

Students from UPR- Río Piedras shine in national competition ^[1]

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The students from the Faculty of Natural Sciences of UPR-RP with the chancellor.

Students from the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras (UPR-RP), shone bright again in the recent edition of the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) by obtaining 8 awards in various categories. This is the largest professional conference for students in the field of biomedical and behavioral science that takes

place in the United States (US) and this year it took place in San Antonio, Texas.

Some 57 students from the on campus undergraduate research programs "Minority Access to Research Career (MARC)" and "Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement (RISE)" participated in the event and presented 31 scientific works as posters and oral presentations.

The group of students from the UPR-RP was the one who received the most awards, specifically in the category of research posters, including Diomedes Dieppa Matos in the area of Chemistry; Faviolla Baez Cruz, Maria Carla del Busto Ferrer and Talia Planas Fontánez in the area of biochemistry. Miguel Miranda, Daniel A. Román, and Jesus Soto were also recognized in the area of Cancer Biology and Ricardo Javier Vázquez Vázquez in Neurosciences. Meanwhile, in the category of oral presentations in the area of chemistry the prize went to Attabey Rodriguez Benitez.

Ricardo Javier Vazquez, who is in his sixth year in Chemistry, said "it is a very rewarding experience to get to learn about the different research projects being conducted". He added that sometimes as students "we have a limited view of the research taking place and in these kinds of conferences one sees countless investigations and it opens a new world for you."

Meanwhile, Talia Fontánez Planas, fifth-year student of Chemistry also said "one has the experience of communicating science, and in that conference one can develop these skills, not only knowing what you're doing but being able to transmit it to others".

The students presented their research and were evaluated by professors from different educational institutions and universities in the US, who then conducted interviews with these to recruit the best talent.

This year the participation of these universities and educational institutions was about 491 and a record of scientific papers were presented for a total of 2,215 in the areas of Biochemistry, Cancer Biology, Cell Biology, Chemistry, Developmental Biology and Genetics, Immunology, Microbiology, Physics and Mathematical Engineering, Neuroscience, Physiology and Behavioral Sciences.

The winning students belonging to the MARC and RISE Programs receive scientific and professional training under the auspices of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Through competitive proposals, NIH annually contributes \$2,368,213 for scientific and professional training of participants. From these programs, 57 undergraduate and 30 graduate students benefit at the Río Piedras campus of the UPR. Both programs are directed and coordinated by Dr. Reginald Morales, Department of Chemistry and Dr. Orestes Gonzalez Quesada, Department of Physics.

The programs have an impressive record of 203 students which graduated from the program who have completed the doctoral degree related to medical research areas at prestigious US universities, and are now part of the professional scientific force in pharmaceutical industries, government, and academia locally and internationally.

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