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Restructuring the UPR: The Government Is Not the Only Culprit — and the Crisis Cannot Be Fixed With More Money

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“The UPR has been key to transforming dependency into dignity, poverty into wealth creation, and inequality into opportunity”.

The University Barely Survives When Puerto Rico Needs It to Transform

The University of Puerto Rico is, simultaneously, one of the Island's most valuable assets and one of its most battered. For over a decade, successive government administrations — in tacit alliance with the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board — have cut its budget in half. The result is predictable: deteriorating infrastructure, a faculty without permanent positions, underfunded academic programs, and an institution that survives instead of transforms.

Today, all eleven campuses of the system are shut down. Students are demanding the restoration of the budgetary formula and the resignation of the university's president. The crisis has a name, a date, and a cause. But the solution cannot simply be to restore what existed before. Puerto Rico needs a different vision — one that transforms the UPR into a financially autonomous, academically competitive, and politically insulated institution.

The Diagnosis: A Decade of Budgetary Dispossession

The history is stark. Law 2 of 1966 guaranteed the UPR 9.6% of the two-year average of General Fund revenues. It was a legal protection specifically designed to shield the institution from political discretion. It worked for decades.

In 2017, the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board eliminated that formula. The consequences were immediate and devastating.

The General Fund allocation fell from \$911 million in fiscal year 2017 to \$466 million in 2022 — a reduction of nearly 50% in five years. For fiscal year 2026, the Board-imposed budgetary certification sets the base General Fund allocation at \$441.2 million. With additional operational support line items and joint resolutions, total Treasury appropriations rise to \$531.4 million.

The General Fund stands at \$13 billion. If the 9.6% formula were in effect, the UPR would receive over \$1 billion. The Board certified \$441 million as the base — approximately 3.4%, that is \$559 million less.

The institutional irony runs deep: the 1966 formula, which some criticized for tethering the university to the government, was in reality its only protection against political arbitrariness. By eliminating it, the Board did not liberate the UPR — it left it defenseless and at the mercy of annual budgetary decisions subject to political pressure, legislative negotiation, and administrative caprice.

Financial Profile: The FY2026 Budget Imposed by the Board

On June 27, 2025, the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board took an unprecedented step: it rejected the budget submitted by the Governor for failing to comply with the Fiscal Plan, and developed its own certified budget for the UPR. In other words, the Board does not merely oversee — it legislates. The budget governing the UPR today was not approved by the Legislative Assembly, nor signed by the Executive. It was imposed.

The figures in that budget tell a story of structural rigidity and zero operating margin.

REVENUES FY2026	USD Thousands
General Fund Appropriation (base)	\$441,206
Additional operational support	\$60,000
Joint resolutions	\$30,170
Total Treasury Appropriations (TSA)	\$531,376
Other special appropriations	\$34,658
TOTAL CENTRAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS	\$566,034
Slot Machine Revenues (Law 36-2005)	\$71,344
Undergraduate tuition	\$133,863
Graduate tuition	\$33,594
Scholarship Fund (Law 4-2022)	\$10,000
Campus-generated revenues	\$218,330
TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES	\$473,749
Pell Grants and other federal student aid	\$56,244
Federal research grants	\$114,235
TOTAL OTHER SOURCES	\$170,479
TOTAL REVENUE SOURCES	\$1,210,262

EXPENDITURES FY2026	USD Thousands
Salaries — Faculty	(\$342,381)
Salaries — Non-teaching staff	(\$172,054)
Medical Plan	(\$68,441)
Social Security	(\$41,026)
Other labor costs	(\$25,802)
TOTAL PAYROLL AND LABOR COSTS	(\$649,704)
Materials and supplies	(\$32,646)
Purchased services	(\$23,798)
Scholarships, Pell and grants	(\$129,679)
Facilities and utilities	(\$48,154)
Other operating expenses	(\$105,833)
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	(\$989,814)

Capital expenditures	(\$8,000)
Equipment and maintenance	(\$43,515)
Pension plan contribution	(\$132,650)
TOTAL OTHER EXPENSES	(\$184,165)
TOTAL EXPENSES	(\$1,173,979)
Operating position (before debt service)	\$36,283
Contractual debt service	(\$36,283)
NET FINAL POSITION	\$0

The numbers speak for themselves. The UPR operates with a net margin of zero. Payroll and associated costs amount to \$649.7 million — 55.3% of the total budget. Pension contributions add \$132.7 million, or 11.3% of the total. Between payroll and pensions, the institution commits 66.6% of its resources before paying a single electricity bill. Capital expenditures allocated amount to \$8 million — for eleven campuses. That is not transformational. It is symbolic.

