

A Proposal for a Confucius Institute at the University of Puerto Rico

Introduction

This is a proposal by the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) for the establishment of a Confucius Institute in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The purpose of the document is to provide background information on Puerto Rico and the University of Puerto Rico, as well as a high-level overview of relevant points in the University's internationalization agenda. We explain how this agenda drives the initiative to establish a Confucius Institute in association with East China University of Science and Technology ECUST to strengthen academic and cultural bonds between the People's Republic of China and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This document also presents a brief overview of existing UPR-China partnerships and a description of the specific objectives that would be addressed by the Confucius Institute and the resources that would be available to support the required operations.



Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is located in the northeastern Caribbean, east of the Dominican Republic and west of the Virgin Islands. The Commonwealth is composed of an archipelago that includes the main island of Puerto Rico and a number of smaller islands and keys, the largest of which are Vieques, Culebra, and Mona. The main island of Puerto Rico is the smallest by land area but third largest by population among the four Greater Antilles (Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico). Puerto Rico is classified by the United States government as an independent taxation authority by mutual agreement with the United States Congress. Puerto Rico has a population of approximately 4 million residents, has representation in the International Olympic Committee and is the host of the 2010 Central American Caribbean Games.





The University of Puerto Rico at a Glance

Founded in 1903, the University of Puerto Rico ("Universidad de Puerto Rico" or "UPR") is the oldest and largest university system in Puerto Rico. Though Puerto Rico is not a U.S. state, the system is run as any other state university system and its programs are accredited by U.S. accreditation agencies. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has classified the three major campuses of the University of Puerto Rico as research institutions, as follows:

- Río Piedras Campus
High Research Activity campus, the only one in Puerto Rico.
- Mayagüez Campus
Master Colleges and Universities (larger programs) campus
- Medical Sciences Campus
Special Focus Institutions (Medical Schools and Medical Center)

UPR consists of 11 campuses with approximately 64,000 students (56,000 undergraduates and 8,000 graduate students) enrolled in 472 academic programs. The entering class of 2008 had an average high school grade point average of 3.52/4.00. One in ten had a 4.00 average, while one in five had over a 3.90 average. UPR graduates approximately 10,000 students per year.

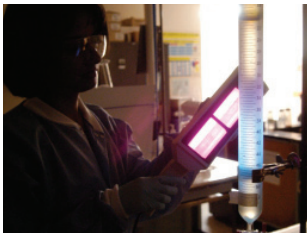
In many relevant areas, the UPR plays a significant role in the higher education agenda of the United States. For instance, the UPR School of Engineering ranks 9th in graduating engineers in the United States; 1st in graduating Hispanics, and 2nd in graduating women.

UPR is increasing offerings to non-traditional students. For example, in 2005-06, 1,736 courses were offered at night, impacting over 26,000 non-traditional students. In addition, since 2003, the Industrial Biotechnology Learning Center at the UPR Mayagüez Campus has offered training in the



area of biotechnology to employees of the pharmaceutical companies such as Amgen and Eli Lilly. UPR is also implementing strategies to broaden the diversity of its student base. In the United States, UPR is approaching the Puerto Rican and Hispanic communities (the Puerto Rican population in the US is estimated to be 4 million). A pilot program to serve the need of that community is already in progress in the Río Piedras, Cayey, and Humacao campuses. It is called the "Bilingual Initiative for Latino Students."

A faculty of 5,000 internationally-formed professors and researchers staff the University and play a major role in guiding the island's economic development. UPR's leadership position in research and development is reflected on the fact that its researchers are responsible for approximately 95% of the scientific papers published in peer-reviewed journals by researchers from PR higher education institutions, according to the Sciences Citation.



UPR has 30 patents issued by the USPTO, 2 licenses signed; 13 patents filled and 5 invention disclosures under evaluation. Forty two percent (42%) of all clinical trials sponsored by the National Institutes of Health in Puerto Rico are conducted by the UPR Medical Sciences Campus. During academic year 2005-06, UPR received \$94 million in research grants: research funds have tripled since 1996. The areas of research focus include biomedical research in cancer, AIDS and neurobiology; behavioral sciences, nanotechnology; proteomics, environmental studies; and material sciences among others. UPR's main sources of research funding include: the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, NASA, Department of Energy (DOE), and others. Indirect cost recovery rates range from 26% up to 56% in the different campuses. The Río Piedras Campus ranks 112 among the top 200 public universities and 139 among the top 200 public and private universities awarding doctoral degrees in the United States.



The University's leadership in the Caribbean and Latin America is demonstrated by UPR President Antonio García Padilla's election as Chairman of the Association of Universities and Research Institutions of the Caribbean (UNICA).

The University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras

We contemplate to plan the Confucius Institute in close relationship with the University's flagship campus, the Río Piedras Campus.

The Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico is a Carnegie-classified High Research Activity comprehensive institution with an academic offering spanning the BA to doctorate degrees in the basic disciplines and professional fields of knowledge. It is also custodian of a myriad of artistic, documentary, cultural, environmental, and symbolic resources for the study, teaching, research, creation, and enjoyment of the citizenry. It counts upon a diverse faculty whose academic degrees have been granted by world-class universities. Its student body presents the best academic characteristics in the island.

