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Dr. Maria Mercedes Larrondo Petrie is a Professor of Computer Engineering and Associate Dean of International Affairs in the College of Engineering and Computer Science at Florida Atlantic University. She is the Executive Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Consortium of Engineering Institutions (LACCEI), an academic non-profit consortium of more than 160 academic institutions that offer engineering degrees in Latin American and the Caribbean or interested in academic and research collaborations with this region. Currently, she serves as Vice President of Engineering Education Innovation of the initiative Engineering for the Americas, headquartered at the Organization of American States. She also serves on the Executive Board of Ibero American Engineering Education Society, on the International Board of the Journal of Engineering Education, on board of the International Division and International Forum Organization Committee of the American Society of Engineering Education (ASEE), and on the Education Committee of the Pan American Federation of Engineering Societies. In the past she has served as President of the Upsilon Pi Epsilon International Honor Society for the Information and Computing Disciplines, as Vice President for the Americas of the International Federation of Engineering Education Societies, and on the Boards of the Women in Engineering Division and Minorities in Engineering Division of the ASEE. Her research focuses on modeling complex systems, security, and engineering education and has been awarded about three million in grants. She has more than 250 refereed publications.

Abstract

International accreditation of engineering programs is essential to provide mobility of students and faculty, research and academic collaborations, and attract high technology jobs to a region. No Latin American or Caribbean accrediting agency has yet signed the Washington Accord, which provides global mutual recognition of engineering degrees. This deeply affects the competitiveness and prosperity of the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. Several approaches have been taken to alleviate this problem:

- New Accrediting Agencies have been created by banks, government organizations, and professional organizations with a commitment of signing the Washington Accord.
- A regional accord signed by regional and national accrediting agencies and engineering education organization is moving toward mutual recognition within the LAC region.
- Professional societies are assisting existing accrediting bodies to align their accreditation process with those of a signatory of the Washington Accord.
- Government organizations are working with non-profit organizations to bridge the cultural gap to begin an international accreditation process through capacity building and expert assistance identification.



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Different cases under each of these 4 approaches will be described, with a more in-depth look at the Par Amigo (in English: “Friendly Peer” or “Peer Mentor”) initiative undertaken by the Latin American and Caribbean Consortium of Engineering Institutions (LACCEI, a non-profit consortium of 160+ universities) at the request of the Organization of American States and Engineering for the Americas.