The Board acknowledges that the UPR holds approximately \$40.7 million in institutional funds from prior years for capital projects, and approximately \$1 billion in federal funds for permanent improvements. Additionally, \$172 million in supplemental General Fund resources are contingent on meeting specific performance targets. But every disbursement requires prior written approval from the Board. Every budget reallocation, regardless of amount, requires prior Board approval. Every contract of \$2 million or more requires prior Board review.

The UPR does not have a budget — it has a certified straitjacket. It operates with zero net margin, with 66.6% of its resources locked into payroll and pensions, and without the ability to reallocate a single dollar without written permission from the Fiscal Oversight and Management Board.

The Price of Knowledge: The UPR in the University Market

Institution / Sector	Type	Annual Tuition	vs. UPR	Total COA	Tuition % of Total Revenues
Puerto Rico					
University of Puerto Rico	Public	\$5,324	—	\$9,492	13.8%
Inter American University Metro	Private	\$5,780	+\$456	\$28,212	65–75%
Univ. del Sagrado Corazón	Private	\$6,410	+\$1,086	\$26,410	65–75%
Universidad Ana G. Méndez	Private	\$6,920	+\$1,596	\$21,420	65–75%
United States — National Averages 2025–2026					
Avg. public university	Public	\$11,950	+\$6,626	\$30,000	18–22%
Avg. private non-profit	Private	\$45,000	+\$39,676	\$63,000	35–45%
University of Florida	Public	\$6,380	+\$1,056	\$22,278	19%
Georgia Tech (STEM benchmark)	Public	\$11,764	+\$6,440	\$31,012	20%
Univ. of Michigan Ann Arbor	Public	\$17,786	+\$12,462	\$36,734	24%
Univ. of Pennsylvania (Ivy)	Private	\$67,295	+\$61,971	\$90,000+	28–35%

* UPR tuition % based on FY2026 certified budget: \$167.5M tuition / \$1,210.3M total revenues. PR private university % estimated from IPEDS audited financials; institutions receive no state appropriation. U.S. public % reflects blended enrollment mix including state appropriations and research grants. Ivy League % reflects endowment and research grant offsets. † Out-of-state pricing represents the same institutions as the in-state row; institutional revenue % is identical. Sources: College Board 2025–26; NCES/IPEDS 2024–25; Birling Capital Advisors analysis. COA = Cost of Attendance (tuition + housing + meals + books + personal expenses).

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The data reveal a reality that public debate systematically ignores. The UPR charges \$5,324 per year in tuition. That amount equals 44.6% of the national average for in-state public universities (\$11,950), 11.8% of the national average for private universities (\$45,000), and — the most revealing comparison — is lower than every local private university in Puerto Rico.

Put differently: a student at Inter American pays more than at the UPR. A student at Sagrado pays 20% more. A student at UAGM pays 30% more. The Island's most prestigious public university is also its cheapest.

The UPR charges \$5,324 per year. The national average for public universities is \$11,950. Local private institutions charge between \$5,780 and \$6,920. The UPR is subsidizing university education in Puerto Rico at a price that reflects neither its real cost nor its market value.

This has direct implications for the funding debate. If the UPR gradually adjusted its tuition to \$8,000 annually — still below local private institutions and at 67% of the national public average — it would generate approximately \$45–50 million in additional annual revenue. At \$10,000 — still 84% cheaper than the national private average — the difference would exceed \$100 million per year.

The obvious objection is access. But the Board's own certified budget provides the answer: Law 4-2022 established a need-based scholarship fund to which the government has contributed a cumulative total of \$214 million, with annual disbursements of \$10 million for students with demonstrated financial need. That fund exists precisely to ensure that no tuition increase excludes low-income students. The problem is not the instrument — it is that it has never been used for that purpose.

The Most Subsidized and the Most Underpriced

There is a number buried in the UPR's certified budget that reframes the entire debate about university financing — and almost no one is talking about it. Tuition accounts for 13.8% of the UPR's total revenue. That is not a strength. It is a structural vulnerability disguised as affordability.

At the average U.S. public research university, tuition accounts for between 18% and 22% of total institutional revenues. At the University of Florida — which charges students only \$57 more per year than the UPR — tuition accounts for approximately 19% of revenue. The UPR charges less and generates a smaller share of its own income. It is simultaneously the most subsidized and the most underpriced university on the Island.

The contrast with Puerto Rico's private institutions is even more striking. Inter American University, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, and the Universidad Ana G. Méndez system each generate between 65% and 75% of revenues from tuition alone. They receive no state appropriation, no slot machine revenue, no billion-dollar federal capital improvement funds. They operate without a Board certifying their every budget decision. And yet they charge between \$5,780 and \$6,920 per year — only \$456 to \$1,596 more than the UPR — and they survive on it.

The UPR arrives at 13.8% tuition dependency only because government appropriations — \$566 million from the central government alone — dwarf every dollar a student pays. Remove that subsidy, and the revenue model collapses entirely. That is not financial autonomy. It is structural dependency with a low price tag. The uncomfortable arithmetic is this: the UPR is undercharging its students, overreliant on a government that has cut its budget in half, and generating a smaller share of its own revenues than universities with a fraction of its resources, prestige, and mission. That is not a funding crisis. It is a pricing crisis — and pricing crises have solutions.

The Structural Problem: Politicization by Design

The budgetary crisis is not the only problem. The UPR's governance is designed to be political. The Board of Trustees is appointed by the Governor. The University President is, in practice, a political appointee of whichever administration is in power. Every electoral cycle brings the risk of institutional purge.

This architecture is not accidental. The UPR is too valuable as a patronage tool — jobs, contracts, academic influence — for political parties to voluntarily relinquish it. House Bill 880, which students are demanding advance,

proposes governance reforms. The direction is correct. The question is whether there is political will to approve a measure that reduces legislators' power over the institution.

The Architecture of Self-Sufficiency: A Three-Phase Framework

The UPR's crisis was built over more than a decade. Resolving it requires a framework that is sequenced, data-driven, and disciplined — one that addresses the external assault on the institution's resources and the internal failures that have made it uniquely vulnerable to that assault. The three phases below are not interchangeable. Phase II cannot succeed without Phase I. Phase III cannot be reached without Phase II. The order is not strategic preference — it is fiscal logic.

1. Phase I — Structural Triage (Years 0–3)

The first phase is not about finding more money. It is about stopping the hemorrhage — and doing so with precision, because the bleeding has two distinct sources that require two distinct interventions.

The external wound is documented in this analysis. The General Fund allocation fell from \$911 million in FY2017 to \$441.2 million in FY2026 — a reduction of 51.6% in nine years. The internal wound is fiscal, structural, and largely self-inflicted.

Start with the ratio that no one publishes. The UPR system employs approximately 4,450 faculty members to serve 44,233 students — a student-to-faculty ratio of 9.9:1. The national average for comparable public research universities is 18:1. The UPR is operating with nearly twice the faculty density of its peer institutions. In 2009–10, the system enrolled 52,791 students. By 2022–23, enrollment had fallen to 44,233 — a decline of 16.2%, tracking Puerto Rico's broader population contraction. Tenured faculty positions did not contract at the same rate. The result is a staffing structure calibrated for a university that no longer exists, funded by a budget cut in half.

The fiscal consequences are precise. Faculty salaries total \$342.4 million. Add \$68.4 million in medical plan costs, \$41 million in Social Security, and \$25.8 million in other labor costs, and the total direct compensation load reaches \$477.6 million — before a single pension dollar is counted. The pension contribution adds \$132.7 million, at a rate of 38.7% of the faculty payroll base. The national benchmark ranges from 15% to 25% of payroll. The UPR's rate is between 55% and 160% above that range. Between direct compensation and pension, the institution commits \$610.3 million — more than half its entire budget — to a workforce whose contractual structure and productivity standards have not been meaningfully renegotiated in decades.

As documented elsewhere in this analysis, the structural inefficiencies embedded in faculty compensation agreements — in hours present versus hours compensated, in weeks worked versus weeks paid, and in promotion standards that do not meet any recognized academic benchmark — compound these numbers further. The fiscal implications are not theoretical. They are the direct cause of the zero net margin that defines the FY2026 budget.

Labor contract reform is therefore the first structural action of Phase I. Faculty workload standards must be verified and enforced. Promotion criteria must align with national academic standards. For new hires, a transition toward defined-contribution pension plans — standard practice in virtually every financially restructured public institution in the United States over the past two decades — is the only actuarially responsible path forward for an institution that cannot sustain a \$132.7 million annual pension obligation on a zero-margin budget.

