

Four students represent UPRM at prestigious summer internships at SUNY Upstate Medical and Stony Brook University

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Four students are representing the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM) this summer in internship programs at renowned medical research institutions, part of the State University of New York System (SUNY). Following a collaboration agreement between that institution and UPRM, students Ana C. Arill Muñoz, Claudia A. Muñoz Vázquez, Carlos M. Vélez Gonce, and Lorena Rivera Pérez are participating at Upstate Medical University and Stony Brook University.

The ambassadors from the Mayagüez campus were selected to participate in the experience, which will allow them to strengthen their academic training through high-level research opportunities in the field of biomedical sciences.

The official announcement was recently made in the Chancellor's Office, Dr. Agustín Rullán Toro, alongside students and the initiative's coordinators at UPRM: Dr. Matías Cafaro, Associate Dean for Research in the College of Arts and Sciences; and Dr. Bernadette Delgado Acosta, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, who are also co-principal investigators of the ASSETS project. The project was also made possible thanks to the support from Chancellor John B. King, Jr. and the collaboration of Marianne Hassan, Chief of Staff in the Provost's Office; and Phillip A. Ortiz, Assistant Provost for Undergraduate and STEM Education, from the SUNY system. Dr. Nancy V. Vicente Vélez, Dean of Academic Affairs, also contributed to this effort.

“At the ASSETS Project, we proudly celebrate the academic and professional growth of our students. These opportunities arise from our ongoing commitment to expanding access to excellent STEM learning experiences. This is very important to us because we know these students are excellent, they excel, and can excel in any field, but especially in research. This opportunity opens the door for future UPRM representatives, and we will work to ensure these collaborations continue year after year,” said Dr. Cafaro.

Dr. Delgado Acosta added that the agreement would allow for additional collaborations, such as professional development opportunities for the faculty, as well as other ideas that will be implemented in the next semester.

“We congratulate our students on this important achievement and wish them much success. I know they will do excellent work and pave the way for others to join next summer and also conduct this type of research. They are gaining this experience early in their careers, and I am sure it will impact their career prospects later on, whether they enter the workforce or pursue graduate studies in science and mathematics,” Dr. Delgado Acosta emphasized.

Ana, a Pre-medical student, and Claudia, an Industrial Microbiology student from the Department of Biology, are interning at Upstate Medical in Syracuse from June 2 to August 8. Meanwhile, Carlos and Lorena, from the Department of Chemistry, are stationed at Stony Brook, Long Island, from May 27 to August 1, 2025.

Gathered at the Chancellor's Office before departing for their destinations in New York, the selected students expressed their gratitude for the opportunity, which they hope will provide them with a chance to develop and grow their careers.

"I'm definitely very excited, as this is the first time I'm going to participate in something like this. I want to gain experience in research, since I haven't had the opportunity," said Ana, a 20-year-old from the municipality of San Lorenzo.

Claudia, a 19-year-old from Caguas, echoed the same sentiments. She thanked her family, as well as the ASSETS project and its coordinators, as this is where it all began.

"Like everyone, I'm very excited. It's also my first research opportunity. I'm happy that it happened out there; it's also an enriching experience that will help me in my future, both professionally and personally," she said.

For their part, chemists Carlos and Lorena, although they admitted to feeling a little anxious about the unknown, are also filled with great excitement about this summer.

"I'm super excited too. It's my first time traveling to New York and my first experience of this kind. I hope to win a lot, not only professionally but personally as well," said Carlos, a 20-year-old from Mayagüez.

"Honestly, I'm very nervous, but I'm very excited and eager. I want to have the best opportunity I can," said Lorena, from Camuy.

The Chancellor also offered words of encouragement and congratulations to those who would represent UPRM during this summer in New York.

"First and foremost, I want to congratulate these four students, who are very talented and have fabulous profiles. I have no doubt that they will have a fundamental experience that will change their lives, even in their future academic and professional careers. This opportunity is also important because it reaffirms the importance of creating and strengthening relationships, particularly with other prestigious universities, in this case SUNY, which we thank for selecting our students as an example of the great wealth of talent and academic excellence that distinguishes our University," he emphasized.