Presently, the Río Piedras Campus offers 76 undergraduate majors, 52 graduate majors and 4 joint degrees, including two international degrees - the most complete academic offer on the island. The academic offer includes an Honors Program, several continuing education programs, and community service and distance-learning opportunities for the community at-large. Its commitment to self-evaluation and accreditation has been confirmed by several accreditation agencies and fifty-four academic programs are fully accredited by United States agencies.



The Río Piedras Campus embraces the importance of research and believes it is its contribution to the social, cultural, scientific-technological and economic development of Puerto Rico. The Campus has a little more than 1,000 full-time teaching faculty members, almost 80% of which hold a doctoral degree. Research and teaching activity of these professors is widely evinced by peer-reviewed publications and other dissemination activities of the result of their scholarly research, and has been acknowledged by the accreditation agencies. Also to be noted is the substantial representation of women among the faculty, as well as the ample and inclusive diversity of the teaching personnel.

The Campus student body, approximately 21,561, is diverse and academically competent. Most students come from local educational institutions. The Campus makes efforts in strengthening their diversity and new strategies are being set in place for increasing the number of international students and expanding study-abroad opportunities for local students.

The Internationalization Agenda at the Río Piedras Campus



In response to the economic, social and geopolitical changes taking place in the world, institutions of higher education have established new goals of promoting academic collaborations with foreign universities and institutions and internationalizing their campuses and their curricula. These international collaborations provide students and faculty with the opportunity to acquire knowledge of and appreciation for different cultures and languages and also prepare them to compete successfully in the international and globalized social, political and economic environment of the 21st Century.



The UPR, acknowledging the importance of these new trends in higher education, has identified the internationalization of its campuses and its curricula, as one of the principal goals in its strategic plans. Goal 7 of the UPR Strategic Plan for 2006-16 provides that: "The University of Puerto Rico will take part in the worldwide dissemination of knowledge, encourage cooperative programs and exchanges, and support publications and presentations by its faculty and researchers; it will foster life and study experiences for its students in international educational institutions and research centers."

Pursuant to the goals and objectives established in the strategic plan, the Río Piedras Campus adopted an internationalization policy to guide the implementation of the internationalization goals and objectives. As part of its Internationalization project, the University is promoting interaction, collaboration and creation of joint ventures in different fields of study with other institutes of higher education and research centers around the world. The purpose of these alliances is to seek collaboration on topics of international relevance that might help to have a significant effect on our society as well as on the world.

An Overview of Existing UPR-China Partnerships

Rather than a commencement for the China-UPR relations, the Confucius Institute will strengthen and tie-up a vibrant set of initiatives that currently grow. We hereinafter describe some of them, as they relate to the several colleges and schools of the Río Piedras Campus.



College of Natural Sciences

Distinguished Chinese professors from the College of Natural Sciences have participated in research and dissemination activities in collaboration with Chinese scholars and institutions. In the academic year 2007-2008, Dr. Mei Yu, professor at the College of Natural Sciences of the UPR Río Piedras Campus, directed the following research projects related to China: Integrated analysis of biodiversity richness, distribution pattern, and structure mechanism at multi-scales for Eastern China Forests Ecosystems; Prediction on potential distribution of key species in China using ecological niche modeling and GIS techniques, a case study of *Rhododendron* L. Dr. Yu also reviewed proposals for the National Natural Science Foundation of China, supervised two students (M.S.) from the Chinese Academy of Science and has published various scholarly articles.



In the academic year 2007-2008, Dr. Xiaoming Zou, professor at the College of Natural Sciences received a grant from the Chinese Academy of Science for his research in Tropical ecosystems. He also worked in the following articles related to his research in China: Soil mono- and disaccharides and amino acids as influenced by plant litter and root processes in a subtropical moist forest of Southwest China; and, Soil organic carbon in pure rubber and tea-rubber plantations in southwestern China. Tropical Ecology.



College of Architecture

The Dean of the School of Architecture, Architect Francisco Javier Rodriguez, has traveled to Beijing, China several times during the current academic year to meet with officials from the Chinese government and from schools of architecture with the purpose of establishing academic collaborative agreements with these institutions.



College of Education - Exchange Project

The College of Education is negotiating a student and professor exchange program with the Mary Knoll China Service Project and Sun Yat-Sen University (School of Translation and Interpretation), Guangzhou, China.

Law School

Three students from the UPR Law School participated in the Summer Law Institute in Suzhou, China, sponsored by the Cornell Law School in partnership with Kenneth Wang School of Law, Soochow University, Suzhou, China Bucerius Law School, Hamburg, Germany and other US and Chinese Universities. The Summer Law Institute, which runs from July 20-August 8, 2008, offers a three-credit course entitled "Workshop in International Business Transactions with Chinese Characteristics."

