



UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO
RECINTO UNIVERSITARIO DE MAYAGÜEZ
DEPARTAMENTO DE BIOLOGIA



UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
MAYAGÜEZ CAMPUS
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY



biol@uprm.edu
www.biology.uprm.edu

March 24, 2025

Evaluation Committee
University of Puerto Rico

It is with great enthusiasm and full confidence that I write this letter in support of Dr. Walleska De Jesús Bonilla's candidacy for President of the University of Puerto Rico. I have had the distinct privilege of knowing and working closely with Dr. De Jesús for the past twelve years, since 2013, when she served as Chair of the Department of Natural Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico in Aguadilla.

For seven of those years, Dr. De Jesús was my direct supervisor. During this time, she visited my classes for peer evaluations, always providing thoughtful, fair, and constructive feedback aimed at enhancing teaching quality. Her open-door policy, willingness to listen, and ability to offer objective guidance were instrumental in resolving both day-to-day matters and more complex departmental challenges. She demonstrated wisdom in assessing each situation and consistently matched issues with appropriate resources or recommendations.

I have witnessed firsthand her development as an effective and respected leader. In the early stages of her leadership, she challenges with some faculty members. However, with professionalism, consistency, and emotional intelligence, she earned their respect and led the department with composure and authority. Even in contentious meetings, she maintained control with grace, and over time fostered a collaborative culture where faculty engaged productively in departmental committees and initiatives. Her strong work ethic was evident in the late hours she dedicated to ensuring the department's operations ran smoothly. She also supported my undergraduate research projects, securing institutional funding and adjusting teaching schedules to ensure students could fully participate in experiential learning.

In 2020, Dr. De Jesús assumed the role of Dean of Academic Affairs. In this capacity, I had the opportunity to work with her on a federal grant proposal I submitted to the National Science Foundation (NSF) entitled Strengthening Teaching and Advancing Research Partnerships: Reinforcing the STEM Workforce (STARp), in which she served as Co-Director (Award No. 2122203). Despite the demands of her role as Dean, she contributed meaningfully to the project, particularly in implementing flipped classroom strategies in chemistry courses. Her coordination with faculty, participation in training efforts, and support in data collection were critical to the success of this initiative aimed at improving student outcomes in high-failure gateway courses.

Over the twelve years I have known her, Dr. De Jesús has demonstrated extraordinary composure, leadership, and integrity. I have never seen her lose her temper or engage in conflict. She manages difficult situations with admirable calm and focus. She is goal-oriented, strategic, and has a remarkable ability to bring people together to achieve shared goals.

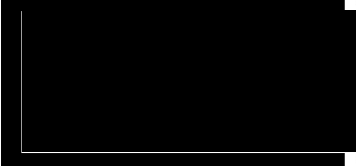


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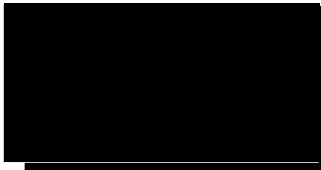
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I am confident that Dr. Walleska De Jesús Bonilla possesses the vision, administrative expertise, and unwavering dedication necessary to serve as President of the University of Puerto Rico. Her leadership is precisely what the institution needs as it seeks to transform and strengthen its role in shaping the professionals of the future for the benefit of Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,

Yadira Malavez, Ph.D.

Associate Professor

Industrial Biotechnology Program

Department of Biology

University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez

