

Message from the VP for Research and Technology

In the last decades, the powerful tools of biotechnology have revolutionized medicine, agriculture and environmental protection. Milestone discoveries and novel inventions have marked biotechnology's early history. These advances, boosted by public and private incentives, have increased attention and sustained research activity. According to a recent report from Ernst & Young, despite worldwide economic turmoil the global biotechnology industry delivered a solid financial performance in 2008, with revenues of publically traded companies growing to \$89.7 billion. But biotechnology is about more than jobs and the economy; it provides the resources for an improving human longevity and health. Recent advances in understanding, preventing and treating diseases such as cancer, cystic fibrosis and Alzheimer's have been made possible by long-term investments in fundamental biomedical and biotechnology research. In addition to improving health, biotechnology has provided more abundant, appetizing and healthy foods produced with less dependence on pesticides and herbicides. Through biotechnology, microorganisms are used to remove oil spills and other hazardous wastes. In the future, many products and processes from plastic to energy will be cheaper and easier on the environment.

The full potential of biotechnology will only be realized if we continue to invest in a strong research agenda and extend our efforts into innovative application areas. To reach these goals, we must sustain education and training in disciplinary sciences while recognizing the need for communication and collaboration among disciplines. With well-recognized programs in health care, engineering, marine and environmental affairs, and agriculture, as well as research in cancer, neurological disorders, and infectious diseases, we stand to be a major player in many areas of biotechnology.

The University of Puerto Rico is committed to ensuring that Puerto Rico does not lose its competitive edge, not just because of the economic gains, but because of the many ways in which biotechnology contributes to the health of our people and the environment.

Emma Fernández-Repollet, Ph D
Vice President for Research and Technology