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(Humacao, PR) - The Transdisciplinary Institute for Research-Social Action (ITIAS) of the Department of Social Sciences of the University of Puerto Rico at Humacao (UPRH) received a grant from the National Science Foundation for the development of a research project to study some of the socio-environmental dimensions of climate change in coastal communities in the northeast of the country, from an approach that combines Environmental Sciences with Participatory Action Research. The project entitled Accessing the geosciences through social action at the University of Puerto Rico Humacao, will receive a grant of \$ 348,000 and will last for three years.

“This grant from the National Science Foundation represents an important achievement in the history of the ITIAS. Part of our mission has to do with generating applied research efforts that result in direct contributions to the human development and quality of life of the communities of our service region. Undoubtedly, this opportunity to critically explore the challenges of climate change at the community-regional level from a transdisciplinary and participatory perspective will allow us to continue contributing in that direction”, mentioned Dr. Alejandro Torres-Abreu, coordinator of the ITIAS. "There is an urgent need for a conversation and debate focused on how we are going to face these environmental challenges that we are already experiencing from a critical and socio-environmentally fair perspective," said the professor, who is the principal investigator of the project.

For his part, the president of the UPR, Dr. Jorge Haddock, highlighted the importance of research for academia and communities. “Our congratulations to Dr. Alejandro Torres Abreu for his effort to achieve this important grant. Given the global challenges posed by climate change, it is urgent to study its impact for prompt decision-making for the benefit of our communities, as well as the strengthening of the economy and the creation of jobs, interconnected areas impacted by the problem. This study is significantly important for its global contribution, as well as for the experience it will provide to students and teachers during its development. Congratulations!” Said Haddock.

Although climate change is a global phenomenon, some of its manifestations at the level of the island's northeast coastal region have to do with substantive changes in precipitation patterns and water availability, longer and more intense periods of drought, erosion coastline, greater flood events and rise in sea level, and the increase in the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events, among others. This scenario is disrupting daily life, ways of life and notions of what development is.

For her part, Dr. Aida I. Rodríguez Roig, rector of the UPRH highlighted and congratulated the team of researchers, as well as the administrative staff who worked on developing this proposal. "The UPRH is committed to the communities it serves through the development of educational projects focused on the detection and search for solutions to improve the quality of life. He also emphasized that" the UPRH continues to establish alliances with other institutions with the objective of promoting the exchange of academic experiences that are of benefit to the university community, especially our students. This research will be an excellent tool to promote the interest of undergraduate students in professional careers and graduate studies related to environmental or earth sciences ", expressed the rector.

Through this research, work will also be done on the creation of four research courses integrating students and faculty from the departments of Social Sciences and Biology, the recruitment of 20 students from the institution from these academic departments to participate in the research. Likewise, it will work on the development of a summer internship for UPRH students at the University of Colorado at Boulder, with scientists and graduate students to meet world-class laboratories and research centers, as well as promote field work conducted by UPRH students and faculty in at least one coastal community in our service region that experiences problems related to climate change; among others.

The professors that are part of this research team are Doctors Alejandro Torres-Abreu and Ivelisse Rivera-Bonilla (Social Sciences Department, UPRH), Dr. Rebecca Batchelor (ITIAS Program, PROUD-UPRH and University of Colorado at Boulder), Dr. Denny S. Fernández del Viso (Department of Biology, UPRH) and Dr. Anne Gold from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

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