Executive Council of the Puerto Rican Studies Association
Public Statement
February 29, 2020

In solidarity with the Puerto Rican Association of University Professors (PRAUP; Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarios, APPU), and in response to the government’s handling of the Puerto Rican fiscal crisis, whose consequences are suffered by our people on the island and even abroad, we join the calls to preserve and strengthen the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and prevent its dismantling by the Financial Oversight and Management Board (FOMB; Junta de Supervisión Fiscal, JSF).

The University of Puerto Rico is charged with providing essential services to all Puerto Ricans. It is because the university provides such services that a law was enacted to guarantee the allocation of 9.6% of Puerto Rico’s revenue to the budget of the UPR (Law #2 of 1966, article #3). The practice of the Puerto Rican Government of cutting funds for the university, in violation of this law, has already eroded the institution and imperiled its future. The current plans and projections under the Financial Oversight and Management Board to cut university funds even further are not sustainable and threaten the very existence of the UPR. It is urgent and necessary to formally acknowledge the status of the university as a provider of essential services in order to protect the institution from such alleged austerity measures that are shortsighted at best, if not outright malicious in intent. Funding for the UPR should be secured, not lost so that the bond holders can take the lion’s share of the Puerto Rican coffers.

It is urgent and necessary to see the university for what it is, not only a provider of essential services, but also a fundamental socio-economic resource to overcome the fiscal crisis and the general state of prostration in which Puerto Rico has fallen in the aftermath of various natural disasters over the last two and a half years. The UPR offers direct services to the population through various agencies that have no equivalent in the private sector. The UPR generates needed, essential research to address the socioeconomic problems of Puerto Rico today and, particularly, those that affect the most vulnerable communities. The UPR has an enormous impact through the creation of direct and indirect jobs, and the promotion of economic activity. The UPR is a prestigious institution of international caliber that has prepared
generations of professionals and provides opportunities for social mobility for many. The UPR is indispensable.

The PRAUP demands that the government of Puerto Rico and the FOMB acknowledge that the UPR provides essential services (or is in and of itself an essential service, as it is commonly said), that the enforcement of the Law #2 of 1966, article #3, is restored and 9.6% of government’s revenue is once again destined to the UPR’s budget and, finally, that the funding that was cut from the UPR’s budget over the past five years is returned to the university. We concur, and wholeheartedly support these demands. They are not only reasonable, but also necessary to preserve and strengthen the university at a time when Puerto Rico most urgently needs its university to deliver for the common good.