

March 11, 2025



Search Committee  
University of Puerto Rico (UPR)  
Consultation, UPR President

Dear Search Committee:

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter to strongly recommend Dr. Edwin Barea-Rodríguez for the position of President of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR). As a dedicated academic leader, administrator, and advocate for student success, Dr. Barea brings an exceptional combination of experience, vision, and commitment that align perfectly with the mission and goals of UPR.

Dr. Barea-Rodriguez currently serves as a Professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), where he holds the prestigious Roland K. and Jane W. Blumberg Professorship in Bioscience, Biology, Health, and the Environment. His research interests encompass learning and memory, neuroscience, and science education. He earned his Ph.D. and M.A. in Biopsychology from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and a B.A. in Psychology from the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico.

I have known him for over 20 years and can attest that Dr. Barea has demonstrated outstanding leadership at UTSA. Having previously served as Chair of the Department of Biology, Vice-Provost for Resource Management for Instructional Innovation, and Associate Dean of Student Success, he has proven his ability to navigate complex academic environments, implement transformative policies, and foster institutional growth. His ability to manage large departments, oversee fiscal responsibilities, and champion academic excellence makes him an ideal candidate for the presidency of UPR.

A first-generation Hispanic Ph.D. holder, Dr. Edwin Barea understands the challenges faced by underrepresented students and has dedicated his career to broadening access to higher education. His leadership as Program Director for several National Institute of General Medical Sciences-funded programs, such as RISE, MARC U-STAR, and IMSD, has provided vital mentorship and financial support to socially disadvantaged students, preparing them for advanced studies. Through these efforts, he has successfully secured over \$30 million in funding for UTSA, demonstrating an ability to attract external resources, an invaluable asset for UPR.

Beyond administrative expertise, Dr. Barea is a forward-thinking academic who has spearheaded curriculum transformation initiatives, integrating evidence-based teaching practices to enhance STEM education. As a PULSE fellow, he has led efforts to implement active learning techniques across disciplines, ensuring students receive high-quality,



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relevant education that equips them to tackle societal challenges. He is a great public speaker, with great charisma, and is known for transmitting often complicated and challenging information in a manner that is clear, concise and transparent. Dr. Barea's leadership extends beyond the classroom. He has been involved in initiatives aimed at revamping biotechnology education in Puerto Rico by empowering K-12 teachers. This project underscores his dedication to improving educational outcomes and his commitment to his Puerto Rican roots

Dr. Barea's ability to build and maintain relationships with faculty, students, and external stakeholders is evident in his extensive involvement in initiatives such as My Brother's Keeper, San Antonio, and the NIH Advisory Committee to the Director Working Group on Diversity. Furthermore, his commitment to UPR and Puerto Rico is well-established, having facilitated faculty training workshops and played an instrumental role in advocating for faculty development initiatives on the island for numerous years.

Financial stewardship is another of Dr. Barea's strengths. As Vice-Provost at UTSA, he managed budgets strategically, ensuring funds were allocated to maximize institutional impact. His experience in securing philanthropic donations and fostering partnerships positions him well to enhance UPR's financial sustainability. He has served as a Trustee of the Ponce Medical School Foundation, Inc. (PMSF), which I direct, since 2022 and his vision and leadership has helped propel the PMSF to exciting growth in revenues and social impact.

Ultimately, UPR requires a leader who can navigate the complexities of higher education while maintaining a steadfast commitment to student success, faculty development, and institutional excellence, while bringing a new, fresh perspective to the growing challenges faced. Dr. Edwin Barea embodies these qualities and has a proven track record of visionary leadership, strategic planning, and inclusive decision-making. His collaborative leadership style, coupled with a deep dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion, makes him the ideal choice for this role.

I strongly and unequivocally recommend Edwin Barea for the position of President of the University of Puerto Rico. His passion for higher education, proven leadership, and unwavering commitment to student success will undoubtedly propel UPR toward a bright and prosperous future.

Cordially,



Kenira J. Thompson, Ph.D., MBA  
President, Ponce Medical Foundation  
Vice President of Research, Ponce Health Sciences University



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