

Another UPR power struggle ^[1]

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By : EVA LLORÉNS VÉLEZ & JAMES FERRÉ eval@caribbeanbusinesspr.com ^[2],
james@caribbeanbusinesspr.com ^[3] Edition: June 16, 2011 | Volume: 39 | No: 23 Muñoz opposes La Fortaleza bill to end university control of Cancer Center; says governor appointment of chairman would undermine research continuity University of Puerto Rico (UPR) Interim President Miguel Muñoz has come out against a La Fortaleza bill that would take control of the Puerto Rico Cancer Center (PRCC) away from the university. House Bill 3337, whose equivalent in the Senate is Bill 2074, would reduce the number of seats in the organization's board from 11 to nine and allow the governor to appoint the chairman, a position currently held by Muñoz. The board, for its part, would select the vice chairman, a position held by the UPR Medical Sciences chancellor. CARIBBEAN BUSINESS sources said the La Fortaleza bill would give the central government control of the PRCC, potentially hindering its focus on research. Critics have said the government has not been efficient in moving along the knowledge-based economy, and that the proposed bill would politicize the center's work and disrupt its continuity. Muñoz, a former UPR Mayagüez campus chancellor, was adamant that the chairman and vice chairman of the board should remain the UPR president and the Medical Sciences chancellor, respectively. "The PRCC's heavy R&D component is performed by Medical Sciences professors and is part of the university's research program," he said. The legislation states that the changes it seeks will make the center more agile. The bill would not only reduce the number of board members, but also calls for the governor to appoint five of the board members for periods that range from two to four years. One of the board members must be from the Puerto Rican Cancer League, two from the research community, one from the business community and one a cancer survivor. It would be up to the board to appoint an executive director, who must be a doctor. The entity must have a minimum budget of \$15 million starting fiscal year 2014-15, according to the bill. Muñoz backs reducing the number of board members and expressed support for moving the PRCC from the Medical Sciences Campus to a location near the Science City, which the Puerto Rico Science, Technology & Research trust plans to develop as part of its Knowledge Corridor of San Juan in Río Piedras. But he insisted UPR should retain control of the entity. As of press time, the legislation had yet to go to public hearings.

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