the minimum requirement for the preparation of a Licentiate in Medicine is 10 cycles of 15 weeks, or its equivalent.

Article 20 of the Regulating Code No. 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) further stipulates that "CONESUP will only approve university courses of study that lead to a degree for which there is a minimum requirement of 120 credits. A credit is a valuation unit of work of a student, equivalent to three hours weekly of classes during 15 weeks; applied to an activity that is supervised, evaluated, and approved by the teacher."

#### Required Subjects

Costa Rica states that Article 13 of Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) requires the basic science curricula of medical schools in private universities to be the same as those offered in state or public universities. Specifically, the study plans in these universities must be similar to those of the public university in the country, or other universities of "recognized prestige," and deemed equivalent for purposes of recognition.

In addition, Costa Rica indicates that the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court judged that "What is set forth (...) is an equivalence with regards to minimum requirements in curriculum, without hindrance to the ability of other universities that wish to establish more courses, longer study plans, greater complexity, greater academic excellence, being that there is the possibility of establishing mechanisms for the examination of the fulfillment of those minimum requirements, once the student has completed the educational study programs of the higher education center that took care of his/her academic preparation."

The basic sciences that must be included in the medical program are chemistry, biology, biochemistry, physics, anatomy, histology, embryology, mathematics, statistics, genetics, physiology, microbiology, parasitology, pathology, and pharmacology. The basic science instruction should include didactic and laboratory courses which should provide a knowledge base to achieve the established educational objectives and to prepare the student for the clinical component of their training, and the research component of the institution's mission. In addition, Costa Rica indicates that the medical program include courses in the field of humanities such as history of medicine (2 credits), medical ethics (2 credits), and legal medicine (2 credits).

Conformance to Commonly Accepted Standards/Focus on Clerkships or Equivalent

The country's response indicates that the medical school curriculum does include the study of clinical sciences. According to Costa Rica, "the clinical science instruction must have didactic and proficiency based courses and supervised patient care to enable the orderly progression of clinical competency. Established educational objectives serve to guide clinical science instruction and prepare graduates for entry-level residency training."

Costa Rica further indicates that "institutional policies and the level of supervision afforded should be sufficient to ensure that faculty and students are responsible for maintaining patient safety, privacy, and dignity. A sufficient volume and diversity of experiences in the supervised care of patients should be available to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for student achievement of the objectives for clinical education."

In addition, the country expects clinical instruction to "ensure student understanding of the ethical and moral basis in the care and treatment of patients and utilizes a wide variety of clinical training settings. External clinical should provide experiences consistent with educational objectives and are evaluated periodically to assess their relationship."

The clinical sciences included as a parameter for the study plans of the private universities are listed below. They are based on the requirements of Article 13 of Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) and the study plan of the Medical School of the University of Costa Rica, the State University.

Physiology and semiology:	10 credits
Internal Medicine:	22 credits
Pediatrics:	12 credits
Psychiatry:	6 credits
Gynecology:	6 credits
Obstetrics:	6 credits
Radiology:	2 credits
Surgery:	12 credits

Public Health:	8 credits
Clinical Pharmacology:	3 credits
Internship in Surgery, pediatrics, gynecology and obstetrics, and medicine:	1 year

Finally, Costa Rica states that "clinical rotations start on the fifth quarterly cycle or fourth semester cycle until the end of the study plan, according to the case and according to what was authorized by CONESUP for each particular medical school. All students must also complete a year of rotating internship, with a length of three months in each of the four great areas: Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Surgery, and Gynecology-Obstetrics."

The country indicates that "to authorize the functioning of a school, CONESUP demands the assuring of the necessary installations for the clinical practice of students. In Costa Rica, medical schools have their clinical rotations in hospitals of the Caja Costancense de Seguro Social (Social Security Department), which is the institution that administrates public hospitals in the country and that is dully regulated by the Health Ministry. The Reglamento de la Actividad Clínica Docente en la Caja Costancense del Seguro Social (Regulating Code for Educational Clinic Activity in the Social Security Department) is the norm that regulates the inspection of medical students in their clinical experience."

