

U.S. Department of Education

Staff Analysis
of the Report Submitted by

Dominican Republic

Prepared March 2007

Background

In October 1997 the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) first determined that the accreditation standards used by the Dominican Republic to evaluate medical education programs leading to the M.D. or equivalent degree in that country are comparable to standards of accreditation used to evaluate medical education in the United States.

The governmental entity responsible for evaluating the quality of medical education in the Dominican Republic is the Secretary of State for Higher Education, Science and Technology (SEESCYT). SEESCYT approves the creation and accreditation of institutions of higher education, science and technology. Although the statutory language does not specifically mention medical schools, SEESCYT interprets the language to mean that it has oversight responsibility over all institutions of higher education in the Dominican Republic, including the medical education programs.

The SEESCYT is responsible for insuring compliance with established policies, program accreditation, and coordinating all efforts geared towards excellence in higher education. The SEESCYT currently reports that its actions are based on continuous evaluation and the decisions of the National Council for Higher Education, Science and Technology. In past reports, the SEESCYT clarified that it makes the final accreditation determination.

Under the SEESCYT is also a Sub-Secretary of State for Higher Education with responsibility to provide guidance, policy implementation and technical criteria. In addition, the current report notes that it is the responsibility of the Sub-Secretary's office to conduct continuous evaluation and the accreditation process.

The SEESCYT conducts its accreditations on a five-year schedule, and currently accredits medical programs housed within nine public, non-profit universities (one pontifical university is legally autonomous but required to submit to the regulations).

During its March 2004 meeting, the NCFMEA reaffirmed its prior determination that the standards and processes used by the Dominican Republic for its evaluation of medical school remained comparable to that used to evaluate medical schools in the United

States. The NCFMEA also requested that the Dominican Republic submit periodic reports describing its continuing accreditation activities. In addition, the country was asked to include information on the areas of concern identified in the Department staff report prepared for the NCFMEA's March 2004 meeting where additional information was needed. The country was asked to provide a status report on those areas, specifically including:

- 1.) Any standards that SEESCYT has established requiring medical schools to involve faculty in decisions related to admissions and in decisions pertaining to the hiring, retention, and discipline of faculty;
- 2.) Any standards or procedures that SEESCYT has established to assess medical programs with respect to graduation rates, rates of acceptance into residency programs, and licensure rates; and
- 3.) Any standards or procedures that SEESCYT has implemented to minimize student exposure to infectious diseases.

The country submitted a report in March 2006 covering the period from January 2004 to December 2005 (although the title reads "Medical School Report for the Year 2002-2003"). No status report on the three highlighted areas of concern was included in that report, which is the one currently under review. In addition, the country was sent a letter in October 2006 asking if it wanted to update any of the information that was submitted previously. However, the Department received no response to that communication.

Summary of Findings

Based on the limited information provided, there is no evidence of any major change in the standards and processes of the Dominican Republic that were last determined to be comparable by the NCFMEA in March 2004. Department staff also concludes that the accreditation activities during the period reported are not inconsistent with the NCFMEA guidelines.

However, based on its review of the report submitted by the Secretary of State for Higher Education, Science and Technology (SEESCYT) regarding its accreditation activities, Department staff concludes that not all of the information requested by the NCFMEA has been provided. The information specifically requested by the NCFMEA in 2004 still needs to be provided by the SEESCYT, especially the status report on the three areas of concern highlighted above. In addition, current information on the SEESCYT's activities pertaining to the nine accredited medical programs should be requested.

Staff Analysis

The SEESCYT reported on some of the following categories of information, as requested by the NCFMEA:

Current Status of Medical Schools: (as of December 2005)

1. UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL PEDRO HENRIQUEZ URENA (UNPHU)

The SEESCYT reports that the school is in compliance with all standards of accreditation, and is due for its 5-year accreditation. The SEESCYT was awaiting the self-study.

2. INSTITUTO TECNOLOGICO DE SANTO DOMINGO (INTEC)

The SEESCYT reports that the school is in compliance with all standards of accreditation, and is due for its 5-year accreditation. The SEESCYT was awaiting the self-study.

3. PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD MADRE Y MAESTRA (PUCMM)*

The SEESCYT reports that the school is in compliance with all standards of accreditation, and is due for its 5-year accreditation. The SEESCYT was awaiting the self-study.

