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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Spanish Language Week celebration to be held April 18-23 at Palm Beach State College

(Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. – April 5, 2011) Palm Beach State College will hold its Second Annual Spanish Language Week celebration April 18-23 with poetry, music and dance performances and a variety of guest speakers, including higher education scholars and leaders in the Hispanic community in South Florida and around the country.

The week will include special days dedicated to Spain, Central America, the Caribbean and Mexico. All events will be held at Palm Beach State College in Palm Beach Gardens, 3160 PGA Boulevard. They are free and open to the public.

The week begins April 18 with lectures on the "History and Geography of Spanish Gastronomy," "Muslims in a Persecuting Society," "Cervantes and the Art of Reading", and music by guitarist Miguel Bonachea. Events will continue each day and conclude on Saturday, April 23 with "Fiesta de las Américas" at the Eissey Campus Theatre. The closing celebration will include a presentation on Successful Latinos in South Florida and music performances by Taquig Inti, a music and folkloric dance group from South America, and up-and-coming artists Samir and Faby Losa.

The College began holding the celebration last year after Spanish Professor Patricia Betancourt, a native of Panama, received a grant from the Eissey Campus Humanities Opportunities (ECHO) Fund. The grants allow faculty and staff on the Palm Beach Gardens campus to provide innovative educational experiences in the arts or humanities. She received a second grant this year.

The event ties into Spanish Language Day April 23, which is celebrated largely in Spanish countries in honor of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Spain's influential novelist, poet and playwright. Many believe his fame and literary work parallels that of English writer William Shakespeare. Cervantes died in Madrid, on April 23, 1616.

Betancourt said she organized a similar event at Southwestern Community College in North Carolina where she also once worked as a professor. She joined the faculty at Palm Beach State in fall 2008.

She said in addition to the pride she feels for her language and heritage, she organized the event here because it is important for people to explore other cultures. She also wants her students to understand the importance of the global society in which we live.

“For my students, especially, I really want them to realize that we live in a global society and that learning a foreign language is fun , exciting and relevant to their education,” Betancourt said. “For the outside community, besides that, I really want the Anglo community to know that Latinos have a lot to offer, and that we are more than the bad things that you see on TV. Communities benefit by sharing cultural understanding. How do we get to that point? By facilitating events like this,” she said.

For the complete schedule and information on the presenters, visit www.palmbeachstate.edu/spanishweek.xml. For more information, contact Patricia Betancourt at 561-207-5050 or email betancop@palmbeachstate.edu.

Serving more than 52,000 students annually, Palm Beach State College is the largest institution of higher education in Palm Beach County, providing bachelor's degrees, 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.

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