



21 October 2019

Dear Search Committee:

It is with great pleasure that I write a letter of recommendation for Ms. Aurora M. Sotogras Saldaña for the position of Dean of Administrative Affairs of the University of Puerto Rico - Río Piedras (UPR-RP). I have known Ms. Sotogras for more than 20 years, dating back to her time as an Institutional Research Assistant in the Vice Presidency of the University of Puerto Rico, Central Administration. From a professional point of view, I interacted strongly with Ms. Sotogras while I was Dean of the College of Natural Sciences (1999-2013), primarily while she was the Executive Secretary of the Administrative Board (2002-2013) and as the Executive Assistant to the Chancellor (2010-2013). Based on our longstanding professional relationship, let me state clearly that Ms. Aurora M. Sotogras Saldaña is an outstanding professional academic administrator, dedicated to rigorous standards of excellence.

Ms. Sotogras will bring a wealth of experience to the Office of the Dean of Administrative Affairs. She has an excellent academic background, holding a B.A. in Philosophy and a J.D. from the School of Law, both at the UPR-RP. In addition to the positions I mentioned above, she has held high level administrative positions in the Commonwealth Government of Puerto Rico (Department of Treasury) and in a private, non-profit foundation (Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades). Finally, she has served admirably as Acting Dean of Administrative Affairs at UPR-RP since June 2018. The sum total of these experiences has allowed Ms. Sotogras to develop the following skills: 1) Leadership; 2) An extensive knowledge of the administrative regulations of the UPR-RP; 3) A comprehensive understanding of the role of the public sector in education and research; 4) An appreciation of the administrative support required to meet the academic needs of the UPR-RP campus; and 5) A sensitivity to the balance between the different constituencies within the campus: administration, faculty, staff, and students.

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Ms. Sotogras has spent most of her professional career in administrative positions, and I believe it is essential to comment on her performance in these posts where I have first-hand knowledge. As I state above, I have directly observed Ms. Sotogras as the Executive Secretary of the Administrative Board (2002-2013) and as the Executive Assistant to the Chancellor (2010-2013). In each position, Ms. Sotogras brought a level of energy, loyalty to the institution and professionalism to bear that clearly strengthened the institutional units in which she served. As the Executive Secretary, she provided to the Administrative Board (under two different Chancellors) complete explanations of the rules and regulations of the University of Puerto Rico and maintained an efficient and timely calendar for executive decisions. As Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, Ms. Sotogras was the heart and soul of the top administration of the UPR-RP campus, maintaining close contact between the Chancellor's office and all the deanships. In addition, she played a key role in the development and implementation of the strategic plans of the Río Piedras campus.

We find ourselves in a moment of history that is clearly not a time for business as usual. I have carefully reviewed the Administrative Plan to innovate and transform the Río Piedras campus over the next four years presented by Ms. Sotogras. In her plan, she details four principal areas for transformation and innovation: 1) Energy efficiency for a resilient and sustainable campus; 2) Professional development for non-teaching and management personnel; 3) Transformation of processes for administrative innovation; and 4) Optimization of physical spaces on the campus. Given the current fiscal and post-hurricane situation of the UPR-RP campus, I find Ms. Sotogras' administrative project to be completely on target. She has chosen to focus on how to make the most of our existing resources putting the administration at the service of the academic needs of the UPR-RP campus. I am impressed with the way her plan cuts across all the academic sectors and constituencies of the campus. Given her extensive experience working

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across the campus, and her excellent temperament, I give her plan a high chance of succeeding and improving the overall environment at UPR-RP. Clearly, her experience with strategic planning in difficult fiscal situations will play a critical role in the implementation of her administrative project.

My recommendation of Ms. Sotogras for a top leadership position at UPR-RP would not be complete without addressing her character. In all of my professional interactions with Ms. Sotogras, I have always found her to be honest and straightforward, loyal to the values of the institution, and even-tempered in addressing issues. Ms. Sotogras is always respectful to everybody, no matter their rank or affiliation. She has a solid foundation in leadership positions, knows how to treat people, and is fully capable of providing the leadership across the administrative sector of the UPR-RP campus. In this sense, I cannot imagine a better qualified candidate.

In closing, I highly recommend, without any reservation, Ms. Aurora M. Sotogras Saldaña, for the Dean of Administrative Affairs at the University of Puerto Rico – Río Piedras.

Cordially,



Brad R. Weiner
Former Dean of the College of Natural Sciences
and Professor of Chemistry