## 5. Medical Students

The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the medical school admits only those students who possess the intelligence, integrity, and personal characteristics that are generally perceived as necessary to become effective physicians. Approval should not be granted to a school that fails to admit qualified students.

The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the medical school carefully monitors the progress of students through the educational program and graduates only those students who successfully complete the program. Approval should not be granted if the school fails to monitor students for satisfactory academic progress.

### Student Characteristics

In its response to the Department questionnaire, Costa Rica cites Regulating Code for Law No. 6693 as the authority that addresses admissions requirements at medical schools, one of which is a high school diploma. In addition, "for each school of medicine, CONESUP studies and authorizes admissions criteria, which include an

admission exam. Also, as a requirement to enroll in clinical courses, approved study plans demand the passing of basic sciences for medicine."

Further, Costa Rica states that "medical schools must publish admission policies that are designed to secure the best possible students for medicine. Policies describe requirements for accepting transfer students and granting advance standing. Policies describe the technical or physical standards for the profession and for the education of physicians. Admissions requirements focus on satisfactory prior scholastic achievement, personality, motivation, industry, and emotional characteristics. Interviews are conducted of all qualified applicants who are under final consideration."

Graduates Only those Students who successfully complete the Program

In its response in the Department questionnaire, Costa Rica indicates that "medical schools must evaluate the performances of students in relation to the achievement of the educational objectives." There are legal requirements to ensure that schools of medicine monitor the progress of students throughout their educational program and graduate only those students who successfully complete the program. For example, Article 51 of Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) requires that, during the exercise of its powers of inspection, "CONESUP, either directly or through its Technical Secretariat, will be capable of requesting from universities the information it deems necessary, or to prove on-site the facts and circumstances that are of its interest, with the object of verifying the fulfillment of the norms on behalf of the institution, or due to a procedure that is pending a resolution. It is the obligation of the institutional authorities to facilitate the exercise of those powers. The object of inspection on behalf of CONESUP is the proper follow-up of the student's progress."

Article 7 of The Regulating Code for Education Clinical Activity in the Social Security Department "establishes the process for the follow-up of students' progress in the clinical training through reviewing permanent reports from each institution." In addition, Article 32 of the same Regulating Code requires that "CENDEISS and the learning entities will perform evaluations at least once a year in order to ensure the professional formation and to verify the institutional policies in the area of health."

Finally, Articles 37, 38, and 39 of Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) require that "the titles conferred by private universities that have the object of accrediting a university degree, will be confirmed by the Technical Secretariat and registered in CONESUP." The requesting university's president must provide an affidavit or sworn statement indicating that the titles have been issued in accordance to the law and verifying that the holders have fulfilled their academic requirements. The title will be conferred within 15 days by the Technical Secretariat after receipt of the application, unless it determines some irregularity, in which case it will inform CONESUP.

## **6. Resources for the Educational Program**

**The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the medical school has physical facilities that are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate for the size and scope of the educational program, as well as the size of the student body. Approval should not be granted if the facilities are inadequate.**

**The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the faculty provides effective teaching and is of sufficient size to provide the scope of the educational program offered. Approval should not be granted if there is an insufficient number of qualified faculty.**

**The accreditation/approval process should determine whether the medical school has a library sufficient in size, breadth, and depth to support the educational program. Approval should not be granted if the library is inadequate.**

### **Physical Facilities**

**Costa Rica requires the physical plant of the schools of medicine to be "appropriate, sufficient, well-maintained and properly equipped to provide an environment that is conducive to teaching, learning, and research in keeping with the mission and objectives of the college." Appropriate scientific instruments, apparatus, and audio-visual aids must be available in addition to short and long range plans noting how the equipment will be repaired or upgraded. This assertion is validated by the requirement of Article 18 of Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) that states "When appropriate, the physical plant standards of the Health and Occupational Safety in Construction Regulations shall be applied in order to provide for the minimum conditions for academic activities. Likewise for those purposes, a Ministry of Health permit must be obtained. Compliance with these standards is essential to obtain approval of the university or its entities. In all cases, the physical plant where the university will carry out its activities must have the permits required by and issued by the appropriate agencies, which must confirm that the plant meets the technical and health specifications necessary for its teaching activity."**

