UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO
RECINTO DE RIO PIEDRAS

Certificación Núm. 110
Año Académico 2020-2021

Senado Académico
Secretaría

Yo, Claribel Cabán Sosa, Secretaria del Senado Académico del Recinto de Río Piedras, Universidad de Puerto Rico, **CERTIFICO QUE:**

En la reunión ordinaria a distancia celebrada de forma asincrónica a partir de 6 de mayo de 2021, y culminada de forma sincrónica el 11 de mayo de 2021, se acordó por unanimidad:

- Recomendar a la Junta de Gobierno de la Universidad de Puerto Rico la otorgación de la distinción académica de **Profesor Emérito** al **Dr. John A. Soderquist**, de la Facultad de Ciencias Naturales.

Y para que así conste, expido la presente Certificación bajo el sello de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, a los doce días del mes de mayo del año dos mil veintiuno.

Dra. Claribel Cabán Sosa
Secretaria del Senado

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Certifico correcto:

Dr. Luis A. Ferrao Delgado
Rector

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UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO
Recinto de Río Piedras
Facultad de Ciencias Naturales
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San Juan PR 00936

UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
Río Piedras Campus
College of Natural Sciences
Department of Chemistry
San Juan PR 00936

Dr. John A. Soderquist
Biographic Profile

It is our honor to nominate Dr. John A. Soderquist for Professor Emeritus of the Department of Chemistry and the College of Natural Sciences at the Univeristy of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras (UPRRP). Dr. Soderquist has had a long and distinguished career as a chemical researcher and educator, the majority of it as a faculty member in the Department of Chemistry at UPRRP, where he served for 33 years. John Soderquist was born and raised in Alta, Iowa. Even as a child, he had a love affair with Chemistry with numerous Chemistry sets, laboratory equipment and chemicals that he could order by mail, leaving a trail of explosions across northwest Iowa. By the time he was in high school, John already knew quite a bit of Chemistry, and was on his way to becoming a scientist. John began his more formal chemical journey at Iowa State University, entering as a Chemical Engineering major, but later switching and graduating with a B.S. in Chemistry in 1966. His first instincts were as an educator, and so, following graduation he became a high school Chemistry teacher in the suburbs of Des Moines, Iowa for several years. John loves to brag that several of his high school students went on to become professors of Chemistry at distinguished universities. But high school Chemistry was not enough for him, so he decided to go on to an M.S. degree at Bowling Green State University in 1973, and then on to doctoral studies at the University of Colorado – Boulder. John received his PhD in Chemistry in 1977 under the tutelage of Dr. Alfred Hassner, who introduced him to synthetic organic chemistry and the role of silicon-based compounds in making molecules. In a career-defining move, Dr. Soderquist joined the research group of Dr. Herbert C. Brown at Purdue University as a postdoctoral researcher to learn boron chemistry from the discoverer of hydroboration. John was a member of the research group when Dr. Brown won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1979, and accompanied his mentor to Stockholm to receive the award. The following year, Dr. Soderquist became Professor Soderquist joining the faculty at the University of San Francisco. While he loved California and San Francisco, he was frustrated because USF did not have a doctoral degree, so he decided to move to Puerto Rico and UPRRP in 1983. After a long and distinguished career, Dr. Soderquist retired from UPRRP in 2016.

Professor Soderquist was an anchor for Organic Chemistry research on the Island during his tenure at UPRRP. His research program, built on a solid foundation from his doctoral and postdoctoral work, integrated silicon and boron chemistry into his synthetic organic methodology. Over his career, he has authored/co-authored 136 peer-reviewed journal publications, presented invited lectures all over the world and remains a recognized authority in boron chemistry. His work was consistently funded by the leading federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy, and the American Chemical Society's Petroleum Research Fund. John's opinion on chemistry issues is widely sought, as evidenced by his activity as a consultant to the chemical industry. Dr. Soderquist's footprint in Synthetic Organic Chemistry research is widely recognized, and he has brought the name of the UPR-Río Piedras Chemistry Department to a much higher level. As evidence of his standing, this nomination received thiry-five (35) external support letters, submitted to the department by his Chemistry peers from around the world. These letters are from academics, including three Nobel Laureates, as well as scientific professionals in the chemical industry. All these letters speak in the highest terms of his well-recognized contribution to the discipline of Chemistry.

Biographic Profile – Dr. John A. Soderquist
Professor Emeritus

No discussion of Professor Soderquist's contribution is complete without consideration of his legacy, perhaps the most qualifying criterion. Professor Soderquist's talent as a PhD mentor probably eclipses his considerable strengths as a researcher and a chemist. During his 33 years at UPRRP, he mentored 27 PhD students. John employed the lessons he learned from his mentors, Hassner and Brown, to create a legacy of successful, well-trained chemical professionals. Soderquist's mentoring style was not for timid – he challenged his students to shoot for the stars. The results speak for themselves, and if they do not, the letters we received from his PhD students tell the story – a more loyal group is hard to find. Today, many of these PhD graduates are located in leading chemical industry positions (Pfizer, Callery, Glaxo-Smith Kline, Merck, Eli Lilly, Bristol-Meyers Squibb, to name a few), both in management and research, in Puerto Rico and the US. Still others, are in academic positions in Puerto Rico, teaching Chemistry at all levels and doing academic research. And behind all of them, John Soderquist remains an active source of support for all of his former students, his 'extended Chemistry family'. For this, John A. Soderquist holds the respect of the entire chemical community of Puerto Rico and beyond.

Dr. John A. Soderquist is a character. He challenged his colleagues and his students to be better scientists, to be better academics, to be better people. His style could be rough, and at times rubbed people the wrong way, but he was always sincere, and always commited. As he likes to say, "Chemistry is not a game for children". We are grateful to his commitment to our 'game', and the Department of Chemistry, the College of Natural Sciences, and the University of Puerto Rico – Río Piedras are better today because of the lifetime contribution of John A. Soderquist.