

RESTORING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN PUERTO RICO

APRIL 20, 2007: MIT FACULTY CLUB

APRIL 21, 2007: TSAI AUDITORIUM IN CGIS SOUTH BLDG.

Presented by the Harvard-MIT Puerto Rican Caucus

PROPOSING SOLUTIONS
2007

Forum Plans for Island's Future

Published On Monday, April 23, 2007 1:16 AM

By **BRIAN J. BOLDUC**
Contributing Writer

Over 150 Puerto Rican students from the Boston area descended upon the CGIS South Building on Saturday, armed with ideas on how to revitalize the economy of their native island.

The symposium was part of a two-day conference, "Restoring Economic Growth in Puerto Rico," presented by the Harvard-MIT Puerto Rico Caucus.

The caucus held the conference so that professors, businessmen, government officials, and students could exchange their proposals for economic reform.

"We wanted to create an intellectual forum," said Luis A. Martinez '08, the lead Harvard representative in the caucus.

The caucus, consisting of over 80 Puerto Rican students from Harvard and MIT, formed last summer after the cash-strapped Puerto Rican government shut down for two weeks in May 2006.

"We wanted to join together to change the economic downside," said Katia Acosta, a senior at MIT and the lead MIT representative at the caucus.

The panels offered several notable speakers, including the chief justice of the island's Supreme Court, Federico Hernandez Denton '66; the president of the University of Puerto Rico, Antonio Garcia Padilla; and Ascherman Professor of Economics Richard Freeman.

The discussion focused on several aspects of the Puerto Rican economy, including real estate, healthcare, and education.

The final panel, "Branding Puerto Rico," debated how the island should be presented to other nations.

One panelist, Mickey Espada, director of the "Branding Puerto Rico" initiative, showed commercials that the island's government had produced in the 1990s to attract American tourists. The clips used slogans such as "Puerto Rico USA" and "Explore Beyond the Shore." Another featured pop artist Ricky Martin, encouraging tourists to visit his native land.

After showing the clips, Espada argued that in the face of greater competition, the island needed a distinctive brand to attract American tourists.