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Celebrating #CienciaBoricua at SACNAS ^[1]

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^[2]





Puerto Rico es Ciencia y Ciencia es Puerto Rico

Please be warned. This post is going to be long. There is so much to be thankful for and much to share...

Since its inception, Ciencia Puerto Rico has been a space to declare and celebrate our identities as Puerto Rican scientists (or with affinities for Puerto Rico). When I came across CienciaPR in its beginnings, it was as if someone had removed a film that dulled my eyes. I could suddenly see my passion for science and Puerto Rico reflected vibrantly in the faces and voices of thousands of Puerto Ricans who were eager to contribute to Puerto Rico through science.

The Society for the Advancement of Chicanos, Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) is sister to CienciaPR in spirit. This professional organization seeks to celebrate and foster "science, culture and community." Their annual conference is a unique experience, where our traditions and cultures are beautifully integrated amidst scientific presentations. Thanks to SACNAS, I have connected with many people I admire, who do for other cultural identities what CienciaPR does for ours. **Going to SACNAS always feels like coming home.**

So when I found out that SACNAS was going to take place in Puerto Rico for the first time in its history, I was excited! It was an opportunity not only to connect in person with much of our #CienciaBoricua but also to show the rest of the SACNAS family those things that make us special and unique. **Ours is a community inspired by the natural beauty of Puerto Rico, marked by so many political and social challenges, formed by solidarity, resistance and collective action. Generous. Vibrant. Strong. That's what I wanted the world to take away from SACNAS 2022.**

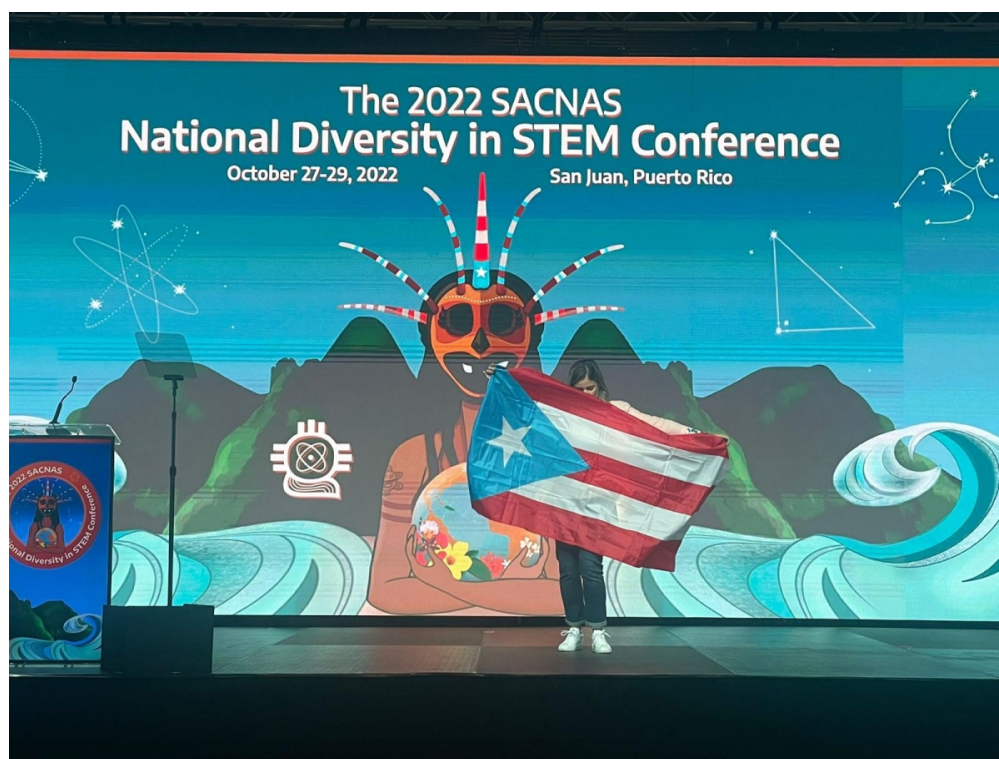


Beautiful logo of the SACNAS 2022 conference made by the very talented Semarhy Quiñones

It was a pleasure to collaborate with SACNAS and provide advice--along with many other Puerto Rican scientists--on the programming of the conference. The solidarity and collaboration SACNAS showed, especially after Hurricane Fiona, meant a lot to those of us who

see this conference as a space to say "we are here" and "without us science would not be the same." In particular, **I am extremely grateful for the support that SACNAS demonstrated by promoting the Fiona Student Fund** [3] established by the Puerto Rico Science Technology and Research Trust, the Caribbean chapter of AAAS, the American Society for Chemistry and Ciencia Puerto Rico. Through this fund, we hope to provide financial assistance to hundreds of science students affected by the hurricane.