The SEESCYT also noted that this is an autonomous university as decreed by law. However, it must still comply with all of the laws and regulations. The SEESCYT reported "We have insisted strongly in their compliance with SEESCYT standards and regulations. The university has fulfilled its obligation to comply with all our requirements."

4. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE SANTO DOMINGO (UASD)

The SEESCYT reports that the school is in compliance with all standards of accreditation, and is due for its 5-year accreditation. The SEESCYT was awaiting the self-study.

5. UNIVERSIDAD CENTRAL DEL ESTE (UCE) *

The SEESCYT reports that the school is in compliance with all standards of accreditation, and is due for its 5-year accreditation. The SEESCYT was awaiting the self-study.

In addition, the SEESCYT reported that the school underwent a re-certification evaluation by the Tribunal Medico de Puerto Rico and was awarded recognition for the maximum period of four years.

6. UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA NORDESTANA (UCNE) *

The SEESCYT reports that the school is in compliance with all standards of accreditation, and is due for its 5-year accreditation. The SEESCYT was awaiting the self-study.

7. UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA TECNOLOGICA DEL CIBAO (UCTECI)

The SEESCYT reports that the school is in compliance with all standards of accreditation, and is due for its 5-year accreditation. The SEESCYT was awaiting the self-study.

8. UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLOGICA DE SANTIAGO (UTESA)

The SEESCYT reports that the school is in compliance with all standards of accreditation, and is due for its 5-year accreditation. The SEESCYT was awaiting the self-study. (The report appears to note that this school was relocated recently from Santo Domingo.)

9. UNIVERSIDAD IBEROAMERICANA (UNIBE) *

The SEESCYT reports that the school is in compliance with all standards of accreditation, and is due for its 5-year accreditation. The SEESCYT was awaiting the self-study.

In addition, the SEESCYT reported that the school underwent a re-certification evaluation by the Tribunal Medico de Puerto Rico and was awarded recognition for the maximum period of four years.

** US Department of Education records list these four schools as current recipients of Title IV funds.*

Overview of accreditation activities:

SEESCYT did not report any overview of accrediting activities specifically pertaining to the schools listed above under the section on "Current Status of Medical Schools." As of December 2005, the SEESCYT was awaiting self-studies from all of its accredited medical schools.

Summary of any changes or developments in the following areas:

Laws and Regulations

SEESCYT did not report that any changes have been made to the laws or regulations in the Dominican Republic that would affect its accrediting activities.

Standards, Processes and Procedure

SEESCYT did not report any modifications to its standards, processes and procedures since they were last approved by the NCFMEA in 2004.

Schedule of upcoming accreditation activities

SEESCYT did not report any schedule of upcoming accreditation activities specifically pertaining to the schools listed above under the section on "Current Status of Medical Schools." As of December 2005, the SEESCYT was awaiting self-studies from all of its accredited medical schools.

The report did note that as part of its efforts to enhance medical education, the Dominican Republic hosted the First Congress on Scientific Investigative Interdependency (June 2005), and the Medical Education Pan-American Congress (June 2006). As a result, the report notes that the Dominican Republic is "evaluating the presentations of both activities to determine if any changes are needed, to what extent and how can we implement any changes we deem necessary."

Country Response to the Draft Staff Analysis

The Dominican Republic responded to the draft staff analysis on February 28, 2007. The country states "The Committee [NCFMEA] determined and so informed during its hearing [March 8-9, 2004] that the Dominican Republic would not be required to make a report for the next year. It [NCFMEA] stated that the next report due date was 2006. The Committee did not indicate areas of concern at the meeting but rather expressed their pleasure at the organizational and administrative excellence of the Dominican reform of its higher education system."

Furthermore, the country states that it has no recollection of the information request in the Secretary's letter of May 14, 2004. In addition, the country reports that it has no record of ever having received the Department's October 2006 invitation to submit additional information. In any case, the country's response makes it clear that nothing has changed. A country representative will be unable to attend the March 2007 meeting of the NCFMEA. However, the country does plan to send a representative to the March 2008 NCFMEA meeting to report on the schedule of accrediting activities that it will conduct throughout 2007.

Another copy of the Secretary's May 14, 2004 letter, with the enclosures requesting further information, as noted in the current staff analysis, has been attached for reference.