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# Implementing University Social Responsibility in the Caribbean: Perspectives of Internal Stakeholders

Practicando la Responsabilidad Social Universitaria en el Caribe:  
Perspectivas de los públicos internos

Praticando a Responsabilidade Social Universitária no Caribe:  
Perspectiva do público interno

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► **Abstract.** University Social Responsibility (USR) is the ethical and transparent management of the administrative, educational, cognitive and social processes carried out by a higher education institution. More and more universities are practicing USR not only in Latin America but also in the United States and Europe, in order to reduce the negative impacts their daily operations can have on different stakeholders and on a macro level on society, the economy, and the environment. However, despite existing knowledge in the implementation of USR in Latin America and the Caribbean, there are few empirical studies that analyze the positions of diverse internal stakeholders regarding USR practices mainly in the Caribbean. Therefore, this study analyzes the perspectives of the internal stakeholders in social responsibility initiatives and processes at a private university in Puerto Rico. A total of 533 participants (356 students, 99 administrative staff, and 78 faculty members) were interviewed and were given a questionnaire, which evaluated the following areas: responsible campus, professional and citizenship education, social

Keywords:

university social  
responsibility,  
USR, university,  
education,  
responsible  
campus

knowledge management, and social participation. Overall, the internal stakeholders' perceptions were consistent among the three groups. It can be observed that the various internal stakeholders are aware of what it means—in theory, and in practice—to be a socially-responsible university, although they also recognize opportunities for improvement and future challenges regarding USR. The results of this study contribute to the literature, to the application of conceptual models—mainly from the perspectives of internal stakeholders—and to the importance of evaluating USR practices.

► **Resumen.** La responsabilidad social universitaria (RSU) es la gestión ética y transparente de los procesos administrativos, educativos, cognitivos y sociales que realiza una institución de educación superior. Cada vez más son las universidades que practican la RSU no solo en Latinoamérica sino también en Estados Unidos y Europa, esto con el fin de reducir los impactos negativos que causan las operaciones diarias en distintos públicos de interés y a nivel macro en la sociedad, economía y el medioambiente. No obstante, a pesar del conocimiento que existe sobre la práctica de RSU en Latinoamérica y El Caribe, existen pocos estudios empíricos que analicen las posturas de diversos públicos internos respecto a las prácticas de RSU principalmente en El Caribe. Por ello, este estudio analiza las perspectivas de públicos internos sobre las iniciativas y procesos de responsabilidad social en una universidad privada en Puerto Rico. Se evaluó a un total de 533 participantes (356 estudiantes, 99 administrativos y 78 profesores) a los cuales se les aplicó un cuestionario que evaluaba las siguientes áreas: campus responsable, educación profesional y ciudadana, gestión de conocimiento social y participación social. En general, las percepciones públicas internas fueron consistentes entre los tres grupos. Se aprecia que los diversos públicos internos están conscientes de lo que significa, en la teoría y en la práctica, ser una universidad socialmente responsable aunque también reconocen oportunidades de mejora y desafíos futuros con respecto a la RSU. Los resultados de este estudio aportan a la literatura, la aplicación de modelos conceptuales, principalmente desde perspectivas de públicos internos y la importancia de evaluar las prácticas de RSU.

*Palabras clave:*  
*responsabilidad social universitaria, RSU, universidad, educación, campus responsable.*

► **Resumo.** A Responsabilidade Social Universitária (RSU) é a gestão ética e transparente dos processos administrativos, educacionais, cognitivos e sociais realizadas por uma instituição de ensino superior. Mais e mais universidades que praticam RSU não só na América Latina, mas também nos Estados Unidos e na Europa, este, a fim de reduzir os impactos negativos causados pelas operações diárias em várias partes interessadas e ao nível macro na sociedade, economia e meio ambiente. No entanto, apesar do conhecimento

*Palavras-chave:*  
*responsabilidade social universitária, RSU,*

que existe sobre a prática da RSU na América Latina e no Caribe, há poucos estudos empíricos que analisam as posições dos diversos públicos internos sobre as práticas de RSU principalmente no Caribe. Portanto, este estudo analisa as perspectivas de públicos internos sobre as iniciativas e processos de responsabilidade social em uma universidade privada em Puerto Rico. Foram avaliados um total de 533 participantes (356 alunos, 99 administrativos e 78 professores) ao qual foi aplicado um questionário avaliando as seguintes áreas: campus de educação responsável, profissional e pública, gestão do conhecimento social e de participação social. Em geral, as percepções do público interno foram consistentes entre os três grupos. Reconhece-se que os vários públicos internos estão cientes do que significa, na teoria e na prática, ser uma universidade socialmente responsável, mas também reconhecem as oportunidades de melhoria e os desafios futuros a respeito da RSU. Os resultados deste estudo contribuem para a literatura, a aplicação de modelos conceituais, principalmente a partir de perspectivas do público interno e a importância de avaliar as práticas de RSU.

universidade,  
educação, campus  
responsável.

**S**ocial responsibility is a fundamental practice in the ethical and transparent management of any organization. According to Topal (2009), social responsibility is an essential element of our networked society and business structure. Due to technological and communication advances, higher education institutions are facing more challenges today than before. Specifically, there has been a rise in university community awareness and pressure regarding social responsibility practices (Vevere, 2017). Universities are vital in teaching responsible values and educating students to be responsible leaders and citizens, along with the well-being of local communities and the environment. However, when applying the practice of social responsibility to universities, it is not adequate to use the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework. Carroll (2015) explains that universities are not corporations, thus they cannot be treated equally. CSR is the way businesses behave ethically with diverse stakeholders (consumers, employees, shareholders) through the implementation of fair and consistent norms, standards and values. In the same line, Vasilescu, Barna, Epure, and Baicu (2010) state that CSR is how businesses contribute to the well-being of their stakeholders, the development of solutions to societal and environmental problems, and sustainable development.

