

A defender of science: Dr. Edwin Vázquez de Jesús ^[1]

Submitted by [Josefina Arce](#) ^[2] on 6 October 2023 - 2:33pm



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We publish this note to celebrate and share the memory and contributions of Dr. Edwin Vázquez de Jesús a member of our? #CienciaBoricua community, who passed away recently. We thank Dr. Josefina Arce for her companionship and authorship.

Dr. Edwin Vázquez de Jesús was a product of Puerto Rico's public education system. He graduated from Miguel Meléndez Muñoz High School and then did his bachelor's degree in Biology at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey. He continued his academic career obtained his master's degree in Microbiology at Long Island University in New York, and pursued doctoral studies at City College of the City University of New York. He completed his studies at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus with a Ph.D. in Cellular and Molecular Biology.

His contributions to scientific research and education were many. Dr. Vázquez promoted the integration of scientific research in biology courses, using the objectives and skills enunciated in the document "[Vision and Change in Undergraduate Biology](#)", ^[3] of which he was a collaborator in its development. He also promoted support for science education in schools through projects such as PR-CETP and AIACiMa, of which he was Co-Principal Investigator, and "Research Experiences for Teachers", thanks to a grant he received from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI). He was a mentor for the HHMI [SEA-PHAGES](#) ^[4] project, in which he offered

first-year students the opportunity to conduct research ^[5] on bacteriophages from the soils of Puerto Rico. Through this research, more than 400 new bacteriophages were isolated and the genome of about thirty were annotated, and these annotations are in the GenBank ^[6] database. In addition to his research on bacteriophages, he studied the role of bacteria in the bioluminescence of bays in Puerto Rico, and the production of agarase by some marine bacteria.

His interests include the study of the history of science and medicine and the relationship between art and science. He conducted research on eugenics issues and led the successful campaign to remove the name of Dr. Cornelius P. Rhoads from an award given by the American Association for Cancer Research (Science, 25 Apr 2003). He discovered that Puerto Rican doctors participated in Project Sunshine, through which corpses were stolen throughout the world, including Puerto Rico, for scientific studies. The results were published in El Nuevo Día. ^[7]

Dr. Edwin Vázquez De Jesús served as Interim Rector of UPR-Cayey, a member of the Academic Senate, Principal Investigator of projects sponsored by HHMI, Co-director of educational projects sponsored by the National Science Foundation, and Research Integrity Officer, among others, and served as Interim Director of the Biology Department. He was a collaborator of CienciaPR, particularly during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Puerto Rico as part of the citizen education program.

In short, in Edwin we had a defender of science and critical thinking, with a humorous, open, and honest character. We have undoubtedly lost a great scientific professional, researcher, educator, lover of truth, friend, husband, and father of four daughters. His legacy will undoubtedly live on in all who knew him, in his publications and writings. May he rest in peace.

Tags:

- equipo informa ^[8]
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