

# **The Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust funds new researchers and reiterates its commitment to strengthening the knowledge economy** <sup>[1]</sup>

Submitted on 22 February 2016 - 2:54pm

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## **Original Source:**

FCTI

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La principal oficial ejecutiva del FCTI, Lucy Crespo, se dirige a los presentes.

**San Juan, Puerto Rico, February, 2016** - The Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust presented the five scientist winners of the Small Research Grants Program, an initiative through which funds are awarded to help them position their respective research and development proposals in a more competitive realm, prior to being submitted for consideration by federal and private agencies.

Lucy Crespo, the Trust's chief executive officer, said that in this second edition of the program, three of the winning proposals were projects in the field of biotechnology and life sciences, one in the area of medical devices, and the final project in the field of electronics. Each winner will receive a grant of up to \$70,000 in funding.

The CEO explained that the program seeks to support researchers to help them strengthen their proposals and increase their chances of success by procuring federal funds to back the development of their research. "We are proud that four of the five winners of this second edition of the Small Grants Program were new talent, people who have been contracted in the past five years by academic institutions in Puerto Rico. It is our hope that, with these funds, our scientists can compete on equal terms with large-scale proposals on the federal and private sector level," Crespo reaffirmed.

The winners of the grants are:

**Catherine M. Hulshof De La Peña**, PhD in Biology, from the Mayagüez campus of the University of Puerto Rico, and her project, "Butterflies in Bioprospecting: The use of evolutionary theory to drive medical discovery"; **Sean Locke**, PhD in Biology, from the Mayagüez campus of the University of Puerto Rico, with his research "Dimensions in parasite biodiversity in Puerto Rico's fauna"; **Vilmali López-Mejías**, PhD in Chemistry, from the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico, with the project "Controlling polymorphism in organic semiconductor materials using self-assembling monolayers on gold surfaces"; **Torsten Stelzer**, PhD in Pharmaceutical Science, from the Medical Sciences campus of the University of Puerto Rico, with his research "Development of processes for the purification and formulation of personalized medication"; and **Carla Restrepo**, PhD in Biology, from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus, with the project "Robustness of the development trajectories at the varying temperatures of a tropical vertebrate."

"At the Trust we seek to attract Puerto Rican scientists, as well as scientists from all over the world, in order to become a world-class research hub. This program is an important step in achieving that goal. Our mission is to invest in, facilitate and increase - in continuous fashion - the capacity to further advance the Island's economy, supporting its ecosystem of innovation and its foundation in science and technology," said Crespo.

Crespo maintained that, by strengthening this effort in support of Puerto Rican and foreign researches based on the Island, the goal is that they obtain federal and private sector funds for their proposals, with agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, among others, as well as the development of a research-based ecosystem in Puerto Rico.

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