The second structural action of Phase I is a fundamental redesign of the campus system — not as an academic planning aspiration but as a fiscal emergency. The UPR's eleven campuses constitute eleven separate administrative structures, eleven separate bureaucracies, and eleven separate sets of deferred infrastructure obligations, all sharing a pool of resources cut in half over nine years. With \$8 million allocated for capital investment in FY2026 — \$727,000 per institution — the physical deterioration of the system is a present condition, not a future risk. The framework is built on three tiers: three full research universities, four two-year colleges, and three closures.

The Three Full Universities

Río Piedras is the flagship. With 12,059 students in 2024–25, a Carnegie R2 research classification, 472 academic programs including 32 doctoral degrees, and a 50.1% six-year graduation rate, it is the only UPR campus operating at the scale of a genuine research university. It receives the majority of the system's federal research grants and trains the professionals who staff Puerto Rico's healthcare, legal, financial, and public sectors.

Mayagüez is the STEM anchor. The Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez is Puerto Rico's only accredited engineering school and the primary feeder of STEM talent into the Island's pharmaceutical, aerospace, and manufacturing sectors. With a 47% six-year graduation rate and deep industry relationships in the western manufacturing corridor, it is the natural institutional partner for the technology transfer agenda of Phase II.

Ponce is the southern regional university. Puerto Rico's third-largest city has no comparable public university alternative within geographic reach. UPR Ponce's 45.7% six-year graduation rate is consistent with its regional mission. Closing or demoting it would eliminate public university access for a substantial portion of the Island's population — historically the region most underserved by public investment. Recinto de Ciencias Médicas occupies a separate category: as the only institution training physicians, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, and public health professionals at the graduate level, it operates as a specialized health sciences institution with a system-wide, non-negotiable mission.

The Four Two-Year Colleges

Bayamón, Arecibo, Cayey, and Humacao are converted from four-year campuses into a structured access and transfer network — a deliberate first rung of a ladder that leads to Río Piedras, Mayagüez, or Ponce through guaranteed articulation agreements.

Bayamón enrolled 2,967 students in fall 2023 across 74 acres in the San Juan metropolitan area. Its four-year graduation rate is 2%. Its proximity to Río Piedras — seven miles apart in the same metropolitan region — makes the duplication of four-year degree infrastructure indefensible. Converted to a two-year technical and transfer college, Bayamón becomes the metropolitan access point for students not yet ready for direct Río Piedras admission.

Arecibo, serving the north-central corridor with approximately 3,000 students and a 44.8% six-year graduation rate, becomes the two-year access point for northern interior municipalities, with articulation pathways to both Río Piedras and Mayagüez. Cayey, in the central highlands with approximately 3,000 students and a 47.2% six-year graduation rate, becomes the two-year gateway for the central and southeastern interior, with workforce training programs oriented toward agro-industrial and light manufacturing sectors. Humacao, with 3,628 undergraduate students and the system's highest six-year graduation rate at 50.6%, is the most difficult conversion decision — but its eastern region coverage is fully preserved as a two-year college with a clear articulated transfer pathway to Río Piedras. The model exists: California's community college system feeds the University of California through guaranteed transfer pathways. Puerto Rico has no equivalent. This framework builds one.

The Three Closures

Utado, Aguadilla, and Carolina must be closed. The data permits no responsible alternative.

Utado enrolled 317 students in fall 2023 across 115 acres. Its four-year graduation rate is 2%. Its six-year graduation rate is 18.3% — the lowest in the system by a wide margin. Course sections dropped 44% between 2017 and 2022. The 317 students currently enrolled can be absorbed by UPR Arecibo or Cayey. The 115 acres in Utado's mountainous interior represent a capital asset that can be repurposed for agricultural research, a renewable energy facility, or transferred to the municipality for economic development.

Aguadilla enrolled 1,931 students in fall 2023 on 35 acres in the northwestern corner of the Island. Its four-year graduation rate is 11%. Geographic isolation within a declining-population corridor makes a standalone four-year campus economically unjustifiable. Students in the northwest corridor are better served by a Mayagüez campus with expanded residential infrastructure. The campus's 35 acres adjacent to the Rafael Hernández Airport have significant alternative-use value for aviation, logistics, or aerospace training.

