



Palm Beach State to award more than 2,100 degrees, certificates at commencement May 8

Faith Proper and Brittany Johnson, who both were home-schooled and began college in their young teens, were selected as the student speakers

(West Palm Beach, Fla. - May 2, 2012) For the first time in seven years, Palm Beach State College will hold one commencement ceremony for the more than 2,100 graduates of its certificate and degree programs.

Spring Commencement will be held at 1 p.m. May 8 at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach. It will be webcast live, and the link will be available at www.palmbeachstate.edu.

The College will award 85 B.A.S. degrees, 1,332 Associate in Arts degrees, 268 Associate in Science degrees and 426 certificates. Among the spring class of 2012 are 60 graduates of the Dr. Floyd F. Koch Honors College, the highest number ever to receive honors certificates and diplomas.

In fall 2005, the College began holding two ceremonies: one for certificate graduates and another one for degree graduates. However, while the College experienced low participation among the certificate programs graduates, the number of graduates participating in the ceremony for degree program graduates jumped, particularly with the addition of bachelor's degree programs and a spike in the degree program graduates in general. In comparison, the College awarded about 1,000 degrees in fall 2005. Instead of just Exhibit Hall A, the College also rented the Convention Center's Exhibit Hall B this year, more than doubling the seating capacity for guests.

Merging the two commencement ceremonies is not the only change this year. The College also implemented a more competitive selection process for the student speakers. All students were invited to submit an essay to be considered as student speaker.

Faith Proper, who served as student trustee on the Palm Beach State District Board of Trustees for the 2010-2011 academic year, and Brittany Johnson, who received her A.A. degree in 2007 but returned to school to pursue an A.S. degree in dental hygiene, were selected from among 17 students who applied to speak to their fellow graduates.

"I'm really excited," said Proper who got her first ever classroom experience at Palm Beach State as a dual enrollment student. She was home schooled from kindergarten through 12th grade and took her first two college courses as a dual enrollment student at the College's Lake Worth campus in spring 2008 when she was a high school freshman.

"I was very shortsighted. I had no idea what I could end up accomplishing at Palm Beach State. I didn't realize all the opportunities that would be available to me. I'm really excited to work on one last big speech before I leave," said Proper, who will receive an Honors Diploma and who was accepted into Emory University in Atlanta, her top choice.

Johnson, the outgoing president of the Student American Dental Hygiene Association, said she also is excited about the opportunity. "This is my first real speaking event in front of a huge audience."

Johnson, who was home schooled from 6th grade to 12th grade, first enrolled at Palm Beach State as an early admission student when she was a 15-year-old; she had already completed all of her high school requirements.

She is pleased with the support she received from faculty and staff while pursuing both degrees and with her chosen career path. "I just love dental hygiene. I'm thankful for everyone I met at Palm Beach State College."

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.

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