

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **PALM BEACH COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECEIVES \$258,555 GRANT FOR NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS**

#### **PBCC launches needs assessment of nursing students as college responds to growing nursing shortage**

(Lake Worth, FL -- August 7, 2002) -- **Palm Beach Community College**, the county's leading provider of health care training with programs for 13 allied health professions, has received from the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** a \$258,555 **Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students** grant, specifically earmarked for registered nursing students.

In addition, the **Palm Health Care Foundation** has awarded \$45,000 in scholarship monies for PBCC students training for all health care occupations. Since May 2001, **Health Corporation of America (HCA)** has donated \$335,000 for scholarships for PBCC health care students. The college also offers numerous nursing scholarships through the PBCC Foundation, including \$25,000 from the Gertrude E. Skelly Foundation.

"Palm Beach County, like the rest of the nation, is facing a severe nursing shortage. These new nursing scholarships are just one way in which PBCC is responding to a very real community need," said **Selma Verse**, PBCC's associate dean of nursing/allied health and wellness.

To determine how PBCC can best respond to the nursing shortage, the college has partnered with the Palm Health Care Foundation and the **Quantum Foundation** to do a needs assessment to determine how and when potential nursing students would prefer to attend classes, whether full time or part time, evenings or weekends. Results will be available in early fall.

"We want to see what people want and would use before implementing a new program," said **Tammy Greer**, grants development manager for PBCC. "We'll also look at what's been successful for other institutions. This needs assessment will help PBCC devise more long-term financial support for health care students so they can build a career ladder that flows seamlessly."

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That financial support, which includes funds for books, tuition and living expenses, is essential to attract people to the health professions, said **Carolyn Geck**, PBCC scholarship coordinator for **Health Care Corporation of America** (HCA). HCA owns three local hospitals: JFK, Palms West and Columbia.

HCA scholarships provide \$5,000 apiece for students in the two-year degree programs in registered nursing, radiography, respiratory therapy and the LPN to RN transition. Those students agree to work in HCA hospitals for two years following graduation. In addition, HCA offers \$3,000 to practical nurses for a one-year commitment, and \$500 for a six-month commitment by students training to become patient care technicians.

“One of the main reasons students drop out is lack of finances,” Geck said. “The typical allied health students are full time with a majority of their time spent in clinical hours at hospitals in addition to their standard academic courses. This makes it difficult for students to work full time.”

Geck said the new scholarship opportunities have created an increased interest in the allied health professions: “At PBCC, HCA has given scholarships to 43 students, and 35 more are pending approval. I get an average of 30 calls a week from people who say, ‘I’ve always wanted to go into nursing, but I never had the money.’”

The nursing department has accepted 20 more registered nursing students than it did last fall, Verse said. “Many nursing students here get their tuition paid,” she added.

For information on financial aid for allied health programs, call (561) 868-3330.

### **About Palm Beach Community College:**

Palm Beach Community College, a comprehensive institution established in 1933, offers more than 100 programs of study at campuses in Lake Worth, Boca Raton, Belle Glade and Palm Beach Gardens. PBCC provides associate degrees in arts and science, professional certificates, workforce development and lifelong learning.

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