Carolina's closure is the most politically resistant decision in this framework and the most analytically straightforward. UPR Carolina enrolled approximately 2,576 students in a municipality that borders San Juan and sits seven miles from the Río Piedras campus. Two institutions offering overlapping four-year programs, funded by the same constrained budget and serving the same metropolitan labor market, are not a university system — they are administrative duplication. A phased teach-out that allows current students to complete their degrees or transfer without penalty eliminates an entire administrative superstructure while preserving every enrolled student's educational opportunity.

The three closures affect a combined current enrollment of approximately 4,824 students — each of whom has a clear transfer pathway under this framework. They free administrative, faculty, and capital resources for the institutions that deliver outcomes. They also send an unambiguous signal to the Board, the bond markets, and the alumni community that the UPR is capable of making the hard decisions that build the credibility needed to demand more resources.

Only after these two structural interventions — labor contract reform and campus rationalization — does it make strategic sense to negotiate a minimum budgetary floor with the Board. An institution that arrives having reduced its structural cost burden and demonstrated governance discipline will receive a different reception than one that requests additional resources to sustain the same structure. The \$172 million in contingent performance-linked funds already embedded in the FY2026 certified budget constitutes the opening position of that negotiation.

2. Phase II — Revenue Independence (Years 3–7)

The architecture of financial independence is not built on aspiration. It is built on specific instruments and realistic projections — beginning with an honest accounting of where the UPR currently stands.

Start with the endowment — or rather, with the near-total absence of one. The UPR Río Piedras campus carried an endowment of approximately \$1.88 million as of fiscal year 2023. The University of Florida's endowment stands at \$3.5 billion. The University of Michigan's exceeds \$17 billion. For a university with 250,000 alumni, a \$1.88 million endowment is not modest. It is a statement about institutional priorities.

The case for an alumni capital campaign is actuarial. At an 8% alumni participation rate — consistent with comparable public universities in sustained fundraising programs — the UPR would engage 20,000 donors. At an average annual contribution of \$750, annual giving would exceed \$15 million. Invested at a 6% return over a decade, that base giving generates an endowment of approximately \$200 million. With anchor gifts from the pharmaceutical, healthcare, and financial sectors that have depended on UPR-trained talent for generations, a \$500 million endowment by year ten is achievable. At a 5% annual distribution rate, that endowment produces \$25 million per year in perpetual, unrestricted revenue — insulated from the political budget cycle and the Board's certification process.

The tuition adjustment is the most immediately realizable lever. As detailed earlier in this analysis, an adjustment to \$8,000 annually generates \$50 to \$67 million in additional annual revenue, rising above \$100 million at \$10,000. The Law 4-2022 scholarship fund — with \$214 million in cumulative government contributions — protects access for students with demonstrated financial need. That instrument exists. The political will to use it does not.

The research commercialization opportunity is the most underexploited. The \$114.2 million in federal research grants the UPR receives places it in a peer group of institutions that generate meaningful technology transfer revenue — but only when they build the institutional infrastructure to capture it. Puerto Rico is the world's largest per-capita pharmaceutical exporter, accounting for more than \$60 billion in annual exports. AbbVie, Amgen, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, Eli Lilly, and Bristol-Myers Squibb all maintain major manufacturing operations here. None has a formal institutional research partnership with UPR's science and engineering faculty. That gap is not a market failure — it is an organizational failure. A properly staffed technology transfer office could conservatively generate \$5 to \$10 million annually in contract research and licensing revenue within five years, with significant upside as pharmaceutical partnerships deepen.

Executive education and professional programs represent the fourth lever — and the one most immediately within the UPR's operational reach. Puerto Rico's corporate sector pays market rates for professional development: \$25,000 to \$50,000 for executive MBA programs, \$5,000 to \$15,000 for specialized certificates. The UPR's Río Piedras Business School, Medical Sciences graduate programs, and Mayagüez engineering faculty are all positioned to deliver market-rate executive education. If 300 students annually enroll at an average of \$25,000, that is \$7.5 million in revenue that does not exist today — requiring no new faculty, no new facilities, and no Board approval.

The Phase II target is not to increase the own-revenue percentage — the UPR already generates 39.1% of its revenues internally. The target is to generate a sustained operating margin of 5%, approximately \$59 million annually, that can be reinvested in research capacity, capital maintenance, and academic competitiveness. Zero margin is not a fiscal strategy. It is institutional survival mode — and institutions in survival mode do not transform.

