



COLLEGE RELATIONS  
AND MARKETING

4200 Congress Avenue  
Lake Worth, FL 33461-4796

561-868-3122  
561-868-3123

[www.PalmBeachState.edu](http://www.PalmBeachState.edu)  
[crmarket@palmbeachstate.edu](mailto:crmarket@palmbeachstate.edu)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **National Science Foundation grant enhances Palm Beach State's Biotechnology program**

***\$200,000 award to fund Dec. 5 student poster symposium among  
many other events and initiatives***

(Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. – November 21, 2011) As Florida's biotechnology industry grows, Palm Beach State College continues to enhance its capacity as a leading provider of biotechnology workforce education. The College's Biotechnology program was recently awarded a \$200,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to further build the program and increase awareness of biotech career paths. The grant is from NSF's Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program, designed to promote the education of technicians for the high-technology fields.

During the course of the two-year grant, the College will implement a multifaceted plan for improving enrollment, retention and graduation rates for its College Credit Certificate and Associate in Science degree programs in biotechnology. The grant-winning proposal, titled Project BLAST (Biotechnology Laboratory and Skills Training), also sets the goal of expanding opportunities for Associate in Arts (transfer degree) students to study biotechnology and explore the field.

"The grant is providing some really wonderful opportunities to help the students succeed within the program and beyond," says Professor Alexandra Gorgevska, Ph.D., principal investigator for the NSF-ATE grant and department chair for natural sciences at the College.

Gorgevska, working with professors and co-principal investigators Tod Fairbanks, Ph.D. and Silvio Arango-Jaramillo, Ph.D., will oversee a variety of initiatives designed to create an active learning community for the biotechnology students, including events that involve industry partners and the public.

One such event is the Biotechnology Student Poster Symposium to be held Monday, Dec. 5, from 1 to 3 p.m., at the BioScience Technology Complex, Room SC127, on the Palm Beach Gardens campus, 3160 PGA Blvd. "It's a great event because the students learn how to present scientific data to an audience, and our industry partners and the

community get to see the type of work that's being done here," says Gorgevska. Attendees, including local high school students, also will have the chance to learn about biotech careers and meet local scientists. A panel of industry partners will judge and award prizes to the top presenters. Upcoming grant-funded events include Biotech Awareness Week, April 16-20, 2012, which will feature activities and films highlighting the impact of biotechnology on daily life, and another student poster symposium set for April 30, 2012.

In addition to curriculum enhancements, the NSF-ATE grant is funding many initiatives. Biotechnology students will have more internship opportunities and new educational tools to keep them on track. The grant will pay for student participation in industry conferences, as well as professional development for faculty and advisors.

Many program alumni have transitioned successfully from internships at local biotech firms to full-time employment or further education at area universities. Through the grant, alumni will be hired as tutors and mentors to help students with subject matter hurdles and career planning. Student gatherings with alumni and industry partners are planned and volunteer student ambassadors now offer visible support to new students.

"We have people of all ages and backgrounds, from career-changers with MBA's to recent high-school graduates, enrolled in our programs, and this grant will help us ensure student success," says Libby Handel, Ph.D., director of the Biotechnology program. Handel also directs the Employ Florida Banner Center for Life Sciences, which is based at the College.

For more information about the NSF-ATE grant, the Biotechnology program or events, please call 561-207-5059 or visit [www.palmbeachstate.edu/biotechnology.xml](http://www.palmbeachstate.edu/biotechnology.xml).

*Serving more than 51,000 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.*

####

**Media Contact:**

Joyce Edelstein  
College Relations and Marketing Specialist  
Palm Beach State College  
561-868-3129