



OUR HISTORY

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The inauguration ceremony of the Puerto Rican Institute at Seton Hall University took place on October 17, 1974 in the Galleon Room of the Student Center. The welcoming address was given by Rev. Msgr. Thomas G. Fahy, President of the University, and among the dignitaries attending was the then Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in Washington, DC., The Honorable Jaime Benítez.

The Puerto Rican Institute at Seton Hall University was founded at a time when the University demonstrated its commitment to the special needs of the Hispanic community because of a growing concern to provide opportunities for the full development of Hispanic young people and Seton Hall University was able to serve the Hispanic community through a variety of services and activities. It also involved the university in the surrounding Puerto Rican communities by providing educational and cultural services, including movies, lectures, concerts, publications, etc. – relevant to the community. Due to the Puerto Rican Institute groundwork, the Hispanic enrollment has increased and there is a corresponding increase in the interest, recognition, and involvement of the community.

When the Institute was formed, Puerto Ricans and Hispanics continue to be underrepresented in the nation's colleges and universities. In order to help bridge this higher educational gap affecting this community, there was a need to develop a unique mechanism to provide services. The Institute was created to address the needs and concerns of Puerto Ricans/Hispanic students on the campus and in the community and to reinforce the Puerto Rican identity on campus and develop awareness of the culture among non-Puerto Ricans.

The Puerto Rican Institute aimed to recruit into all levels of the University: the student body, the faculty, administration and staff, Puerto Rican and other Hispanic people. The mission of the Puerto Rican Institute was "to provide the student with supportive services to help develop a sense of "familia" within the University setting and assisting the students with their personal, career, and academic development in order to achieve their goals". In addition to the Institute supportive services, it provided Puerto Rican and Hispanic students with a sense of cultural pride through its cultural and social programs. Cultural events were offered throughout the years in order to reinforce the Puerto Rican/Hispanic cultural identity.

The Institute worked to develop an awareness of our connection to other cultures. Annual events were presented such as: New and Returning Students Get-together (September), Puerto Rican Heritage Month (November), Fiesta Navideña (December), Career Day (March), Latin American Awareness Month (April), Eugenio María de Hostos Banquet (May), study tours to Latin America and /or the Caribbean region, namely: Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic. The study abroad trip took place during the Intersession (May 10 – May 31). The latter was a well received trip and more than 40 students would travel to DR. Participation in Human Relations Week. Hosted Dominican Week in the USA (October) for 8 years. The delegation visit Washington, DC, South Orange and end their trip in New York City.

Among the group of people that traveled to NJ from the Dominican Republic for this event were the Rectors of several Dominican universities, as well as businessmen and scholars, and their participation in lectures and seminars was received with interest. The Institute also served as a conduit in the



development of sister-state relationship between the Dominican Republic and the State of New Jersey. Throughout the years many programs were presented such as: panel discussions by well known authors in the health profession, such as, Drs. Marylin Aguirre, Carlos Molina, Mark Calderón and Thomas Ortiz on Latino Health in the USA and health issues affecting Latino communities; lecture on “Puerto Rican Migration History and its Influence in the USA” by noted author Dr. Olga Waggenheim; Frankie Negrón a student at SHU and now a well known salsa singer, performed at several events, hosted by the Puerto Rican Institute; the group “Cuatro Cuarenta” (4-40) led by Juan Luis Guerra, a Dominican who has become a well known composer and singer also performed under the auspices of the Puerto Rican Institute.

