

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Palm Beach Community College to award 1,500 degrees and certificates at two Commencement ceremonies May 8

Petr Kout, an Honors student who for two years has biked 16 miles round trip from Jupiter to his classes at PBCC in Palm Beach Gardens, is among the graduates.

(Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. – May 2, 2007) - Petr Kout hasn't let a little distance stop him from getting a degree.

For two years, he has biked 16 miles round trip from Jupiter to his classes at Palm Beach Community College in Palm Beach Gardens. "It takes me 40 minutes one way," said Kout, a 25-year-old Czech Republic native who came to Palm Beach County in 2005 to live with his sister and pursue a college education. "It's a little bit far, but it's not too bad. It's good for staying in shape," he said with a chuckle.



With no money for a car, the Honors student who has maintained a 4.0 grade point average, said he simply did what he had to do to reach his goal. He will graduate May 8 with an associate in arts degree with about 1,100 other students who will receive associate in arts, associate in science and associate in applied sciences degrees. The Commencement ceremony for degree graduates will be held at 2 p.m. May 8 at the Palm Beach County Convention Center. A separate Commencement ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. for the 395 graduates of PBCC's certificate programs.

Commencement speakers include Palm Beach County Sheriff's Deputy Lillian "Lee" Pettry Sutterfield and Matthew Holley, two degree program graduates who will address their classmates at the afternoon ceremony. Danita Robinson, a student in the dental hygiene certificate program, will speak at the morning ceremony.

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Kout already has been accepted to Columbia University in New York and Tulane University in New Orleans. While he's still awaiting word from Cornell University, he said he is about 90 percent certain he'll attend Columbia, where he plans to major in physics. His goal is to pursue a career in either astronomy or biophysics.

He became interested in studying in the U.S. after vacationing in Palm Beach County in 2003. He went back to the Czech Republic, worked for a year to save money for college, and enrolled in PBCC in the fall of 2005. He bought a Giant mountain bike in the Czech Republic and had it shipped to the U.S. so that he could have transportation to class.

During his two years at PBCC, he has been actively involved in community service and has excelled academically, taking several Honors classes. He recently completed a one-year term as president of PBCC's Alpha Gamma Sigma chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. He was one of 20 students from around the country named a 2007 Phi Theta Kappa Guistwhite Scholar, which comes with a \$5,000 transfer scholarship. He's been on the PBCC President's Honor List and was selected to compete for the All-USA Academic Team.

He said he owes much of his success to the encouragement and support of English Professor Nancy McDonald, who encouraged him to take his first Honors course, and Dr. Nancy Levin, who teaches speech communication. "Without these two excellent faculty members, I would not have even dreamed about the opportunities that are out there for me," he said. "These two scholars stimulated me to follow my dreams and work hard to achieve my goals."

About Palm Beach Community College: Serving more than 46,000 students annually, Palm Beach Community College is the largest institution of higher education in Palm Beach County, providing associate degrees, professional certificates, career and customized training and lifelong learning. Florida's first public community college, PBCC offers more than 100 programs of study at locations in Lake Worth, Boca Raton, Palm Beach Gardens and Belle Glade.

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Editor's note: For a picture of Petr Kout, visit www.pbcc.edu/images/marketing/petrkout.jpg.

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