

UPRM at the forefront of biotechnology education ^[1]

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During the last months the quality of BIOTEC has been recognized with prizes, donations, scholarships to students and the establishment of strategic alliances that optimize the educational supply, explained doctor Rosa Buxeda, director of the program. “We have been meeting with our strategic partners, to tailor the activities of our program, so that they help the economic development of the country and make our graduates more competitive in the global economy”, she assured. Donation from Pall and VWR Recently BIOTEC received a donation of a Cascade equipment for water purification valued in 10 thousand dollars, from the companies Pall Life Sciences and VWR International, for the Center for Learning in Biotechnology (CABI). Governor visits BIOTEC camp On the other hand, the beginning of this month, the governor of Puerto Rico visited the Second Biotechnology Camp of UPRM in which 60 outstanding eleventh grade students participated. “I congratulate to them for what they have achieved until now and for the commitment they have with their future. I have asked them what there are going to study and almost all said that biotechnology and soon I ask them where, almost all say in the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez”, indicated Acevedo Vilá when speaking to the students of the camp. He added that the best guarantee to increase the number of industries is that “when they come they have prepared talented people”. “For that reason, our priority is that you have the best opportunities to develop and the biotechnology area is the one of greater growth from the industrial point of view”, he maintained. During the 10 day camp, these young people received orientation on careers in biotechnology; workshops of molecular, industrial, marine and environmental biotechnology. Also, they were exposed to laboratory experiences and visits to the

pharmaceutical Amgen, among other activities. BIOTEC director indicated that 300 requests were received reason why the admission process was very competitive. She added that the 60 young people selected represent 40 municipalities of Puerto Rico. 70 percent is registered in state schools; also a 70 percent of the students were females. The camp was possible that to a 250 thousand dollars contribution from the Amgen Foundation. First global biotechnology clinics in Puerto Rico UPRM initiated this month of June a collaborative agreement with the company Amgen and Harvey Mudd College (HMC) in California to carry out the first global clinics of the program of biotechnology in Puerto Rico. Buxeda explained that the initiative will allow that an interuniversity team from UPRM and HMC makes a one-year investigation on process improvement in the Amgen plant. She added that this project includes visits of both teams to each institution. On the other hand, the director of the UPRM, doctor Jorge Iván Vélez Arocho affirmed that BIOTEC serves as nucleus and anchor to the development of important proposals of education, human capital formation and investigation in the University. "This project takes to a higher level the initiatives that the Biotechnology Program has with the manufacturing sector of Puerto Rico and illustrates how the Island fits in the global economy", maintained the Director. Madhu Balachandran, vice-president of operations of Amgen in Puerto Rico thought that this project represents a new landmark in the close collaboration relationship that Amgen and UPRM has maintained from 2003, when the initial funds to establish a laboratory of industrial biotechnology in the university were granted. He added that through this initiative, UPRM students will not only be able to work with their counterparts in the United States, but also will expose themselves to experiences of applied investigation that can result in improvements to our processes of manufacture. UPRM students will be directed by doctors Lorenzo Saliceti and Elsie Pares while those of HMC will be supervised by doctor Tony Bright. The project has a cost of 100 thousand dollars. Scholarships granted to biotechnology students Abbott recently granted a \$2.500 donation to Industrial Biotechnology student, Ernie Perez. The engineer Jose Martinez, general manager of Abbott gave him the donation that will help him in his research work. Perez will carry out his research in the Bioprocesses Center of the University of Salamanca in Spain. "This initiative aims to expand the educational experiences portfolio of our students, in a globalized world. Simultaneously we strenghten collaborations between the program of Industrial Biotechnology and the University of Salamanca", said Buxeda, at the time that she appreciated the collaboration of Abbott, one of the strategic partners of BIOTEC. On the other side, student Juan Rodriguez, also from the Program of Industrial Biotechnology, received the Pfizer scholarship. According to Buxeda his selection represents a great honor for the program since this is one the most sought after scholarships by students. At the moment, Rodriguez carries out his undergraduate research at the University of Winsconsin. This student is the second from BIOTEC to be granted this scholarship. Last year, Gustavo Afanador was selected by Pfizer.

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