Historical Note: The School of Tropical Medicine grew out of the Institute of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (1912-1924), which in turn, developed out of the Anemia Commission (1904-1911)—a government-sponsored effort first organized to address widespread anemia caused by hookworm.

The School served as a joint venture between the Puerto Rico government/University of Puerto Rico and Columbia University in the City of New York to support epidemiology in local, “tropical” infectious and parasitic diseases, and in the training of health care professionals.

According to the School’s 1926 Announcement, P.R. Senator Antonio Rafael Barceló proposed “the cooperation of Columbia University with the University of Porto Rico in such an undertaking, which might be initiated by the establishment in Porto Rico of a School of Tropical Medicine” in 1923. That same year, the P.R. legislature established a commission to open a medical school for the study of local diseases and then passed a joint resolution in 1924 to establish the School under the auspices of Columbia University.

By 1925, The School of Tropical Medicine building was dedicated in Puerta de Tierra, San Juan. Through an Act of the Legislative Assembly, approved by the Governor July 21, 1925, a permanent Special Board of Trustees was provided for the School of Tropical Medicine. In November, Dean William Darrach met with the Special Board of Trustees in Puerto Rico regarding the operation of the school, with Columbia University given authority to create policy and nominate faculty with the approval of the School of Tropical Medicine Trustees.

In 1926, construction and organization was complete and the school opened for the 1926-1927 academic year.

Columbia ended its involvement in 1948 and the following year, it merged with the newly formed School of Medicine at the University of Puerto Rico.

Scope & Content: Typescript minutes of two meetings of the Board of Trustees, held at the School of Tropical Medicine, University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico on September 15th and November 25th, 1925. Headed by Thomas E. Benner, the Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico and temporary chair of the Board. Contains founding documentation as the board approved the contract between Columbia University and the School, establishing the joint relationship between the institutions, beginning in 1926. William Darrach, Dean of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, was present during this November meeting.
Public health -- Study and teaching – Puerto Rico.
Tropical Medicine – Study and teaching – Puerto Rico.