

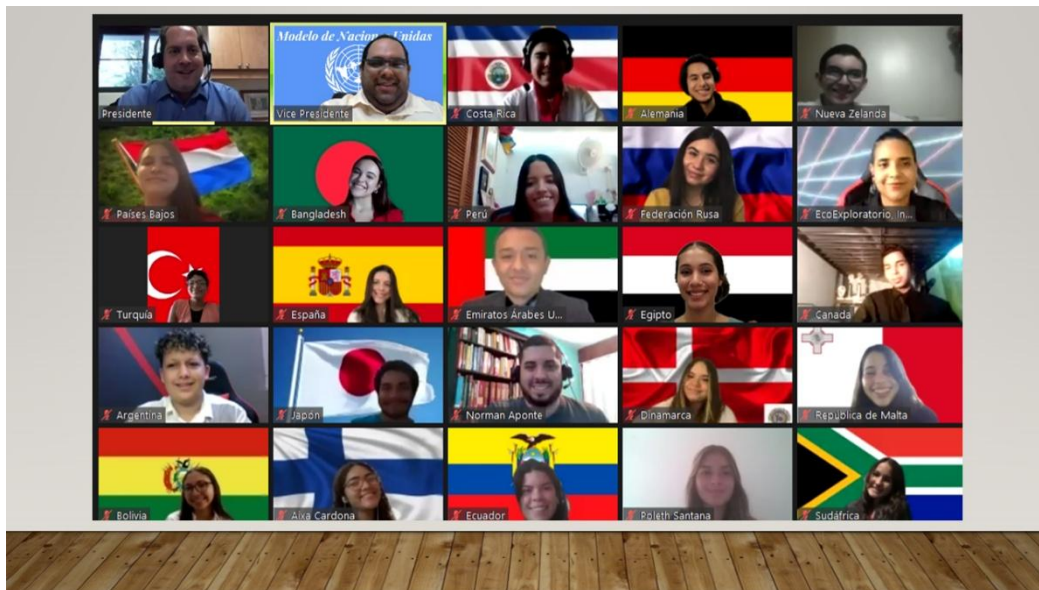


# Chapter Spotlight: Puerto Rico

For the majority of UNA-USA chapters, COVID-19 introduces many new challenges to community engagement, putting a pause on regular chapter meetings and events. Social distancing measures require chapter leaders to think creatively and innovatively to preserve chapter unity and sustain advocacy efforts.

The UNA Puerto Rico Chapter tackled this recent challenge organizing a virtual Model United Nations (MUN) conference for high school students. Starting from scratch, Ricardo Arzuaga, Executive Director of the chapter, enlisted the help Edwin Torres, a local teacher pursuing a Ph.D. in distanced learning. The chapter leaders and Torres aimed to provide students from Puerto Rican public schools the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills and problem-solve as global citizens.

Key to executing a successful, 50-delegate conference was a student guide to Zoom MUN Conferences and a structured action-plan. The conference utilized Google Docs for resolution writing, the “raise hand” icon for speaker lists, country flag virtual backgrounds and other elements to establish decorum and professionalism even through the computer. Students not only practiced international diplomacy, but also studied coronavirus response and recovery as they wrote resolutions about the pandemic from their country’s perspective.



Nevertheless, an ongoing challenge with virtual student programs is widespread poverty and limited access to technology. Out of all the US states and territories, Puerto Rico has one of the highest levels of poverty, and according to the US Census Bureau, only 54% of all households in Puerto Rico have internet access. To ensure widespread access to valuable learning and advocacy during these challenging times, the Puerto Rico chapter pursues partnerships with local NGOs and universities. These partnerships are focused on overcoming obstacles to connectivity and expanding the local MUN program.

Another pioneering partnership of the Puerto Rico chapter is their cross-sector collaboration with the Instituto de Estadísticas de Puerto Rico (Statistics Institute of Puerto Rico) and the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón (Sacred Heart University). As some of the first stakeholders to show interest in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Puerto Rico, the collaborators of this SDG Working Group document local SDG indicators, manage a recently established bachelor's program in sustainable development, and recruit local stakeholders.



After almost three years, the SDG Working Group has amassed involvement from over 50 organizations. The Puerto Rico chapter hosts and manages the multi-stakeholder relationship, ensuring all participants have an equal voice and contribution to Puerto Rico's application of the 2030 Agenda. Ricardo believes every individual should stand for the United Nations, as all lives are impacted by the issues addressed by the SDGs. Wide in scope and sharp in impact, the Sustainable Development Goals not only champion positive, lasting change – they ultimately promote global unity that will combat any future global challenge.

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Visit the UNA-USA Puerto Rico Chapter's [website](#) for more information on their [virtual MUN program](#) and their [SDG Working Group](#).