

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Federal grant will boost student retention and success**

#### **PBCC will implement innovative programs**

(Sept. 18, 2003—Lake Worth, FL) Palm Beach Community College has received a \$1.7 million U.S. Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions grant to increase student retention and success.

Thirty administrators, faculty and staff members and students worked for six months to pinpoint the greatest barrier to student success. They discovered a major culprit was a four-letter word: math.

Among PBCC's first-time-in-college freshmen, most need remedial math courses to prepare them for college-level course work. Because of the additional preparatory classes they must take, only half of those students seeking an associate in arts transfer degree complete their courses within four years. The technical career degree students do slightly better and typically finish in three years rather than two.

To shorten the time it takes to complete the preparatory courses, the College is developing student-centered "course modules" for "Prep Math" students that target where students need the most help and incorporate critical thinking and reading skill development. These modules will allow students to work at their own pace and will provide more individualized instruction. The modules will be based on successful models at other institutions, including Valencia Community College in Orlando.

But, problems with student retention are more complex than math difficulties. The College also will use the Title III funds for developmental advising that offers each student in preparatory math courses guidance that pays attention to both academic and outside pressures. These initiatives will:

- Assess the student's career interests, diagnose academic strengths and weaknesses and help establish clear educational goals
- Establish an "Institute for Student Success" to help students overcome critical barriers to their academic and personal success

- Design an “Early Alert System” for academically high-risk students that offers appropriate intervention when needed
- Train academic and career counselors to show students “the big picture” rather than just planning courses for individual terms. They will emphasize PBCC’s “career ladder” concept in which the first rungs are sometimes workforce courses that eventually lead to degrees, if appropriate.

“These changes will establish a whole new student-centered culture at the College,” said Tammy Greer, grants development manager. “The Title III project is central to PBCC’s initiative to ensure student success.”

The Title III \$1.7 million grant will fund 100 percent of the student success initiatives over a five-year period. The funds will be available Oct. 1. For more information, contact Erin McColskey, executive assistant to the President, at (561) 868-3139.

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