Every organization produces positive or negative impacts on society, and universities are not the exception. They must be aware of the effects and consequences of their decisions and actions like any other organization (Argandoña as cited by Vázquez, Aza & Lanero, 2014). According to Vallaey, Sasia, and De la Cruz (2009), universities have different impacts on the economy, society, and the environment. This is due to the high number of people and vehicles around campus, the high consumption of materials, and the development of sophisticated activities, among other things (Nejati, Shafaei, Salamzadeh, Salamzadeh & Daraei, 2009). Corporations and universities produce different impacts; for instance, universities produce impacts related to learning and research production that only applies to educational institutions. And this is where University meets Social Responsibility. University Social Responsibility (USR) involves different aspects, such as, civic commitment and active citizenship, volunteering, the promotion of environmental involvement, and the strengthening of communities among internal stakeholders (Vasilescu et al., 2010). USR involves how the campus is managed, how students learn, how the curriculum is developed, how faculty engages in research that produces solutions, and the development of cooperative and collaborative local partnerships with communities. Hernández and Saldarriaga (2009) state that USR is the ability to develop and promote a group of principles and values through responsible management, teaching, research, and community engagement. These four key areas (responsible management, teaching, research, and community engagement) do not work in isolation; they work together as a whole.

Social responsibility is a crucial component of the higher education management process as stated by the World Declaration on Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century (Vasilescu et al., 2010). Guided by the body of conceptual literature in USR and the importance that this concept has on world educational organisms, this study's concern is about how universities, particularly in the Caribbean, are behaving in terms of social responsibility among their diverse internal stakeholders. This study emphasizes the students', employees', and professors' opinions on how a private university is applying different aspects of University Social Responsibility on their campus. It also aims to provide a structured empirical foundation for analysis and understanding of the participants' knowledge, perspective, and approaches toward this topic. This work analyzes social responsibility opinions among internal stakeholders of a private university in Puerto Rico with the purpose of identifying strengths and weakness regarding social responsibility practices. This work is relevant because literature on empirical methods is still scarce, especially in the Caribbean.

The concept of USR was born in 2001 when 13 universities in Latin America, in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), developed the initiative "Ethics, Social Capital, and Development." This with the purpose of promoting awareness of socially-responsible practices involving not only traditional community outreach programs (Vallaey,

2008). Implementation of University Social Responsibility was developed based on the above. USR has grown in acceptance and recognition among several institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to Martí Noguera and Martí-Vilar (2013), since 2010, several Ibero-American universities have been working in the development of conceptual frameworks and methodologies for the implementation and evaluation of USR. Among the most relevant are Universidad Construye País (initiative of Chilean public and private universities), Asociación de Universidades Confiadas a la Compañía de Jesús en América Latina, and the work from the Interamerican Development Bank (Martí Noguera & Martí-Vilar, 2013). Recently, a new initiative was designed, URSULA, Unión de Responsabilidad Social Universitaria Latinoamericana (Latin America University Social Responsibility Association). URSULA is an interactive platform for discussion that includes the participation not only from universities but also governmental organizations, companies, and members of the social sector, to discuss the role of universities in social responsibility. It is also an initiative for showcasing best practices and innovative and sustainable management models (URSULA, 2018). USR has become then, a fundamental discussion topic driver of solutions among universities in Latin America and the Caribbean (Herrera 2009; Vasilescu et al. 2010). This is due to the diverse challenges facing the economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of society. Furthermore, the rapid technological changes that help expand online education offerings provided opportunities to universities to influence public life as stated by Hoyt and Hollister (2014). Martí Noguera, Moncayo, and Martí-Vilar (2014) explain that USR presents an ethical reference thanks to the work developed in the area by the Interamerican Development Bank with the management of Bernardo Kliksberg and François Vallaëys, which created an evaluation model through the administration of the impacts that universities generate in the society.

The practice of USR has been extended to other regions. Vázquez et al. (2014) specify that Europe and Asia have started to pay attention and gain increasing knowledge and acceptance of the importance of social responsibility practices at universities. For instance, the University Social Responsibility Network (USRN) was created on October 9, 2015, in Hong Kong (USRN, 2018). The purpose of this network is to create awareness on the fact that universities around the world must work together to address diverse challenges in areas of society, environment, economy, and culture. This network was formed by several universities that participated in the Second Summit on University Social Responsibility and it pursues collaboration and networking among members and alliances (USRN, 2018). In sum, USR has brought alignments among critical areas that were considered separate processes: educational practice and society needs.

This paper follows the methodology of Vallaëys et al. (2009). They developed a comprehensive Manual on University Social Responsibility (*Manual de Responsabilidad Social Universitaria*) published by the Interamerican Development Bank, for universities who want to initiate social responsibility processes, providing them with the tools and resources needed



for this purpose. François Vallaëys' work is one of the most relevant and internationally-recognized about USR. He served as consultant for the Interamerican Development Bank, producing several documents and tools regarding USR that are still used as reference by many universities in Latin America (Martí Noguera & Martí-Vilar, 2013).

Vallaëys et al. (2009) and other authors (Dominguez-Pachón, 2009; González-Alcántara, Fontaneda-González & Camino-López, 2010; Vázquez et al., 2014) emphasize that universities create four different types of impact in their stakeholders: organizational, educational, cognitive, and societal. Organizational impacts are about the way universities manage their daily operations in the campus with transparency and equity (including but not limited to work climate, student life, environment, suppliers, and all aspects concerning energy, waste, and safety). Organizational impacts can be caused by any organization. It is essential that universities reduce any harmful organizational impacts, providing all the resources and tools required by students, professors, and administrative personnel to do their jobs and fulfil their roles. Simple things like providing comfortable office chairs to the faculty (to avoid back pain), as well as LED lighting in classrooms for better illumination thus enhancing focus and productivity. Societal impacts are also caused by every organization. For universities, societal implications go beyond the traditional volunteering and community efforts. Positive societal impacts involve the participation of community leaders in the teaching-research process. The idea behind this approach is that students are making a positive impact in their communities while practicing the skills and knowledge learned in the classroom. Also, community leaders are brought to the classroom to work on projects with faculty and students so as to solve problems or satisfy community needs.

