

CREATING BONDS AND MOVING FORWARD

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Submitted by [Greetchen Díaz-Muñoz](#) [2] on 1 August 2016 - 10:00am



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Creating Bonds and Moving Forward

by: Greetchen Díaz

I'm a scientist. During the years of lab research, there was always a moment that motivated me more than anything: to share "my science" with others. I can bet that for every scientist this is a crucial moment as relevant as their own experiments. I completed a PhD and a postdoc in the United States. During all those years as a researcher, I traveled to many places with the purpose of revealing my findings and contributions to science. To participate in scientific conferences also gave me the opportunity to know the work of colleagues and establish connections and collaborations that have marked my career until today.

I went to all kinds of conferences, but was in multidisciplinary conferences that I could see more clearly the potential impact of each discipline in science itself and society. There, I see the importance of bonds and their multiplier effect.

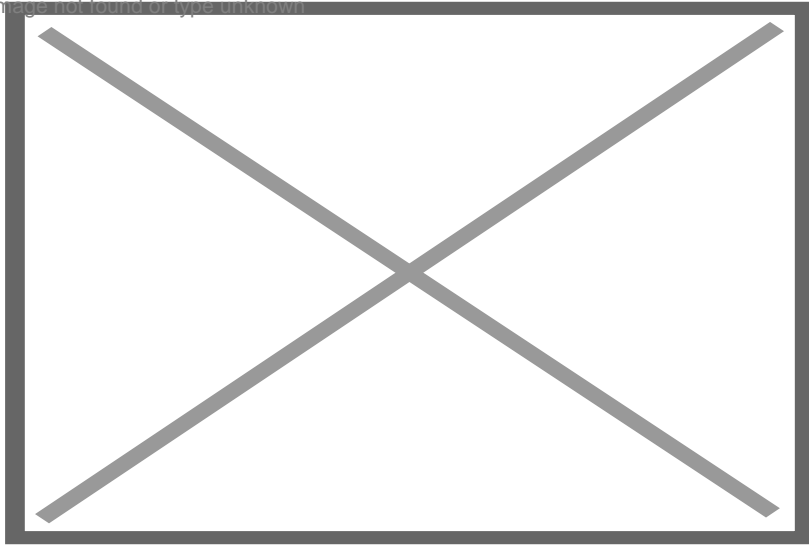
In science, a chemical bond is a physical interaction that has a degree of stability, which depends on the elements involved. For example, opposite charges attract each other. This is because by joining, these charges are in a more stable situation than when separated. At this point, I clarify that I do not intend to give you a basic chemistry class (which incidentally is not my specialty), but I intend to use it metaphorically.

As with a strong chemical bond, interactions between different disciplines can generate a more stable outcome than when separated. Therefore, their social impact is the result of these bonds with the capacity to generate knowledge, applications and solutions to daily life problems.

To improve our economy in the long term, it is crucial to invest more in research and development of technologies. It's not my thing; it is a proven fact in many parts of the world. The natural result: a vibrant and innovative research and development culture, and one that is immersed in the global conversation. We have the human capital. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015 ^[3] of the World Economic Forum, Puerto Rico was the sixth country with greater availability of scientists and engineers. That same report indicated that the island was country number 20 of 144 in capacity for innovation (not bad). Last but not least, we have a research and manufacturing infrastructure that exceeds that of many countries. So, how can we make these attributes and many others have a direct impact on our economy?

We must put all the pieces together, create bonds and move forward. That's exactly what the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust ^[4] is looking for. With our initiatives, part of our strategic plan, we have made progress on local funding for research, technology transfer and entrepreneurship, among others. Now we begin to see the fruits of our labor. For this reason, we created a new annual conference: "Forward – Research and Innovation Summit" ^[5]. Why Forward? It's simple, because Forward means advance and progress.