Similarly, selecting our own Mónica Feliú-Mójer as the emcee was an inspired choice for SACNAS. **The brilliant Monica, who gives so much already to Puerto Rico, did a spectacular job welcoming the audience and guiding them to see Puerto Rico through our eyes and hearts. And of course, she did so with her usual "piquéte"!**



Monica Feliu-Mojer unfurling the Puerto Rican flag at SACNAS 2022. Credit: Mónica Feliú-Mójer

In collaborating with SACNAS, it was of utmost importance to us to ensure that the world knew the many ways in which our #CienciaBoricua has stood up for Puerto Rico. **Dr. Melissa Marzán** [4], our state epidemiologist and one of the first to call for proactive, humanistic public health during the pandemic, was an excellent convener for the conference. People like our **Edmy Ayala** [5] and **Danilo Trinidad Pérez-Rivera** [6] (also representing **Dr. Fabiola Cruz López** [7]) played a critical role in informing the public and in monitoring and pushing the government to do the right thing. Their conversation with **Dr. Rosa Ficek** [8], a sociologist dedicated to studying and preserving the impact of collective action movements, set the tone for **a conference designed to demonstrate the importance of a science community connected and committed to society**. These bridges between scientists and communities were also the topic of

discussion at a breakfast that Monica and her CienciaPR team from Aquí Nos Cuidamos and CienciaCoLab held in collaboration with AAAS. It was a privilege to learn from community leaders about how science can best work with and alongside them.



Rosa Ficek, Edmy Ayala and Danilo Perez on stage at SACNAS2022. Credit: Giovanna Guerrero-Medina

It was also an honor that SACNAS accepted our suggestion of inviting **writer Mayra Santos Febres** ^[9] **to grace the conference with her offering of a poem.** This "blessing", traditionally performed by a spiritual leader from an indigenous community local to the region, made our Afro-Boricua legacy visible and inspired us to question the narratives with which we grow up and find strength in who we are. **And for the first time to my knowledge--perhaps the first time at a scientific conference!--SACNAS held an interactive bomba session.** More than a show, we wanted this session to engage audiences in this Afro-Boricuan tradition that celebrates resistance, protest, community, and individuality.



AFROLegado playing bomba at SACNAS2022. Credit: Kevin Alicea

Our #CienciaBoricua made its presence known ^[10] **the rest of the conference.** The program was marked by countless presentations led by scientists from our community and the participation of many new to science. It was our mission to celebrate and make these contributions visible. **We hope you all felt the deep appreciation and admiration we have for all your achievements and contributions.**

Finally, we are extremely grateful to SACNAS for allowing us to welcome attendees from our booth in the showroom. From that space, the Ciencia Puerto Rico team jumped in, ensuring visitors left knowing who we are, what we do, and why and for whom we do it. **Alondra, Ariadne, Andrea, Edmy, Elvin, Greetchen, Larisa, Liz, Monica, Nathaly, Ramdwin, Xavier: THANK YOU! You make Ciencia Puerto Rico.**



CienciaPR team relaxing after a long day! Credit Mónica Feliú-Mójer

The booth provided us with a very cherished opportunity to greet and connect with so many collaborators, allies, mentors, and students who have passed through our organization or programs. **Past volunteers and members of the CienciaPR "Equipo", Yale Ciencia Academy fellows, mentors and alumni of Seeds of Success, speakers in our Ciencia al Servicio program, YOU are a wave that will lead science to a new reality of inclusion, impact and service.** It was great to see many of you at the conference. How I wish I could have had more time to hug and talk with everyone.



The Yale Ciencia Academy family at SACNAS.
Credit: Alondra Caraballo



Mentors of Seeds of Success at SACNAS 2022. Credit: Rar

If this is your first time reading us: Welcome! We hope that SACNAS was an opportunity to meet other members of our #CienciaBoricua and see yourselves reflected in this vibrant community that is here for you and by you. **We know this will be the beginning of a beautiful and long trajectory of putting science in the service of Puerto Rico.**

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