Educational impacts refer to the curriculum design which includes ethical and social responsibility topics and projects. It refers also to the way professors teach and students learn and are involved in research collaborations not only with faculty but with members of the community. Cognitive impacts concern research production and how faculty conduct research that helps advance society, solve problems or fulfill needs (at a micro or macro level). Moreover, Brown and Cloke (2009) indicate that cognitive impacts include providing accessible knowledge, and the importance of developing research projects with students and collaborating with other institutions. Universities have different groups of stakeholders or stakeholders (both internal and external). Internal stakeholders are students, staff, administrative personnel, in other words, groups that spend most of the time in the institution. According to Sánchez-Hernández and Mainardes (2016), external stakeholders are different groups of people that are important for the university and vice versa such as alumni, parents, prospective students, media, donors, competitors, communities, governmental organizations, among others.

To date, most previous research on USR has been developed in Latin American universities. However, it has recently started to gain attention in Europe (Vázquez et al., 2014). Although USR

in Latin America has been studied conceptually, evidence on empirical studies to articulate USR is still scarce, especially in the Caribbean. As previously stated, Europe has started to focus on university social responsibility practices. Vázquez et al. (2014) examined students' perceptions regarding the four impacts of USR (organizational, educational, cognitive, and social) and analyzed the overall understanding of university contribution to society, environment and economy. This study was developed at the University of León in Spain. Results indicated that students have an in-depth knowledge about the importance of promoting work-life balance, respect for diversity, and equal opportunities.

Martínez-Usarralde, Lloret-Catalá, and Mas-Gil (2017) examined the perceptions of the student body regarding social responsibility practices at the University of Valencia in Spain. This research project follows Vallaeys et al. (2009) methodology for carrying out a self-diagnosis of USR practices among students using surveys. The final sample of this study was 206 third and fourth-year students between 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 from the School of Philosophy and Sciences. Results indicated that students agree that the university offers adequate ethical and citizenship education. Forty-four percent of students agreed that the diverse course offerings are updated and respond to social needs. Fifty-nine students indicated that they had had the opportunity to participate in social projects outside the university. And 41% have had the chance to engage in research projects for solving societal and environmental problems.

In 2013, Vázquez, Lanero, and Licandro examined opinions regarding social responsibility, specifically among business administration and economics students at the Catholic University of Uruguay. The final sample comprised 200 students. Overall, students perceived a general commitment to educating on social responsibility contents at both internal and external levels. Findings also reveal a high demand among students for training in issues regarding employees, consumers, and environmental sustainability. In the same line, Domínguez and López (2009) analyzed social responsibility perceptions among students, precisely how universities manage USR and which should be their role according to students. This study observed that there has been an evolution in the awareness of social responsibility practices and students declared that universities should deal not only with professional but also with human and responsible education.

Arango Tobón, Clavijo Zapata, Puerta-Lopera, and Sánchez-Duque (2014) found that students in a university in Colombia perceived socially-responsible behaviors as self-care, environmental awareness, and respect for shared spaces. Authors found that academic education incited in the development of responsible behavior. They also indicated that university should go beyond the traditional education of social responsibility. This means that university should teach values, including empathy and emotional development, so students not only know the concept, but they can apply it to everyday situations in personal and professional scenarios. Martí Noguera, Martí-Villar, and Almerich (2014) developed a significant research project, from a



psychology perspective, to evaluate how students in Ibero-America acquire social responsibility behavior due to the incidence of higher education. The authors created an instrument that includes three scales: human values, multidimensional empathy, and empowerment of social responsibility behaviors. This instrument was administered to 860 students from different countries in Ibero-America. Findings indicated that students are frequently choosing social responsibility behaviors, and this usually stems from openness to change and empathy.

Teaching methods could be used to evaluate classroom USR manifestation. A study in Slovakia analyzed teaching methods used to educate students of the Computer Sciences program in the field of social responsibility. Its significant findings were that the concept of social responsibility could evoke a natural purging process in economically challenging times despite that this concept is relatively new in Slovakia. (Tokarčíková, Kucharčíková & Ďurišová, 2015). A study developed by Vennero (2011) created and tested a model for determining whether there is a relationship between higher education institutions that adopt social responsibility policies and student retention. This study focuses on a sample group of higher education institutions within the United States that have a high level of social responsibility policies and compares their levels of student retention to institutions with a low level of social responsibility policies. Results showed that sustainability activities that are most significant are positively impacting student retention and, consequently, institutions. Research projects like these show that different aspects can be studied within USR to contribute different points of view to the literature.

Another essential aspect of the USR process is communication. Diverse stakeholders must be informed about what the university is doing in terms of USR. Ramsenia Canelón (2013) analyzed the websites of 14 universities that belong to the *Asociación de Universidades Confiadas a la Compañía de Jesús en América Latina* (AUSJAL) to discover how universities communicate about USR. All 14 universities disseminate USR content, but each institution communicates differently. For instance, few universities had a unique section for USR and the majority presented USR information in different sections of the website that sometimes it was difficult to find. Many of the content displayed on the websites was concerned about social impacts.

Current literature on USR shows that most of the empirical studies analyze student perceptions regarding social responsibility practices. That is why our research is relevant because it involves not only the students' but also the faculty's and administrative personnel's opinions. Our study comprises three of the essential stakeholders of a higher education institution. This gives a holistic view of the current evaluation of social responsibility by several groups. The objective of this paper is to analyze the perceptions and opinions of internal stakeholders about social responsibility in a private university in Puerto Rico. Students, administrative personnel, and faculty were surveyed based on Vallaey's et al. (2009) methodological approach. Vallaey's et al. (2009) conceptual framework was taken into account due to its international recognition and holistic perspective (Martí Noguera & Martí-Vilar, 2013). Vallaey's et al.'s (2009) work is

used in different projects and initiatives developed by universities and research groups in Latin America (Martí Noguera & Martí-Vilar, 2013). This framework has been used by other authors such as Martínez-Usarralde et al. (2017); Ramsenia Canelón (2013); Vázquez et al. (2014) to name a few. Vallaeys et al.'s (2009) methodological framework includes a comprehensive set of guidelines for universities to do a self-diagnosis of USR practices, providing surveys, interviews, and focus group instruments for both internal and external stakeholders.

