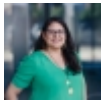


Desire and Commitment Take You a Long Way ^[1]

Submitted by [Giovanna Guerrero-Medina](#) ^[2] on 29 February 2016 - 3:53pm



^[2]



The author, Christina López, during her internship with PARACa

Ciencia Puerto Rico support summer internships for students who are interested in leadership and professional development through the [PARACa program](#) ^[3] of the non-profit organization [Mentes Puertorriqueñas en Acción](#) ^[4]. Here, we present a guest post by [Christina López](#) ^[5], a student at Cornell University, who participated in this program with Ciencia Puerto Rico during the summer of 2014. This year we are looking for a maximum of 3 students interested in working with us. For more information, please read the end of this blog or view the internship opportunity here:

<http://www.cienciapr.org/es/forum-topic/desarrolla-tus-destrezas-de-liderazgo-y-apoya-la-ciencia-boricua-pasantia-paraca-con> ^[6]

By [Christina López](#) ^[7]

Little did I know of the great impact that PARACa (the Empowerment and Retention of Agents of Change Program) and CienciaPR would have in my college and post-college life, mainly because

I was a freshman when I applied. Now, looking back on that experience, my challenge is to summarize all that summer meant for me.

PARACa turned my summer of 2014 into one of the most memorable. Since day one, it was of great excitement to recognize that I was surrounded by other students like me: focused on their contribution to the development of Puerto Rico from



Every Friday and some Saturday during

the summer of 2014, approximately 25 of us PARACa fellows, gathered from 8am to 5pm. Many were from the metropolitan area, but others traveled from Mayagüez, Humacao, Caguas, and me, from Peñuelas. We looked up to and appreciated the work of the young *Mentes Puertorriqueñas en Acción* leaders who not only ran the program, but who also portrayed those same values ??and work ethics they taught us. It was a privilege to have in front of us successful professionals who through their work have greatly impacted Puerto Rico. Another component of the program and one of the parts I enjoyed the most was the community service project in the community “La Vía” in Aguadilla. This was a very dynamic project where we were divided into groups depending on our professional interests. It took several weeks of planning and execution, but we helped many people who had lost hope that someone would work the community and advocate for them at the municipality level. During those eight summer weeks, PARACa managed to develop around 25 agents of change committed to the island.



Due to my interest in medicine, public health and social service, PARACa highly encouraged me to intern with CienciaPR. CienciaPR is a nonprofit organization made up of an extensive network of scientists, professionals and students connected through the web with a common goal: to catalyze progress and diffuse knowledge of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) branches in Puerto Rico. I had the opportunity to work with them under the supervision of the Executive Director, Dr. Giovanna Guerrero. I met with her twice a week via "Skype" as she works in Connecticut and was located in Puerto Rico. Soon enough, I learned that just this is what the organization is about: linking people passionate about the Sciences and about contributing to Puerto Rico regardless of their location.

During the internship, I served as the point of contact in Puerto Rico for running the project *The Voice of the Experience*. The goal of the project was to tackle the unfamiliarity of the array of existent careers in the STEM branches by creating a navigable career catalog with profiles and interviews of Puerto Rican and Latino professionals to serve as models for elementary and high school students. I was able to help design the website, edit and translate profiles, among others. In fact, my favorite part was directly contacting the Director of Telesagrado and the four chosen professionals to coordinate, and then, direct the interviews. At the end of the summer, I culminated my internship presenting the project and proposing a follow-up plan to the CienciaPR executive panel via "Skype".



Thanks to PARACa, I had my first work experience with an organization of high impact in Puerto Rico. CienciaPR gave me the opportunity to work in a nontraditional but technological professional environment—through "google docs", emails and telephone calls. Time management, organization and responsibility were key to performing weekly tasks and document updates since everything had to be done in my own time and without immediate supervision. Above all, the frequent communication, welcoming attitude and trust Dr. Giovanna Guerrero bestowed on me were essential to the success of *The Voice of Experience*.

Until this day, working with CienciaPR has benefitted me greatly as it is highly praised by teachers here at Cornell University as well as by the evaluation panels of the different internships where I have been accepted. The impact CienciaPR has on future professionals of the island and in the community in general are invaluable. Currently studying in New York and not in Puerto Rico, it has always been of my concern to not be able to contribute to my island from so far. CienciaPR made me realize that carrying out initiatives in Puerto Rico is detached of your location: thanks to technology we were able to overcome this and many other barriers.

I recommend you accept the challenge of working with CienciaPR and showing leadership, creativity and professionalism upon unforeseen situations!



About the Empowerment and Retention of Agents of Change Program (PARACa)

PARACa ^[3] is a summer program for university students who excel through their academic achievement, leadership and a sense of responsibility to Puerto Rico. The experience consists of 8 weeks during which young people perform an internship to gain experience in a field in which they wish to develop professionally, while also participating in a series of workshops, lectures, and guided tours in order to strengthen their leadership skills and create awareness and sensitize their perspective on the realities of Puerto Rico.

PARACa 2016 Dates: June 6 - August 3, 2016.

Deadline for Applying: March 31, 2016.

For more information and to apply please visit:

<http://www.mentespuertorriquenas.org/#!/paraca/uhfrc> ^[3]

For details about the CienciaPR positions with PARACa, please see here:

<http://www.cienciapr.org/es/forum-topic/desarrolla-tus-destrezas-de-liderazgo-y-apoya-la-ciencia-boricua-pasantia-paraca-con> ^[6]



[3]

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Autor Adicional:

[Christina Giselle Lopez](#) [13]

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