



10 December 2010

OPEN LETTER

RE: Necessity of regular police presence on the UPR Río Piedras Campus

Dear Chancellor Dr. Guadalupe and President Dr. De La Torre:

We are writing to you as a group of very concerned faculty members from several departments in the College of Natural Sciences, Río Piedras Campus, who represent a variety of educational, academic, professional, and cultural backgrounds. We strongly support you in your request for on-campus protection by Commonwealth police to ensure the basic rights of those who wish to work and study on a peaceful, law-obeying campus maintaining an environment conducive to intensive research.

We support the presence of police on campus for the following reasons:

Students or unidentified individuals on campus have repeatedly violated UPR policies and procedures as well as the laws of Puerto Rico by 1) limiting access to the campus by blocking entrances and preventing emergency access to the campus, creating a risk for employees and the public at large, 2) intimidating and endangering the safety of faculty and students by brandishing makeshift weapons and sticks, 3) damaging equipment and facilities on campus, 4) blocking free access of physical plant personnel to enter the campus, thus preventing necessary campus maintenance and repairs (e.g., locks, electric lines, air conditioning systems), and 5) intense harassment and verbal abuse of personnel trying to work or students trying to study on campus, just to name a few. The campus was basically at times **completely out of the control of the campus administration**, one of the two issues raised by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (Standard 4, Leadership and Governance). In addition, interruption of classes and laboratory work of undergraduate and graduate students negatively affects the training of the next generation of scientists and puts our accreditation at risk (Standard 11, Educational Offering). We all have gone to work despite this intimidation and the terrible working conditions for the advancement of UPR and Puerto Rico and have been left scarred and depressed from the experience.

It must be pointed out that the aforementioned illegal activities on campus are also **endangering the public at large** because scientific laboratories with extremely dangerous and hazardous materials and equipment are not being properly supervised during this chaotic situation. Theft of chemicals can occur and those chemicals or biological entities could be used to commit terrorist acts by poisoning the public water system or create highly effective explosives or biological weapons. **It is therefore imperative that a direct oversight of such facilities be performed by scientific professionals whose safety and well-being is protected by armed police on a permanent basis.**

The denounced activities above are also endangering the future of Puerto Rico with major repercussions during economically challenging times. Who will teach the future generation of scientists if the flagship campus loses its accreditation? Most of the external funding of the UPR system is received by the faculty of the Río Piedras Campus. External funding is already in jeopardy because of non-compliance issues with funding agencies (e.g., NSF) and thus millions of dollars in overhead funds are at risk. In addition, **our personal and professional reputations are at stake**. Excellent faculty members have already left UPR-RP or are in the process of leaving as the result of the strike – many more will follow. We are extremely worried about the future of our university and its capacity to maintain its academic excellence.

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In conclusion, as faculty members of the College of Natural Sciences, we demand professional protection to guarantee our basic right of safe working conditions on the UPR-RP campus. We need the Commonwealth police to continue to establish and maintain order on campus and to enforce the law. We believe that we have this right as faculty members and citizens. Our rights do not end at the gates of UPR!

Signed,

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(Zhongfang Chen, prof. Chem)

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(Mei Yu)

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The following faculty members endorsed the letter, but could not be reached in time for a signature. E-mails of endorsement can be obtained from Dr. Griebenow as proof if needed.

Dr. John A. Soderquist, Prof. of Chemistry
Dr. Ram Katiyar, Prof. of Physics