



Welcome Speech – By: Rafael Defendini, President, INDUNIV

At the Occasion of INDUNIV 40th Anniversary Milestone and The Annual Commemoration of the Biosciences 22nd Edition

Buenos días a todos. Good morning, everyone.

It is with great honor and deep gratitude that I welcome you to this **morning celebration of INDUNIV's 40th Anniversary**. Today we gather not only to commemorate four decades of achievements, but to celebrate the legacy of collaboration, innovation, and service that has guided this organization since its creation.

First and foremost, I want to **thank Lucy Crespo** and the **Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust** for allowing us to use this wonderful facility for our activity. Lucy, thank you for your commitment to Puerto Rico's scientific and technological progress. Your leadership and collaboration truly embody the mission that INDUNIV has always promoted among industry, academia, and government.

Standing here as **President of INDUNIV during its 40th year** is a profound honor. INDUNIV's story is one of vision, dedication, and community — a legacy built by generations of professionals who, for four decades, have worked **pro bono** toward a stronger Puerto Rico.

What began in 1983 with the vision of four pioneers — three from industry and one from academia — has evolved into a vibrant organization that continues to strengthen Puerto Rico's position as a global leader in the life sciences.

Even within INDUNIV, I have experienced the power of collaboration among **young professionals** who, like myself, have found in this organization a space to grow, to learn, and to support one another. Together we've managed diverse and forward-looking initiatives — from **space exploration discussions** to **university curriculum design** — always united by the purpose of advancing Puerto Rico's scientific and industrial ecosystem.

For **40 years**, INDUNIV has impacted **thousands of lives** across our island. We have guided students, supported industry needs, and served as a trusted partner to every administration in developing policies that strengthen Puerto Rico's competitiveness.

Our mission remains clear: *to promote and catalyze effective collaboration among industry, academia, and government — developing strategies and action plans that promote innovation and position Puerto Rico as a global location of choice for the life sciences industry.*

That mission has guided every major milestone we celebrate today. Let me highlight just a few:

The **BioScience Celebration**, which every October transforms the month into a tribute to Puerto Rico's scientific talent — officially recognized as the **Month of the Biosciences with a Governor's Proclamation**.

The **IFPAC–INDUNIV Summit**, now in its **22nd consecutive year**, bringing together global leaders in advanced manufacturing and innovation.

High-level **round table meetings** with leaders from the **White House, DARPA**, and the **U.S. Department of Commerce**, ensuring that Puerto Rico's capabilities are recognized on the national stage.

Our strong collaboration with the **University of Puerto Rico** in designing and modernizing curricula aligned with industry needs — such as **Industrial Biotechnology at UPR–Mayagüez, ABET certification at UPR–Bayamón**, and the **Doctoral Program in Pharmaceutical Sciences** at the Medical Sciences Campus.

And, of course, our close partnerships with **Invest Puerto Rico, DDEC**, and the **Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust**, strengthening our bioscience ecosystem through innovation, workforce development, and advocacy.

But INDUNIV's network of collaboration extends far beyond these alliances. We are proud to work side by side with the **Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores de Puerto Rico**, the **Colegio de Químicos**, the **Pharmaceutical Industry Association (PIA)**, the **Puerto Rico Medical Cluster**, and many others across academia, nonprofits, and the private sector.

Together, we have built a community that thrives on **open collaboration** and **mutual respect**, where every contribution counts toward a common goal — to make Puerto Rico a global hub for science, technology, and innovation.

And while we celebrate this collective success, I want to take a moment to **recognize on behalf of the Board of Director, members and collaborators, two individuals whose leadership and dedication have been fundamental to INDUNIV's journey in the past years**.

First, our **Director of Scientific Affairs, Dr. Carlos Tollinche**.

Carlos has been instrumental in maintaining INDUNIV's **direct connection with academia**, ensuring that our programs, discussions, and strategies remain scientifically sound and aligned with educational and research needs. His thoughtful guidance has strengthened the dialogue between universities and industry, bridging the gap between knowledge and practical application.

Carlos, thank you for your professionalism, your wisdom, and for representing the spirit of scientific excellence that fuels our mission.

I also want to express our deep appreciation to **Iván Lugo**, who for over **20 years** has been the **anchor that has sustained INDUNIV** through change, growth, and transformation.

Ivan's **devotion to Puerto Rico** and his tireless effort to position our island as a center of excellence in science and manufacturing truly exemplify the **caliber of professionals we have on the island**.

His vision, discipline, and steady leadership have ensured that INDUNIV not only endures but continues to thrive.

Carlos and Ivan, thank you for your commitment, your passion, and your belief in the potential of Puerto Rico.

As we celebrate the 40-year milestone, I encourage everyone here this morning to **connect with new professionals**, to **share experiences, anecdotes, ideas**, and to **continue the spirit of collaboration** that defines INDUNIV. Whether you are a veteran of this ecosystem or joining us for the first time, this is your community — and your voice matters.

Throughout these decades, INDUNIV has been a **bridge** — between science and society, between knowledge and opportunity. From promoting **STEM education** to supporting **research infrastructure** and advocating for better policies, we have worked to ensure Puerto Rico remains competitive and innovative in an ever-changing world.

Today, as we look ahead, we do so with optimism.

Puerto Rico stands as one of the most specialized bioscience hubs in the United States, home to more than **42,000 jobs** in pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and research.

This ecosystem reflects not only economic impact but the **talent, creativity, and resilience** of our people.

To our founders, past presidents, board members, and all our partners — **thank you** for building the foundation we stand on today.

And to the new generation of professionals — **the future belongs to you**. Continue to dream boldly, to collaborate openly, and to serve with passion and purpose.

As we celebrate **40 years of science and commitment**, let us reaffirm our shared mission: to innovate, to educate, and to transform Puerto Rico through collaboration.

Thank you all for being here this morning — and for being part of the **INDUNIV's legacy**.