3. Phase III — Earned Autonomy (Years 7–15)

By the end of the first decade, the institution that enters Phase III is materially different from the one that began Phase I. A restructured labor cost base. A campus system rationalized around three research-anchored universities and four access-oriented two-year colleges. A tuition model generating \$50 to \$100 million more annually. A technology transfer office generating \$8 to \$12 million in annual revenue. An endowment approaching \$300 to \$500 million, producing \$15 to \$25 million in annual unrestricted income. An executive education program generating \$7 to \$10 million annually.

Add those streams together and the UPR's non-government revenue base grows by \$80 to \$150 million annually — reducing its General Fund dependency from the current 46.8% of total revenues toward 30% or below. At that level of diversification, the relationship with government changes structurally. The UPR is no longer dependent on annual political will for its basic operational continuity. It negotiates from a position of demonstrated productivity and partial financial independence.

That transformation is the documented trajectory of every public research university that has meaningfully reduced its state-funding dependency — from the University of Virginia, which now derives less than 10% of revenues from the Commonwealth, to Georgia Tech's technology transfer ecosystem, to the University of Michigan whose endowment and research income give it fiscal resilience that less diversified institutions cannot sustain.

The UPR has every structural prerequisite those institutions had when they began: a concentration of research faculty, a captive industry base, a large and professionally accomplished alumni network, and a geographic position of genuine comparative advantage — an American jurisdiction in the Caribbean with access to both federal programs and international markets. What it has lacked is not potential. It has lacked leadership willing to make the structural decisions that precede the revenue outcomes. Autonomy is not granted. It is earned.

The Final Word: The Uncomfortable Truth

None of these reforms are technically complicated. The obstacle is not intellectual — it is political. The UPR is too valuable as a tool of power for those who wield it to relinquish it voluntarily. And that applies not only to the politicians who control its budget — but to those inside the institution who have benefited from its dysfunction for decades.

None of it holds without governance reform. An institution whose board is appointed by the governor it is supposed to hold accountable is not a university. It is a dependency.

The students who shut the gates are right in their diagnosis of the external threat. But restoring the 1966 formula does not solve the underlying problem. A budget with zero net margin, with 66.6% of its resources locked into payroll and pensions, and with every reallocation subject to Board approval, is not cured with more

government dollars. It is cured with structural transformation — inside and out. The data in this analysis makes that case in detail. The political will to act on it is the only unresolved variable.

The expropriation from outside is real. The Fiscal Board cut the budget by nearly 50% in nine years. But the expropriation from within — structural, contractual, and institutional — is the scandal that no one names. Both are bleeding the UPR simultaneously. Naming only one and ignoring the other is not advocacy. It is complicity.

The numbers make that complicity visible. The UPR generates only 13.8% of its revenues from tuition — less than any comparable public university in the United States. Puerto Rico's private institutions, operating without a single dollar of government appropriation and charging similar tuition prices, sustain themselves on 65% to 75%. The UPR is the most subsidized and the most underpriced university on the Island simultaneously — and every time the government cuts its budget, that structural dependency becomes a fiscal emergency. That is not affordable education. It is institutional fragility dressed as public service.

The UPR has produced the scientists who staff Puerto Rico's pharmaceutical industry, the physicians who anchor its healthcare system, the engineers who build its infrastructure, and the economists who analyze its crises. Defunding it is not a fiscal decision — it is a civilizational one. But so is tolerating a compensation structure that consumes the institution's resources before a single student enters a classroom, and a campus system that maintains eleven administrative bureaucracies on a budget that cannot sustain three.

Puerto Rico cannot export talent it never trained. It cannot attract industry without the research capacity to support it. It cannot build a knowledge economy on the ruins of its only research university — nor on the fiction that the university's problems are entirely someone else's fault.

The question is no longer whether the UPR can afford reform. The question is whether Puerto Rico can afford not to. The answer is written in every brain that left, every factory that chose another island, and every patient treated in a system held together by professionals the UPR trained on a budget the government chose to cut in half — while the institution itself looked the other way.

That is the true bill. And it is long overdue.

Derek Bok, one of the most influential figures in modern American higher education, was best known for his leadership as president of Harvard University and for shaping debates on the purpose, governance, and economics of universities; he said it best:
“If you think education is expensive, try ignorance”.



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