This paper advances the literature regarding social responsibility, validating conceptual models, and adding best practices regarding USR in the Caribbean. The findings of this research are relevant to the governing bodies of the university; they can rely on them to build environmental and curricular strategies, as the number of students looking for socially-responsible colleges increases. Institutional governments can also be aware of the concerns and priorities of their communities, giving them a base upon where to start implementing changes and improvements towards making the school even more socially responsible.

## METHODS

This descriptive study uses a quantitative methodology for analyzing the attitudes of internal stakeholders towards social responsibility practices of a private university in Puerto Rico. This with the purpose of performing a self-diagnosis of social responsibility practices among three of the essential stakeholders for universities: students, administrative personnel, and professors.

### Participants

Internal stakeholders that participated in this survey were volunteers and the sample selected shows real distributions by gender, age, and school. Based on these criteria, the initial sample comprised 375 students, 100 faculty members, and 110 administrative personnel. The number of participants was established according to the educational and psychological measurement by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). After cleaning the data and removing incomplete questionnaires, the final sample was made up of 356 students, 99 administrative personnel, and 78 faculty members. We used a non-probabilistic sample (using a convenience sampling or accidental sampling) for selecting the participants. Volunteer students that participated in the surveys were recruited at campus or with prior authorization from a professor to administer the survey in the classroom. Only undergraduate students from the main campus (there are other smaller campuses around the island) were included but they belong to different schools and disciplines. Professors and administrative personnel were recruited in their offices.

Among the final sample of 356 students, 58% were female and 41% were male, aged mainly between 15 and 25 years (15/19 age: 44%; 20/25 age: 50%). Most of the students surveyed were in

their first year (42%), followed by the second year (24%), third-year (17%), fourth year (10%) and fifth year (7%). Twenty-five percent of student respondents indicated a main academic background on Social and Human Sciences, 24% on Business, 15% on Health Sciences, 11% on Hospitality and Tourism, 9% on Science and Technology, 9% on Education, and 7% on Technical studies.

On the other hand, female professors comprised 70% of the sample, while 30% were male. Most of the professors were in the age range of 36/45 (29%), followed by 46/55 (25%), 55/65 (22%), 25/35 (19%), and 65 or more (4%). Most of the professors surveyed belonged to the School of Social and Human Sciences (49%), followed by Business School (15%), Health Sciences (10%), Technical Studies (9%), Hospitality and Culinary Arts (7%), Science and Technology (7%), and Education (1%). Administrative personnel was mostly female (67%), while 33% were male (67%). Seventy-eight percent of the staff belonged to offices (such as Admissions, Library, Marketing, Retention, etc.), while 22% worked on the different schools of the university. Forty-four percent were in the age range of 36/45, followed by 26/35 (31%), 46/55 (19%), 56/65 (5%), and 20/25 (1%).

## Instruments

A survey technique was used and the questionnaire was adapted from the methodology of Vallaeys et al. (2009).

The questionnaire follows the four areas of responsible university management established by Vallaeys et al. (2009): responsible campus, professional and citizenship education, social knowledge management, and social participation:

- **Responsible campus:** Refers to the commitment of daily ethical operations around campus including responsibility for the environment, university life, work climate, environment, internal communication, among others. Diverse items were used to grade the importance given by internal stakeholders to USR performance in responsible campus, for instance, “environmentally-responsible initiatives,” “transparent information,” and “freedom of speech.”
- **Professional and citizenship education:** It is about how universities prepare and educate students to be ethical and socially-responsible professionals and citizens and be ready for the challenges of tomorrow. Diverse items were used to grade the importance given by internal stakeholders to USR performances in education. Some examples are “social initiatives outside the classroom” and “teach topics aligned with actual social and environmental problems.”
- **Social knowledge management:** It involves knowledge production, research, and responsible epistemological models and their diffusion. Ten items were used to grade the importance given by internal stakeholders to USR performance in research. Some examples are “inclusion of social problems and community needs in research topic ideas” and “involvement of students in research projects.”

- **Social participation:** Describes the role of the university in forming partnerships and projects that positively impact local communities and society at large, promoting the involvement of internal stakeholders (especially students and faculty) in the commitment and participation in these initiatives. Several items were used to grade the importance given by internal stakeholders to USR performance in social outreach, for instance, “awareness of social problems,” “contribution to the solution of social problems,” and “relationship with community leaders.”

## Procedure

Three questionnaires were distributed to each type of public, since not every one of them had to answer questions in all of the areas. This distribution is followed by the work of Vallaeyes et al. (2009):

Students:

- Responsible campus: 17 questions
- Professional and citizenship education: 10 questions
- Social participation: 7 questions

Faculty:

- Responsible campus: 17 questions
- Professional and citizenship education: 7 questions
- Social knowledge management: 11 questions
- Social participation: 5 questions

Administrative personnel:

- Responsible campus: 17 questions
- Social participation: 3 questions

Each questionnaire included USR indicators to measure the performance of the university so that we could obtain concrete data to let us know what the situation in each vital area was. Although the questionnaire was based on the work of Vallaeyes et al. (2009), some questions from the manual were not considered, and others were modified so as to adapt them to the Puerto Rican environment. Participants were asked to use a seven-point Likert-type scale to grade the importance of each activity defined. Items were related to the four impacts involving USR as explained in previous sections: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Partially disagree, 4: Neutral, 5: Partially agree, 6: Agree, 7: Totally agree.

