

February 19, 2022

Lcdo. Alejandro Camporreale Mundo, presidente  
Comité de Búsqueda y Consulta de Presidente UPR  
Junta de Gobierno de UPR

Dear Search Committee,

It is my distinct pleasure to provide this recommendation for Dr. Alexandra Medina-Borja for the role of President, University of Puerto Rico (UPR). I have known Dr. Medina-Borja for about 25 years since she was a graduate student in the Grado Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISE) at Virginia Tech. She served as the Graduate Teaching Assistant for the graduate course I was teaching, and later, I went on to serve as a member of her doctoral dissertation committee. I have maintained contact with her since this time and have followed her career quite closely. I have also interacted with her several times in her current role at the National Science Foundation and due to my role as Department Head of the ISE Department at Virginia Tech.

In your letter, you ask that I comment on the experiences, qualities, and knowledge of Dr. Medina-Borja that would enable her to serve in the role of President. Although I am not currently in a formal university-level administrative position at my institution, I have been leading our Department for six years and have held service leadership roles at both the College of Engineering level and the university level previously and currently. I have also served in significant leadership roles within my professional societies, including most recently being elected President-elect for the Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineers, the international (and largest) society dedicated to the profession of industrial and systems engineering. Thus, I believe I have good visibility for knowing what would be required to lead as President of UPR. In this letter, I outline the most significant reasons why I think Dr. Medina-Borja would make an excellent President for your university.

First, as of course you are aware, she has served in higher education in Puerto Rico, at the Mayaguez campus for a number of years, and she also served in roles at the university system level. Thus, she is very familiar with the higher education system in Puerto Rico, in my view.

Second, a critically important role for a President (and leader of any organization) is to create an inspiring vision, set a strategic plan, create a positive culture, put in place measures to track performance, and establish processes and mechanisms to implement strategic priorities. This is an area where Dr. Medina-Borja simply excels, and her experience in strategic planning, visioning, performance measures, and implementation is unparalleled. She has held numerous roles at NSF (and her role at UPR) where strategic planning, and these related areas, were directly in her portfolio of responsibilities. By all accounts, her leadership in these roles has been extremely

successful. What also impresses me is that she has led strategic planning and visioning for relatively smaller units (where she would be directly involved in implementation), but she has also done so with larger organizational units, where it is critical to gain stakeholder buy-in in order to influence and lead others in implementation. In other words, she has served as a catalyst for change and strategic planning, even in units where not everyone reports in to her or where leadership must use influence and create a compelling vision rather than through formal reporting relationships. I think these skills and experiences would translate directly to a university environment, where administrators, staff, and faculty all have varying levels of authority and autonomy but yet must still be led in a positive future direction.

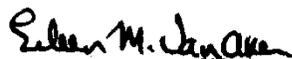
Third, Dr. Medina-Borja clearly knows the landscape of STEM education, and higher education in general. Her role at NSF has enabled her to be exposed to hundreds of universities (of all different types and sizes), and she has shown excellent leadership in helping to set an agenda for the future of higher education, including STEM education. I believe the breadth of her roles at NSF will translate directly to leading a comprehensive university with (of course) more than just STEM degree programs. Her experience in working with the federal government and numerous agencies, as well as many universities, will be an asset in the role of President.

Fourth, Dr. Medina-Borja has also demonstrated success as a faculty member, with her scholarship, research, teaching, and service. I believe this is an important role for a leader in higher education – i.e., to have walked in the path of a faculty member, faced the challenges they experience, and established success. This will enable her to have empathy and concern for the role of faculty, in addition to all those who she would lead in this position.

Lastly, as a general point, Dr. Median-Borja has a national reputation based on her role as a faculty member, but even more so, based on her leadership roles at NSF. This reputation and visibility will serve UPR exceptionally well, beyond all of the knowledge, skills, and experiences she could bring to the role.

In summary, I recommend Dr. Alexandra Medina-Borja for this position without reservation. I think she would make an excellent President for your university. Please feel free to contact me if any additional information is needed.

Sincerely,



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