**Costa Rica indicates further that "classroom, laboratory, patient care related study, and office space must be quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and reasonably accessible for use, and maintained in a good state of function and cleanliness. When necessary, a suitable environment and procedures exist for the care and protection of live animals. The patient care facilities are maintained in compliance with governmental standards."**

### Faculty

In its response to the Department questionnaire, Costa Rica indicates that Article 13 of Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) establishes the requirements for professors. These requirements are necessary for the creation of a private university and require the entity to demonstrate that "the proposed university has the necessary academic, qualified personnel to carry out its operations, as required by subsection (c) of the Article 6 of the law. Therefore, the teaching staff must meet the following requirements:

- a) Persons who hold university titles that are legally valid or properly recognized by the appropriate official agencies.
- b) At a minimum, 75 percent must hold the degree of licentiate or equivalent.
- c) Ten percent must hold a degree beyond the licentiate.
- d) Fifty percent must have published at least three articles in prestigious specialized journals on topics related to those they will teach. In the case of artists, the publications may be substituted by public exhibits or public performances. Meritorious books may also substitute for the publication of articles, either partially or totally.
- e) In the case of specialists in technical subjects, the requirements of the previous subsection can be met by works of other types, such as plans, maps, execution of significant projects, or scientific or technical contributions, depending on the characteristics of the subject involved.
- f) Ten percent of the professors must have academic teaching or research experience for a least ten years and twenty-five percent for at least five years.
- g) For the doctoral program, all of the professors must hold a doctorate. Analogous requirements must be met for other degrees.
- h) None of the teaching staff may have a teaching load of more than 24 hours per week at the universities, which will be shown by sworn affidavit of the professors."

### Library

Articles 11(i) and 19(g) of Regulating Code for 6693 (Decree No. 25071-MEP) establish library requirements. Article 11(i) requires a "detailed description of the installations and infrastructure available for the operation of the university, with special reference to classrooms, libraries, physical plant, and if applicable, workshops or installations for field work, laboratories and other facilities necessary for the fulfillment of the activities

provided in the study plan..." Article 19(g) requires a description of the library services, bibliographical resources, availability of laboratories and general infrastructure at the time the application is submitted, as well as the investment and acquisition plan provided for the adequate operation of the major.

The country further asserts that information technologies and services shall be available to faculty and students and shall be of the quality, depth, and currency to support the institution's mission and the objectives of the academic program. The information technologies shall include computer hardware and software, and related sources shall be reviewed and updated on a continuous basis to meet the emerging needs. The country indicates that support and training are provided to assist faculty and students learn and apply information technologies.

## **PART II: Accreditation/Approval Evaluation Procedures**

**1. There should be a clearly recognized body responsible for evaluating the quality of medical education in the country and that body should be legally authorized to accredit/approve medical schools offering educational programs leading to the M.D. (or equivalent) degree.**

In its response to the Department questionnaire, Costa Rica states that "the Inspection Committee for the medical schools of CONESUP is the entity in charge of exercising the inspection of the medical education according to an agreement taken by CONESUP in a meeting held on August 27, 1998. CONESUP is the legal authority to approve the function of medical schools according to the Regulating Code for Law 6693 (Decree No. 25071), Article 3(e)."

**2. The accreditation/approval process should include effective controls against conflicts of interest and inconsistent application of the accreditation/approval standards.**

Costa Rica cites Articles 230, 234, and 236 of the General Law of Public Administration as the authority to prevent conflicts of interest in the operation of CONESUP. Article 230 deals with motives for abstentions and recusals set forth in the Organic Law of the Judicial Power and in article 102 of the Law of the Financial Administration of the Republic. Article 234 deals with the motives of members of collegiate bodies and provides directions for the members to abstain and separate themselves from proceedings. Article 236 provides further direction for the procedures of the abstentions and recusals.