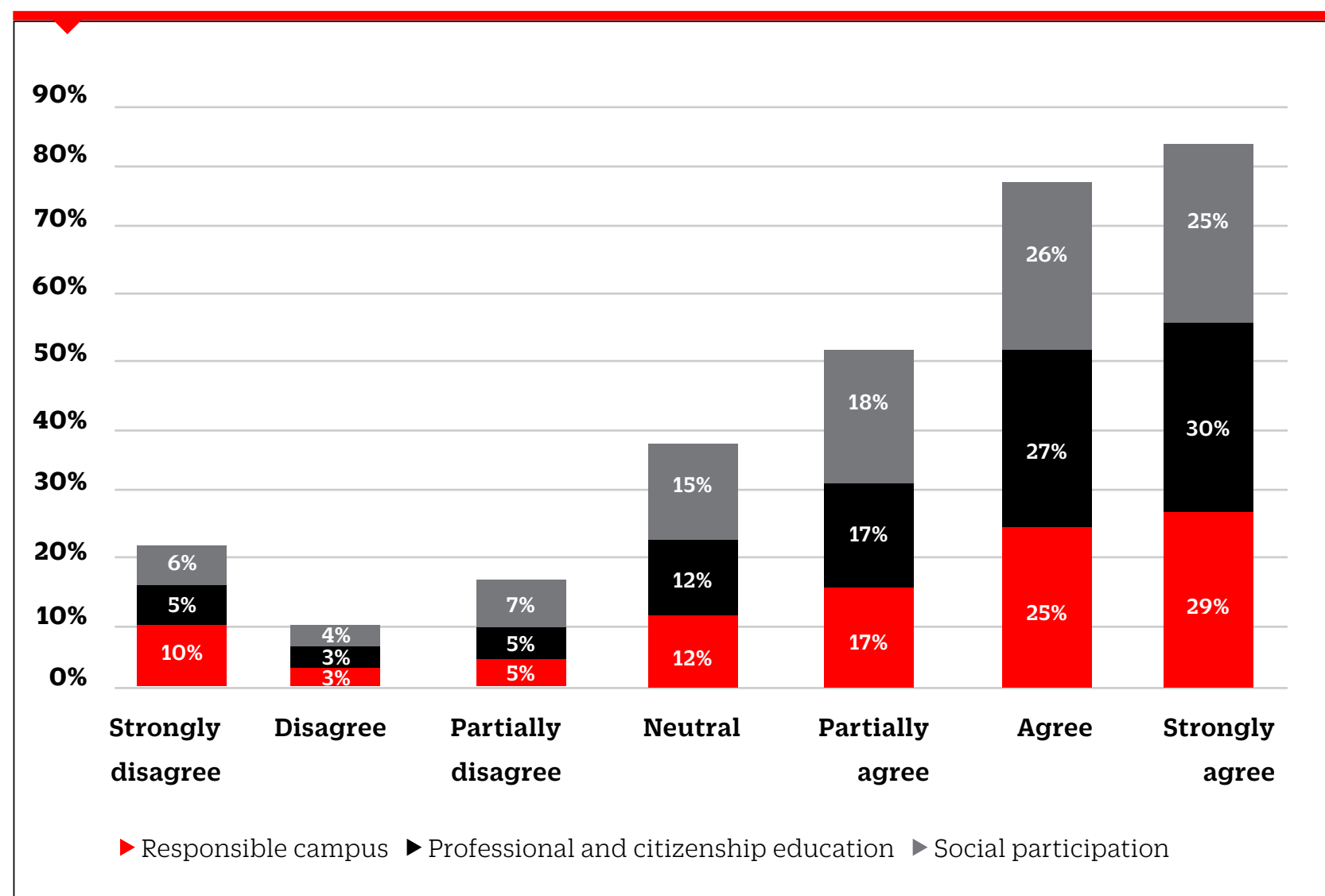
Additionally, to ensure content validity, the selection of the indicators used in the measurement of the variables was based on the judgment of three experts in the field. Also, a pre-test (pilot) was conducted with a small group of students, faculty, and staff who were consulted about the difficulty and understanding of the content of the items. The Cronbach's alpha obtained was .89.

To ensure that participants had no relationship with the principal researcher, research assistants were the ones in charge of recruiting participants and distributing and administering the questionnaires. This research project was authorized by the institution's Internal Review Board (IRB) in charge of protecting human beings in research. Each participant received an informative letter (informed consent) containing the study's objectives, benefits, risks, privacy issues, and contact information of the principal researcher.

## RESULTS

Findings showed that, overall, students agree that the university is doing a fair job regarding campus responsibility, professional and citizenship education, and social participation, as shown in Figure 1.

Responsible campus scored an average of 5.36 (using the seven-point Likert scale), which means that the mean of the students' responses was "partially agree" among the different