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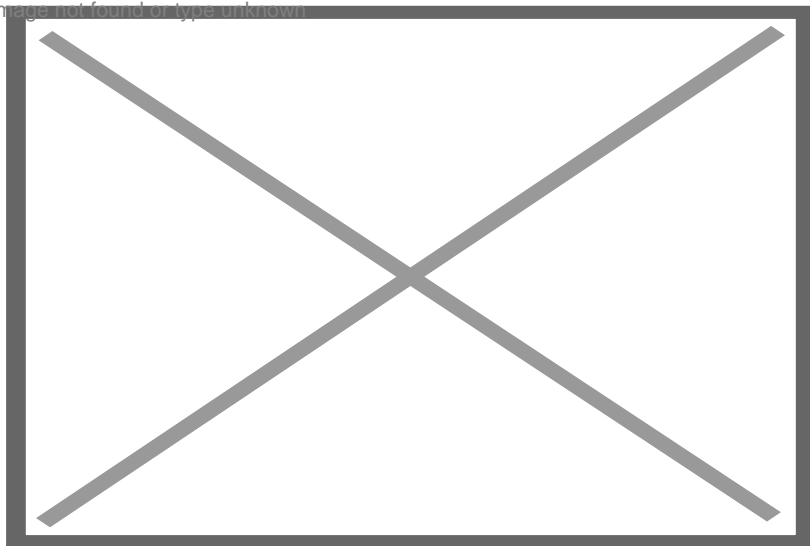


July 6, 2016. San Juan Puerto Rico. Staff meeting at the Puerto Rico Science, Technology, and Research Trust Headquarters. In this picture, Iván Ríos, COO. (photo by: Jos?é R. Madera)

In 2015, together with a great team at the Trust, I accepted the challenge to start bringing together researchers, entrepreneurs, and investors in a series of Research and Innovation Meetups [6] that started to catalyze those bonds, and served as a stage for the human capital to collaborate with the Trust on defining opportunities and strategies that help them fulfill its mission and vision [7]. I remember very well that one of the most frequent comments among attendees was that they wanted to have a forum for the innovation in science and technology community.

Well, here it is! Forward Summit will focus on the discussion of research, development, commercialization, entrepreneurship, financing, and investments in science and technology. What do we wish to accomplish? First, create these much-needed interactions between researchers, entrepreneurs and investors. Second, showcase local research and entrepreneurship projects of the highest caliber. Third, we want to expose our human capital to projects, innovative ideas, and the global latest trends. Last but not least, we want to become a forum to receive people and groups living outside the island, but that are interested in collaborating with the local innovation community. This is an opportunity that neither they nor we want to lose.

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July 6, 2016. San Juan Puerto Rico. Staff meeting at the Puerto Rico Science, Technology, and Research Trust Headquarters. In this picture, Greetchen Díaz, Grants Program Director. (photo by: José R. Madera)

We have worked hard in this effort that will achieve that more than 75 local and international presenters, showcase their work and experiences through lectures, panels, workshops and posters on a wide range of disciplines and topics. I can assure you that we have more to show and this year will only be a sample of what Forward Summit can bring to improve our research and entrepreneurship culture.

Forward is more than an annual conference. It is a celebration of what we have achieved and what we can do. It is also a platform to empower the local scientific and technological community, as an engine of the island's economic development. I hope that we can count on the support of all sectors.

Certainly we have no excuse. As I mentioned before, opposite charges attract to each other and are stronger than when they are separated. So, let's look for those elements that can make us stronger to interact with each other, to create strong bonds, and to move Puerto Rico Forward.

The mission of the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust, is to invest, facilitate and build capacity to continually advance Puerto Rico's economy and its citizens' well-being through innovation-driven enterprises, science and technology and its industrial base. If you want to know more about Forward Research and Innovation Summit, visit the website and sign up. Help us spread the word using #ForwardSummitPR.

About the author: Dr. Díaz is the Trust's Grants Program Director. She also coordinates the Trust's outreach initiatives and is one of the organizers of Forward Research and Innovation Summit

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