



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Palm Beach Community College Receives \$3.7 Million to Help School District with Teacher Certification and Recruitment

(Lake Worth, FL – Oct. 29, 2002) Palm Beach Community College has been awarded two federal grants totaling \$3.7 million to help the school district tackle teacher certification and training problems and draw more highly qualified teachers to its classrooms.

The Transition to Teaching Grant gives PBCC \$370,000 a year for five years to help people who are moving from other careers into teaching grades K-12. The College will work with the school district to develop alternative routes to certification, including an online training program, to help teachers complete the certification process faster. The grant also will provide mentors for new teachers and stipends to defray the cost of certification-related coursework.

The English Language Acquisition Grant also gives PBCC \$370,000 a year for five years to help paraprofessionals with financial aid, counseling and other support services to obtain the associate in arts degrees demanded by President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The law gives paraprofessionals at Title I Schools--schools where at least half of the students received a free or reduced price lunch--until 2006 to complete at least 60 college credit hours. The grant also will be used to develop workshops for new teachers.

The two U.S. Department of Education grants are arriving on the heels of a recent state audit, which found that too many Palm Beach County School District teachers had not met certification requirements. This ongoing teacher shortage will get even worse if the proposed state constitutional amendment to lower class-size limits is approved by voters on Nov. 5.

(MORE)

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“These two new grants will enable PBCC to work with the school system in our county to directly address the teacher shortage,” said Sharon Sass, Ph.D., vice president of academic affairs at PBCC.

“Clearly, if this state constitutional amendment passes next week, we’re going to need a lot of qualified teachers really fast and this is going to help us with that,” said Susan Caldwell, academic coordinator.

With the College’s new Institute of Teacher Education, PBCC already has taken specific steps to help the school district recruit, train and certify teachers. Under the institute, PBCC began offering education courses last summer in a three-week intensive format for teachers who needed them for certification or re-certification.

Because so many teachers were facing a July 1 deadline to pass the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST), the College also offered CLAST Review Seminars and additional testing sessions specifically for teachers last spring. Effective July 1, the state now requires teachers to pass a new General Knowledge Test, which replaces the CLAST for teacher certification purposes. These initiatives effectively reduced the number of teachers facing dismissal.

About Palm Beach Community College:

Palm Beach Community College, a richly diverse comprehensive two-year institution with a history of achievement since 1933, offers more than 100 programs of study at locations in Lake Worth, Boca Raton, Belle Glade and Palm Beach Gardens. PBCC is dedicated to serving the educational needs of Palm Beach County by providing associate degrees in arts and science, professional certificates, workforce development and lifelong learning.

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