**Figure 1.** Students' attitudes regarding university social responsible practices.



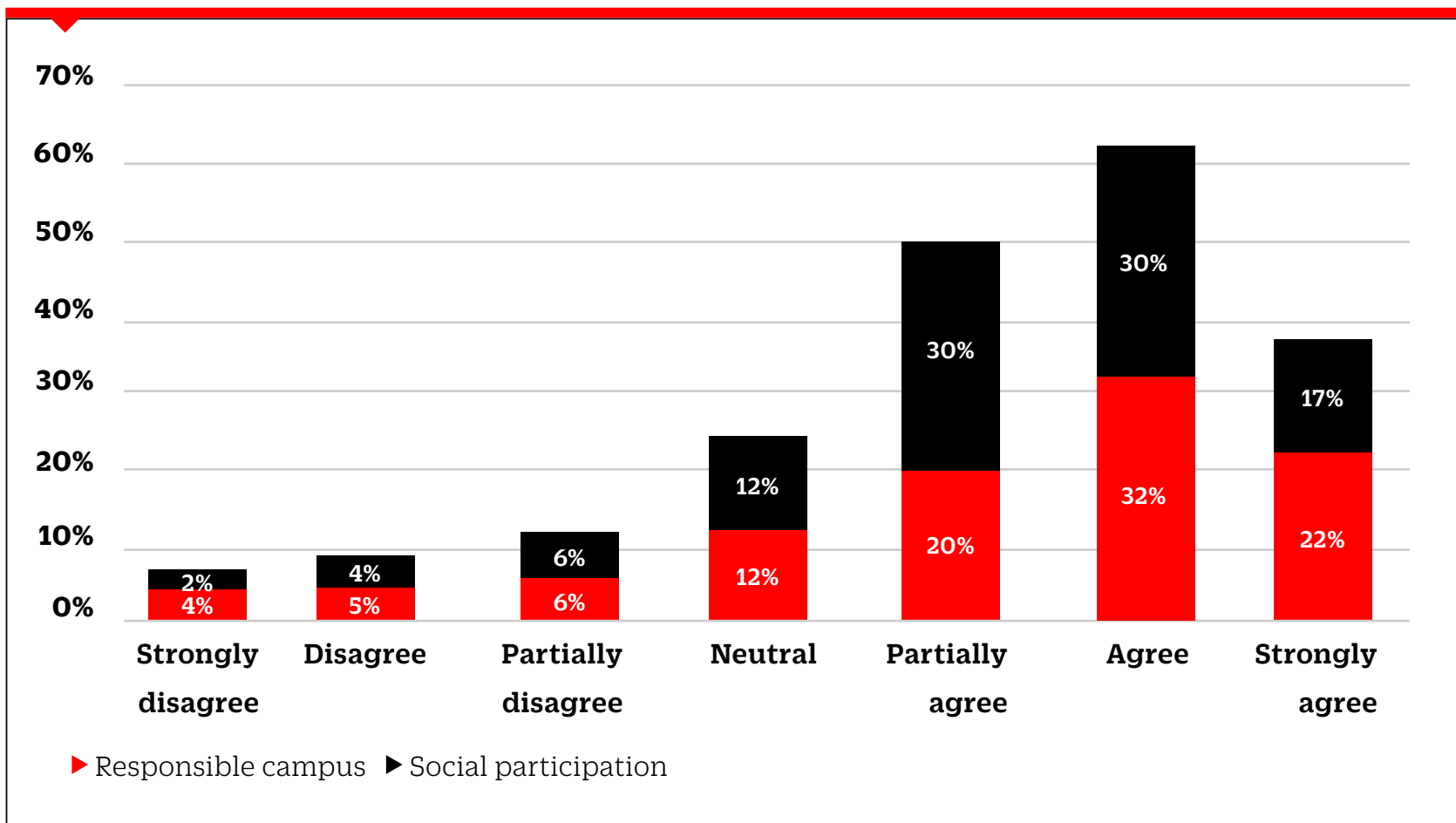
responsible campus' items included in the questionnaire. Professional and citizenship education scored an average of 5.34, and social participation, 5.11; both indicating a partially agreement among students. Table 1 shows the critical topics found in each of the three areas surveyed. The table shows the average mean response (based on the Likert Scale), the standard deviation, and the mode.

**Table 1**

*Students – Results of critical topic questions for each core area*

TOPIC QUESTION	M	Mo	SD
Work climate	5.34	6	1.68
Environment	5.42	7	1.53
Ecological habits	4.53	4	1.82
Administrative decisions	4.94	6	1.53
Stated vs. practiced principles	5.26	6	1.55
Transparent communication	4.94	7	1.78
Responsible marketing	5.40	6	1.45
Defense of the environment	5.35	6	1.53
Participation on community projects	4.52	6	2.08
Opportunity to meet specialists on social and environmental development	5.08	6	1.73
Opportunity to participate in research projects towards the solution of social and environmental problems	4.83	6	1.85
University concerns about social problems	5.17	7	1.70
Relationships between NGOs and local government agencies	4.95	6	1.68
Opportunities to interact with social sectors	5.22	6	1.57
Development of forums regarding social and environmental problems	5.11	6	1.63
Motivation for participating in volunteer opportunities	5.26	7	1.68
Opportunities to join associations or groups for social and environmental purposes	4.69	7	2.02
Learning about my country's reality and social problems	5.39	7	1.70

Administrative personnel expressed that the university is doing a fair job regarding campus responsibility and social participation as shown in Figure 2, following the same pattern results observed on the students' responses.



**Figure 2.** Administrative personnel's attitudes regarding university social responsible practices.

Responsible campus scored an average of 5.23 and social participation. 5.21 (using the seven-point Likert scale), which means that the mean of the administrative personnel's responses was “partially agree” among the different items included in the instrument. Table 2 indicates the topic results that recorded lower on responsible campus and social participation among staff.

**Table 2**  
*Administrative personnel – Results of critical topic questions for each core area*

TOPIC QUESTION	M	Mo	SD
Work climate	5.45	6	1.42
Environmental responsibility	5.48	6	1.41
Institutional policy towards environmental protection	4.85	4	1.43
Training in environmental problems	3.86	4	1.73
Ecological habits	4.14	4	1.59
Participation in academic life	4.72	6	1.82
Transparent information	5.33	6	1.44
Stated vs. practiced principles	5.18	6	1.53
Responsible communication and marketing	5.52	6	1.49
Responsible marketing campaign for promoting values and social responsibility topics	5.40	6	1.40
University concerns about social problems	5.40	6	1.26
Development of forums regarding social and environmental problems	5.12	5	1.42
Motivation for participating in volunteer opportunities	5.12	6	1.49

Faculty agrees that the university is doing a fair job regarding campus responsibility, professional and citizenship education, social knowledge management, and social participation as indicated in Figure 3.

