

Palm Beach State to hold two commencement ceremonies May 10

Graduates include a 69-year-old grandmother who returned to college after 51 years; four high school students who completed all of the coursework for their degree while in high school and a brother and sister both honors students who moved to the U.S. from Cuba three years ago

(Lake Worth, Fla. –May 3, 2010) It is never too late or too early to earn a college degree. It even can be a family affair. Just ask some of the Spring 2010 graduates of Palm Beach State College.

Palm Beach State will confer more than 1,380 degrees and more than 355 certificates during two commencement ceremonies May 10 at the Palm Beach County Convention Center. These are the first graduates since Palm Beach State changed its name from Palm Beach Community College in January.

The 10 a.m. ceremony is for graduates of the certificate and diploma programs that prepare students to go directly into the workforce, change careers or gain new skills for their current jobs. The 1 p.m. ceremony is for graduates of the Associate in Arts, Associate in Science and Associate in Applied Science degree programs.

Among the graduates are:

- **Linda Siegel, a 69-year-old grandmother** who returned to school two years ago to complete a goal and dream she had put on hold 51 years ago. She started college in New York in 1959, but quit after a year to focus on being a mother and wife. However, after her husband of more than 46 years—an ailing disabled Army veteran— died in 2007, she decided it was time to pursue her dream. She will receive an Associate in Applied Science degree in human services as well a college credit certificate in human services. Her only son, a resident of Indiana, will be sitting in the audience cheering her on. “This is a very overwhelming moment for me. I never thought I would get to this point,” said Siegel who now plans to pursue an A.S. degree in educational assisting. She says the human services training will help her as a substitute teacher, which is what she wants to do. “You have to follow your dreams. You’re never too old to learn. This has been one of the greatest times of my life.”



(more)

- **Four Palm Beach County high school seniors - Juliana Prieto** (Glades Central), **Matletha Fuller** (Glades Central), **Brittani Coore** (Wellington High) **and Krystal Neira** (Park Vista) - who completed the 60 credit hours required for an Associate in Arts degree while at the same time completing the coursework for their high school diploma. While many students take dual enrollment courses each year at Palm Beach State, few are able to complete all of the requirements for a degree while still in high school. Dual enrollment students do not pay college tuition, and those attending public high schools receive free books. This is the largest number of dual enrollment students Palm Beach State has had in one graduating class, according to College officials.

“I started in the 9th grade. I took one class my first semester and every semester since then I’ve been taking two classes per semester,” said Fuller, a participant in Palm Beach State’s College Reach Out Program (CROP) who has been accepted into the University of Florida. The English and political science major and aspiring lawyer will begin this summer taking a study abroad course in Mexico.

- **Yusnier Sonora Lopez, who will be among the commencement speakers, and his younger sister, Dianelis Sonora Lopez.** The first-generation college students moved with their parents to the U.S. from Cuba in 2007. Although they began studying English about six months before moving here, they had not quite mastered the language when they first got here. “We started hanging out with people that only spoke English so that we could learn from them,” said Dianelis, who finished her senior year at Palm Beach Gardens High School. Yusnier, who is three years older, began college in Cuba, but because not all of his credits transferred, he had to take more courses, allowing his sister to catch up with him. They took classes together, and they both say they are excited about graduating together. Yusnier, an aspiring doctor and Honors College student with a 4.0 grade point average, has received a \$52,000 per year scholarship to Cornell University where he will transfer this fall. Dianelis, who has better than a 3.8 grade point average, hopes to attend the University of Arizona and major in physics. She then plans to join the Air Force and work as an officer doing research.

Serving more than 50,000 students annually, Palm Beach State College is the largest institution of higher education in Palm Beach County, providing the bachelor’s degree, 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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Editor’s note: Please contact College Relations and Marketing for photos. Graduates noted are available for interviews.

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