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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Palm Beach State chosen to create new Employ Florida Banner Center for Life Sciences

College to develop statewide workforce training for life sciences industry

(Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. – Jan. 3, 2011) Developing a highly skilled workforce for Florida’s life sciences industry, including the biotechnology, pharmaceutical and medical device sectors, is the aim of Palm Beach State College in its new role as the Employ Florida Banner Center for Life Sciences.

Selected by Workforce Florida, Inc. to establish the Banner Center, Palm Beach State College will serve as the statewide nexus for life sciences workforce education and resources. With input from industry, Palm Beach State will provide cutting-edge job training and support for Florida’s life sciences business sectors, boosting competitiveness.

Already a recognized provider of life sciences education, Palm Beach State College will create state-of-the-art, industry-driven curricula and services to be deployed statewide in training and education centers. Modules will be developed with the guidance of life sciences industry representatives with the goal of generating a pipeline of entry-level and advanced workers equipped to meet current and emerging employment demands.

“We’re thrilled and honored to join together with Workforce Florida to realize the shared goal of building a highly skilled workforce to support Florida’s expanding life sciences industry and keep it competitive on a global level,” said Dr. Libby Handel, director of Palm Beach State’s Biotechnology program and of the new Banner Center.

Critical to its success as a Banner Center, Palm Beach State will build and solidify partnerships between the life sciences business community, public and private education providers and the public workforce system, including Palm Beach County’s Workforce Alliance. Beginning in January 2011, the College will establish a statewide Industry Advisory Council that will include leaders from biotechnology, pharmaceutical and medical device industry sectors, as well as education partners, workforce boards and economic development agencies from across the state.

Palm Beach State will also organize statewide industry focus group meetings to determine workforce needs, delineate core competencies and skill sets for each sector, and identify industry-recognized certifications.

“Taking on the challenge of creating a Banner Center is a natural fit for the College as our biotechnology curriculum is already anchored by strong industry partnerships,” said Dr. Dennis P. Gallon, president of Palm Beach State College. “Integral to our mission is the belief that the College must reach out to all potential partners and provide programs and courses that meet evolving community and industry needs.”

The Employ Florida Banner Center for Life Sciences joins a growing network of such centers across the state, each targeting a different industry and based at a Florida college, university or industry organization. The Banner Center concept was created by Workforce Florida in response to *The Roadmap to Florida’s Future*, the state’s strategic plan for economic development.

Nearly 3,000 people were trained through Banner Centers in 2009-2010. Since 2006, more than 6,000 people have enrolled in Banner Center training, with more than 3,000 earning either industry or academic credentials. Banner Center trainees’ wages increased, on average, by 21 percent one year after completing training. Workforce Florida has awarded about \$3.8 million in grants for 2010-2011 to fund the 13 existing and planned centers. Each center also must leverage additional financial and in-kind contributions to support its work.

Serving more than 52,000 students annually, Palm Beach State College is the largest institution of higher education in Palm Beach County, providing the bachelor’s degree, associate degrees, professional certificates, career training and lifelong learning. Established in 1933 as Florida’s first public community college, it offers more than 100 programs of study at locations in Lake Worth, Boca Raton, Palm Beach Gardens and Belle Glade.

Workforce Florida Inc. is the state’s chief workforce policy organization and principal architect in the efforts to meet the current and future workforce needs and challenges of Florida’s businesses and citizens. WFI is a state partner, along with the Agency for Workforce Innovation, in the Employ Florida affiliate network of 24 business-led regional workforce boards and nearly 100 One-Stop Centers that provide employment solutions throughout Florida. Learn more about Florida’s workforce resources and solutions at www.EmployFlorida.com .

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