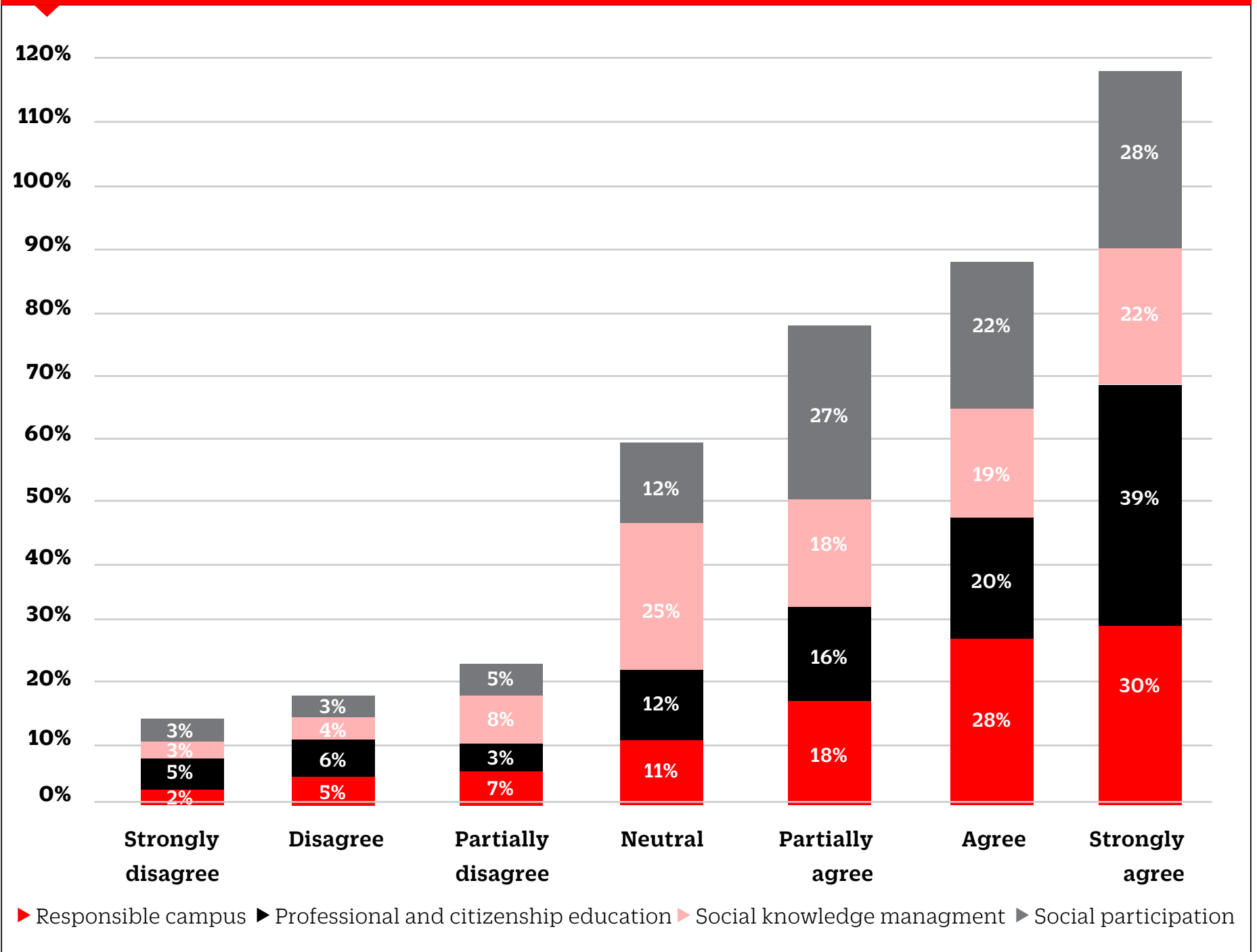


Figure 3. Administrative personnel's attitudes regarding university social responsible practices.

Faculty responses on responsible campus scored an average of 5.42 and on professional and citizenship education, 5.29. social knowledge management obtained a 5.00 among faculty, which demonstrates that the university is doing an acceptable job in this area. On the other hand, social participation was 5.36 among faculty. Table 3 illustrates the critical topic results in the four areas:

Table 3  
Faculty - Results of critical topic questions for each core area

TOPIC QUESTION	M	Mo	SD
Institutional policy towards environmental protection	5.17	7	1.73
Ecological habits	4.65	6	1.64
The university is socially responsible towards faculty	5.18	6	1.65
Transparent information	5.45	7	1.57
Stated vs. practiced principles	5.19	5	1.50
Responsible communication and marketing	5.29	6	1.38
Good relations with other universities	5.21	6	1.58
Responsible marketing campaigns for promoting values and social responsibility topics	4.62	4	1.67
Available resources	5.46	6	1.38
Ethics and citizenship education	5.47	7	1.71
Students are informed about social injustices and ecological risks of today's world	4.38	4	1.66
Provide opportunities for my courses to develop social projects outside the university	4.95	7	1.93
Meetings with external social actors to discuss social issues in the curriculum	4.26	4	2.06
Research areas oriented toward social development and environmental sustainability	4.88	7	1.63
Multidimensional problems are studied interdisciplinarily	4.71	4	1.57
Interdisciplinary research teams incorporate non-university actors	4.52	4	1.56
Workshops and training in transdisciplinary research for faculty	5.20	7	1.63
Partnerships with NGOs, governmental agencies, and companies regarding research	5.08	5	1.46
Media platforms for transmission of knowledge among citizens	5.36	7	1.61
Promotion of scientific transmission and knowledge diffusion to external stakeholders	5.42	6	1.40
Needs satisfaction of external groups	4.73	5	1.54
Training of diverse groups for research knowledge	4.88	6	1.65
The inclusion of research results, case studies, and methodologies in the curriculum	4.78	4	1.62
Students are obligated to do research in the curriculum	5.42	7	1.62
Relationships between NGOs and local government agencies	5.05	5	1.62
Opportunities to interact with social sectors	5.41	5	1.40
Development of forums regarding social and environmental problems	5.41	7	1.44
Motivation for participation in volunteer opportunities	5.39	7	1.48

## DISCUSSION

This paper analyzed the attitudes of internal stakeholders (faculty, students, and administrative personnel) regarding social responsibility in a private university in Puerto Rico. Internal stakeholders were surveyed in the four key areas of university social responsibility: responsible campus, professional and citizenship education, social knowledge management, and social participation. This study applies the conceptual model developed by Vallaey et al. (2009) to three groups of internal stakeholders. Vázquez et al. (2014) and Martínez-Usarralde et al. (2017) have applied the conceptual model, specifically to only students.

Overall internal stakeholder perceptions were consistent among the three groups. The university presented strong and weakest areas that were indicated by all groups. However, there are some specific details that concern certain stakeholders. Results are consistent with Vázquez et al. (2014), which found that, in general, respondents were satisfied with internal USR performance rather than external USR performance (e.g., local communities).

