August 20, 1962 will remain as one of the salient moments in the history of the University of Puerto Rico; 267 students and 22 faculty members initiated one of the most ambitious educational projects ever attempted by the University, the inauguration of the Humacao Regional College. Five academic departments – English, Spanish, Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences (Physical and Biological Sciences) – received the first group of students representing 15 municipalities in the Eastern Region of Puerto Rico; namely, Humacao, Las Piedras, Juncos, Gurabo, San Lorenzo, Yabucoa, Maunabo, Patillas, Arroyo, Guayama, Naguabo, Ceiba, Fajardo, Culebra and Vieques. The English Department, whose director was Benjamin Jeffrey, had a total of four professors, Gregory Rocha, Jules Bouret, Ben Jeffrey and Oscar E. Rodríguez, who officially joined the department on January 1, 1963,

The English courses offered during the first year were Honors, Intermediate and Basic English.

The Audio Lingual Laboratory began in January, 1963. All students had to take the Audio Lingual Laboratory which was set up to give the students practice in oral English as a complement to the regular courses, and it followed the content structure offered weekly in the other classes. The Honors English Lab was an Oral Interpretation class which exposed the students to the reading of oral passages from important literary works such as Shakespeare’s “Othello”, “Hamlet” and others.

Through the years, and as the University evolved from a two year Regional College, a four year University College and finally to the University of Puerto Rico at Humacao, the English department has grown in number and complexity. Until 1976, it offered the first two years of the bachelor’s degree transfer programs to Rio Piedras, and the service courses of the various associate degree programs that were implemented after 1967. In 1967 the business communication courses for the Business Administration and Secretarial Science Associate Degree programs were added to the course offerings to satisfy their English requirements.

In 1976, a new page in the history of the department ushered in the Bachelor of Arts Degree in English, with a minor in Elementary and Secondary Education. Hundreds of teachers working in Puerto Rico and in the United States have graduated from our program, including seven members of our department. At the present time it has 18 full time regular faculty members plus four temporary faculty appointments for a total of 22 faculty members as compared to the four who began in 1962, and it offers a total of 51 courses distributed in the following areas: English education, literature, linguistics, business communication; as well as the first year pre-basic and intermediate, and the first and second year basic courses.
In 1985, the English Department students exercised their right to organize and the English Students’ Association (ESA) was born. The purpose of the ESA is promoting the use of English as a second language through various activities such as seminars, conferences, field trips that serve as forums for expression in English.

In April of 1986 the Shakespeare Festival was born. The first Festival was a recital, presented by Oscar E. Rodriguez, that included the reading of some of Shakespeare’s sonnets and the dramatization of Hamlet’s soliloquies, and Richard, Duke of Gloucester’s, Machiavellian soliloquy from Henry VI, Part III. Since then the English Department has presented this Festival during the second semester of each academic year with the participation of students, faculty members and visiting performers and lecturers. The Festival has included lectures on topics dealing with Shakespeare’s literary production, discussion panels, presentations of Shakespeare’s plays, recitals that have included poetry readings and the dramatization of selected scenes from Shakespeare’s plays. The Festival has broadened its scope to include literary works written by other renowned writers about, or related to, Shakespeare’s work.

Since 2004, the department has also been working very hard to prepare for the accreditation of the Bachelor’s Degree Program by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which is scheduled for fall 2009.

Sixteen (17) members of the department have served as directors since its inception. They are:

3. Roger Anderson – 1970 - 71
4. Aija Buckalders - 1971-78
5. Etanislao Vega - 1978-1979
7. Aida Arus - 1980-83
9. Carlos Baez - 1985-86 First Semester
10. Francisca Alicea - 1985-86 Second Semester
15. Elizabeth Hodges – 1999-01
17. Doris Rivera – 2002-06

The English Department has one Professor Emeritus of the University of Puerto Rico at Humacao, Oscar E. Rodríguez.