Graduate School of Planning

The Graduate School of Planning designed a course focused on urban planning in China and the changes China has adopted in light of its increased economic development and population growth. A total of 14 students and 3 graduate professors traveled to China in June 2007 to study urban and environmental planning in China. They visited several universities in which they were able to meet with professors and students. Some of the universities and institutes visited were the following: Institute of Historic City Conservation of the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, Wuhan New Development Zone Branch, Wuhan School of Urban Design, Tsinghua University at Beijing and the Institute of Transportation Engineering. The students and professors met with the General Secretary of the Communist Party at Wuhan University who handles and distributes funds for the School of Urban Design. The Secretary manifested his commitment and interest in future collaborations between China and Puerto Rico. The students and professors identified several universities (Wuhan University and Tsinghua University) who showed interest in promoting initiatives of collaboration between China and the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus.



College of Humanities

The Foreign Language Department offers majors mostly in Romance Languages such as French, Italian and Portuguese. The recruitment of a qualified Mandarin language instructor has resulted in a very challenging task. As a consequence, the Department has not been able to structure a major and/or minor in Oriental Languages. The proposed Confucius Institute is expected to collaborate with the Foreign Language Department at the College of Humanities, the College of General Studies, and with the Multilingual and Cultural Institute of Continuing Education and Professional Studies of the University of Puerto Rico in developing new curricular units of Chinese language and culture to improve the course syllabus in BA and Continuing Education courses, in addition to providing support to the Foreign Language Department in the creation of a sequence in Chinese Studies. We foresee the faculty of Beijing Normal University partnering with us in these endeavors. The Institute would also offer Mandarin Language as part of the continuing education development, granting appropriate university credits to UPR undergraduates as well as graduate students.

The Confucius Institute in Puerto Rico Goals and Objectives

The Creation of a Confucius Institute at the University of Puerto Rico will be a starting point of a sustained project of collaboration between Puerto Rico and the People's Republic of China in multiple domains such as culture, language, business, finance, higher education, research and development. The Confucius Institute at the University of Puerto Rico will collaborate with the Foreign Language Department at the College of Humanities and with the Multilingual and Cultural Institute of Continuing Education and Professional Studies in developing new curricular units of Chinese language and culture, in addition to providing support to the Foreign Language Department in the creation of a sequence in Chinese Studies. Some other areas of collaboration include:



- **Short term activities:**

- Teaching of Mandarin and Chinese culture to UPR students in appropriate courses and programs, and to the community at large via the Division of Continued Education of the Río Piedras Campus;
- Faculty exchanges, consisting, initially, of Spanish language professors from the UPR visiting East China University of Science and Technology ECUST and other Chinese universities and Mandarin language professors from East China University of Science and Technology ECUST visiting the UPR;
- Summer exchange with the Institute of Transportation Engineering Tsinghua University;
- Extracurricular activities for the Chinese community in Puerto Rico;
- Strengthening the “China Initiative” at the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus - a special program designed to offer Chinese students a first class, US-recognized and accredited education at an affordable cost.

Students admitted to this program will have the opportunity to study in their area of interest while refining their English language skills, learning the Spanish language and immersing themselves in the language, culture and history of Puerto Rico.

- Developing cultural activities aimed at promoting and disseminating Chinese culture. (Demand for Chinese language and culture education is expected to exceed 250 students per semester).



- **Medium term activities:**
 - Joint collaboration between China and Puerto Rico directed at strengthening academic and research exchange;
 - Development of Chinese Studies as an area of emphasis for Río Piedras undergraduate and graduate students;
 - Extension of academic and cultural programs to private and industrial sector;
 - Expansion of Chinese Programs to UNICA and other Caribbean universities.
- **Long term activities:**
 - Provide support in student-professor educational exchange programs;
 - Develop a teacher/professor/undergraduate and graduate students/researchers exchange program between Puerto Rico and China in order to encourage and strengthen academic, research and business programs;
 - Provide support in the projects between China and the private and public sectors in Puerto Rico.

Confucius Institute at the University of Puerto Rico



Operational and Management Plans for the Institute

The Confucius Institute at the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus will be operated and managed following the guidelines and by-laws of the Confucius Institutes. It will operate under the leadership of an Executive Council with a President and Vice-president. The Executive Council will include the Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of General Studies and a Chinese faculty member from the University of Puerto Rico – Río Piedras. Further details will be developed in discussions with East China University of Science and Technology ECUST and the Confucius Institute Headquarters.

Location

The University of Puerto Rico will provide a two story building with approximately 4,685 square feet for the Confucius Institute, in the heart of Río Piedras, San Juan, Puerto Rico. The building will be refurbished and will include: 3 classrooms, researchers' office area, library, conference room, offices for the staff, multiuse room, storage and a reception area. The building is within walking distance from the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus, the stations for the Urban Train, main highways and avenues, as well as downtown Río Piedras. Equipment, materials and personnel will also be provided to operate the Confucius Institute at the University of Puerto Rico. A floor plan is included as an appendix to this proposal.

UPR Funding

In addition to the approximately \$56,000 yearly in-kind contribution associated with the proposed location for the Confucius Institute, the University of Puerto Rico will contribute \$75,000 of institutional funds towards annual instructional costs. The funds will be administered by the Confucius Institute administrative team.

