

BMB Partnership with the University of Puerto Rico



University of Puerto Rico

The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center recently formed a Joint Educational and Academic Exchange Program with the University of Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences, Department of Biochemistry. This exchange program is aimed at establishing a long-term educational and academic partnership between the two departments, emphasizing the unique environments of UPR and MDACC. Faculty and trainees from each

department exchange visits to direct workshops, participate in scientific retreats and train in laboratories. Goals include the establishment of research collaborations, fostering of joint publications, and an ongoing, thriving exchange to encourage the recruitment of UPR students to BMB as Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

Dr. William Klein, chair of BMB, had earlier established a professional relationship with Dr. José Rodríguez Medina, chair of UPR Medical Sciences, Department of Biochemistry. M. D. Anderson and UPR Cancer Center were previously awarded the Partnership for Excellence in Cancer Research through a Minority Institute/Cancer Center Program U54 grant from the National Institutes of Health. This partnership grant allows both institutions to pursue research objectives ranging from basic science to clinical trials.

February 2010 Faculty Visit

Dr. Pierre McCrea visited the University of Puerto Rico in late February 2010. He was first hosted by Dr. Carmen Cadilla at the Medical Sciences Campus in San Juan, and then by Dr. Jose Garcia-Arraras at the Rio Piedras Campus. The Medical Sciences Campus offers advanced training in the basic and medical sciences (e.g. Ph.D. and M.D.), while the Rio Piedras Campus offers both undergraduate and graduate education. The University of Puerto Rico boasts additional campuses, including one at Humacao, where two former postdoctoral fellows from the Genes & Development program are pursuing

junior faculty positions – Dr. Edwin Traverso (Etkin) and Dr. Tania Malave (Dent). Dr. McCrea presented a class in the Eukaryotic Gene Expression course and two research seminars, assisted with a journal club, and led an informal discussion session on career opportunities with approximately 30 graduate student members of the Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement (RISE) program. He reports productive interactions with motivated and bright students present at both campuses, and along with many other individuals at MDACC and UPR, hopes that further basic science interactions will allow for meaningful exchanges, such as those involving the training of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.



L-R: Students Carmelo Orengo, Marina Martínez, Monica Rivera, Ednalise Santiago and Yacidzohara Rodríguez; Dr. Pierre McCrea and Dr. Carmen Cadilla.

Spring/Summer 2010 Events

In April/May 2010, Dr. Georg Halder and six BMB trainees will travel to Puerto Rico to participate in the RISE Retreat to present research and interact with UPR trainees and faculty. A student exchange program is planned for the summer, where four or five UPR trainees will be chosen to visit BMB labs for one or two weeks to learn new skills to broaden and enhance their research projects.

Future Events

There are more workshops and exchanges planned for the following year, September 2010 through August 2011. Please check back for updates on the development of the partnership between these two departments.



Genes and Development Spring Retreat

March 25-26, 2010

M. D. Anderson Cancer Center
Cancer Prevention Building
Conference Center, Floor 8
Houston, Texas