Regarding responsible campus, students, faculty, and administrative personnel partially agree that the university has been performing a fair job regarding social responsibility practices. Faculty, administrative personnel, and students agreed that the university is not promoting ecological habits among its stakeholders and that there is no institutional policy on environmental protection. These results are consistent with Arango Tobón et al. (2014) who found that students in a university in Colombia agreed on the importance of socially-responsible behaviors regarding the environment. Martínez-Usarralde et al. (2017) also discovered that only 23% of the students believed they had acquired ecological habits while studying at the university. These results are also aligned with our findings regarding environmental awareness. The environment is a critical component of social responsibility and this is not addressed adequately by promoting environmentally-responsible initiatives and projects.

Each stakeholder group also pointed out specific challenging areas regarding social responsibility. Students agree that more transparent communication is needed when addressing administrative decisions. This was also addressed by faculty and administrative personnel, but they also found other more critical areas: Administrative personnel indicated that they want to participate more in academic life, but they are not informed about opportunities to do so. And faculty expressed that the university is not adequately carrying out a responsible marketing campaign for promoting values and social responsibility topics. These findings are consistent with Martínez-Usarralde et al. (2017) which also discovered that only 26% of the students agree that the university promotes transparent communication about crucial issues. It can be observed that the environment and open communication are key challenges faced by universities in both Spain and Puerto Rico.

Faculty and students partially agreed in the professional and citizenship education

component. Both faculty and students indicated specific areas for improvement in this component. However, both groups have a common agreement in terms of the need for going beyond traditional learning activities and promoting the inclusion of renewable assignments. For instance, the opportunity to participate in research projects towards the solution of social and environmental problems and having meetings with external social actors to discuss social issues in the curriculum. Faculty also believe that students are not sufficiently informed about social injustices and ecological risks of today's world. Sánchez-Hernández and Mainardes (2016) explained that it is essential to integrate research across the university and this is a component of the university social responsibility practice. Teaching and research are always aligned, they do not function in isolation. Therefore, the involvement of principal actors in the teaching-learning and research process is essential.

Following the same line, faculty partially agreed on the component of social knowledge management, specifically when referring to opportunities to engage in interdisciplinary research projects. Lang et al. (2012) indicated that in order to participate in research projects regarding social responsibility and sustainability the involvement of actors outside academia is critical in the research process. They also expressed that this is a challenge for most universities and researchers, but it is fundamental for developing opportunities to perform transdisciplinary research where different stakeholders are involved.

Lastly, the performance of the university regarding social participation efforts was partially agreed among students, administrative personnel, and faculty. Particularly students and faculty showed that more opportunities for working with local communities are needed in projects with social and environmental approaches. Faculty indicated the importance of working in meeting the needs of external groups and using the data produced by research projects (case studies, results, methodologies) in the curriculum. The production of research projects should include others (students and external actors in the community) so they can benefit from the experience. Producing research only for institutional evaluation purposes or prestige is not enough. When talking about social knowledge management, it involves the responsibility of researchers to create knowledge that helps or impacts others through the solution of problems or by fulfilling the needs of specific groups. Arango Tobón et al. (2014) explained that it is necessary to generate more awareness about social participation with local communities, explicitly encouraging more students to do so as part of a class project. Students should be involved in research projects through the community so they can intervene in pressing needs that need to be solved, such as inequality, corruption, injustice, unemployment, family violence, among others.

Universities are now being called to play a vital role towards moving to a more sustainable future by creating economic, social, and environmental impact (triple-bottom-line) (Moon, Herzig, Godemann & Bebbington, 2012). Social responsibility is a driving force of a university's



progress, and this practice has become stronger than ever. In order to build an efficient society, its citizens should function adequately at all levels of emotional, intellectual, and social complexity to be able to tackle issues regarding public education, health care, and the environment, as explained by Chickering (2010).

Universities can improve their reputation by supporting research efforts and enhancing academic programs; these initiatives are proved to help universities increase donations and recruit faculty members and students (Plungpongpan, Tiangsoongnern & Speece, 2016). Universities can serve as a social institution that encourages its stakeholders to build social and environmentally-sustainable spaces. According to López, Benítez, and Sánchez (2015), this requires stakeholders to think of it as an active part of the social project, which incorporates other relevant projects such as vocational training and knowledge for the planning of future projects that offer different solutions to social and environmental issues.

Vallaes (2014) states that the practice of University Social Responsibility involves a community of mutual learning of internal and external actors. Learning, teaching, research, and service do not pertain to an exclusive group. Working efforts in these four areas should always be aligned. This is where the concept of USR is valid and more empirical studies of best practices that involve the perceptions and demands of not only the internal stakeholders but also the external ones are needed.

Our study is a starting point to bring awareness on and promote action among faculty, students, administrative personnel, deans, vice chancellors and chancellors around the importance of thinking of the USR as aligned with teaching/learning, research, responsible campus, and community. Furthermore, USR should be present in the everyday classroom and be used when planning teaching strategies, methodologies, and assessments (Martínez-Usarralde et al., 2017). Internal stakeholder perceptions and attitudes regarding USR are a valuable resource for universities to understand their needs and expectations. This has an impact on the way sustainability and responsible marketing strategies are developed to fit public needs as stated by Vázquez et al. (2014).

While this exploratory paper analyzes internal stakeholder perceptions on USR, further empirical research is needed in other countries in Hispanic America and the Caribbean to achieve best practices for discovering challenged areas in USR. Although this paper has some limitations, these weaknesses are avenues for further research. Future studies can apply Vallaes et al. (2009) methodology not only to internal stakeholders but also to external ones. There is a lack of studies in this area so that the views of both stakeholders can be contrasted.

Depending on their context, needs and realities, universities can take a distinctive approach when engaging in USR practices (Olarte-Mejía & Ríos Osorio, 2015). However, no matter the path taken, each internal stakeholder group (students, administrative personnel, and faculty) requires specific training and resources to perform their job. These are obtained

through responsible management of campus, teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. Each key area of USR is the best solution for helping students, faculty, and administrative personnel to do their job in an ethical, responsible, and sustainable way.

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