The Institute also sponsored winter session courses for six years in the Dominican Republic such as “Doing Business in the Caribbean Basin: A Case Study of the Dominican Republic”; “Special Topics in Hispanic Civilization: The Dominican Republic: Cradle of the Americas”; “The Dominican Republic: Its Culture, Literature and Art” “Dominican Biblical and Religious Traditions”, for both undergraduate and graduate students, hosted by Universidad APEC. There were lectures by Dominican scholars in their respective field. An exhibition “Fantasy ... A Caribbean Dream” by renowned Dominican artist Alberto Ulloa with a colorful display of “El Maestro” paintings brought specially from the Dominican Republic and “Elemental Fossils: Works by Brazilian artist Duda Penteadó” both held at the Walsh Library Gallery. There were also debates on Immigration and “Latino” vs. “Hispanic”; the Institute supported the awarding of an honorary degree by SHU to First Lady of Honduras, Mrs. Mary Flakes de Flores for her humanitarian work; presentation by 1990 Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction, Oscar Hijuelos; sponsorship of Latino/Latina Secretaries luncheon; Latino Festival on the Green, both of these two events during Latino/Latina month; readings by Puerto Rican poet, Luis López Nieves; performance of Puerto Rican music by “El Cuatro Project” and la “Plena Dulce”; presentation of bilingual musical “Song of the Simple Truth”, the life of Puerto Rican poet Julia Burgos, and play “Venecia” by the Retablo Hispanic Theater at Theater-In-The Round.

The Institute also presented exhibits of Puerto Rican and Latin American artifacts on loan from faculty, staff and students, in the Walsh Gallery window; lectures related to the Vieques situation, the Indians of the Caribbean, Statehood vs. Independence, and the Discovery of Puerto Rico; sponsorship of Puerto Rican students to attend yearly reception held by the Puerto Rican Resident Commissioner in Washington, DC. This reception was held for Puerto Rican students only. There were also yearly trips to El Museo del Barrio, Repertorio Español, The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, Broadway shows and NJPAC. Co-sponsoring of activities with MLK Scholars, Office of International Programs, Adelante, Japan Week and other campus organizations. All these activities were offered to the entire Seton Hall University community.

Utilizing existing and outside sources, the Institute encouraged courses and seminars that explored the sociological, economic, historical, political and cultural background of the island. Another purpose was to promote bilingual programs staffed by tutor-counselors who assisted students in learning and teaching English as a second language and improving their Spanish language competency and in offering other supportive services.

The Puerto Rican Institute coordinated the student exchange programs between Seton Hall University and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico, Universidad Sagrado Corazón, and Universidad Interamericana, all in Puerto Rico and Universidad APEC in Dominican Republic, for many years. These programs have been an excellent opportunity to study in Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic, and learn first hand about the Puerto Rican and Dominican people, their rich culture, history, language, and wonderful traditions. Students participating in the program register for courses approved by both SHU



and the university in Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic. Students pay for tuition and fees at Seton Hall, and room and board and other fees at the host university. We also have students from La Católica who study at our campus. This exchange program was initiated in 1987 when Theodore Cardinal McCarrick was President – Board of Regents of Seton Hall University. Cardinal McCarrick was also President of La Católica in 1965.

The Institute's services included: recruitment, financial aid, academic advisement, tutorial services, workshops, community outreach, individual and group counseling, cultural activities, seminars, student exchanges, and the enhancement of study abroad opportunities. Also, our men's basketball and baseball teams had an exchange program and played exhibition games in Puerto Rico and in Dominican Republic for several years. In order to reach the Hispanic University population we distributed a monthly newsletter, the Puerto Rican Institute Bulletin. This bulletin provided important messages and information that was useful to the students.

An integral part of the Institute was the Talent Search Project, a federally funded career and college counseling program that aids Newark residents to gain acceptance into colleges, technical schools, and educational programs throughout the country. It was developed by the Institute in 1980. This program established and developed unconventional ways for identifying minority low-income youth who have the potential to overcome disadvantages. It provided the supportive services needed to succeed in college. This Project was abolished by the federal government around 2006.

Ms. Milagro Collazo was the first Director of the Institute. Among the subsequent Directors were Marcos Hernández, Dr. David Abalos and Félix López Montalvo, Esq. In the 90's Frank Morales was named Executive Director Special Academic Programs and Director of the Puerto Rican Institute, supervising the following programs: Talent Search Project, Upward Bound, Office of International Programs, ROTC, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Student Support Services, until his departure from Seton Hall in 2002. Alyssa McCloud became Interim Director of the Office of International Programs, in September 2003, overseeing the Asian Center and the Puerto Rican and Dominican Institutes until 2004.