

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PBCC receives grant to attract more minorities into math and science

(Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. – March 30, 2009) Palm Beach Community College has received a \$545,471 grant from the National Science Foundation to launch a scholarship and mentoring program aimed at boosting the number of underrepresented minority students pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

As part of the Math & Science Institute: S-STEM Diversity Project, a cohort of 55 academically talented students with financial need will receive scholarships to cover the full cost of tuition, fees and books for their two-year associate degree at PBCC. In addition, those who transfer to Florida Atlantic University to pursue a bachelor's degree in such disciplines will receive full scholarships for their junior year. FAU, as part of a partnership with PBCC, will offer scholarships for the students' senior year and provide some of the mentoring and support.

The National Science Foundation awarded the grant through its S-STEM (Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program, which emphasizes the importance of recruiting students to these disciplines and providing mentoring and support.

Last year, PBCC launched the Math & Science Summer Institute at its Palm Beach Gardens campus to give high school and PBCC students interested in careers in math, engineering, biotechnology and environmental science a blend of rigorous college classes, research projects, hands-on career exploration and field trips.

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It is a result of PBCC President Dennis Gallon's vision to prepare students for emerging careers requiring strong science and mathematics backgrounds through cutting-edge experiential learning opportunities.

The Math & Science Institute: S-STEM Diversity Project allows the College to expand the institute to a year round initiative, said Dr. Dana Zorovich, PBCC's director of resource and grant development. The project will begin in fall 2010 and will target incoming college freshmen with at least a 3.5 grade point average, although the program may be available to other students.

"Math and science are the toughest programs to retain students. Students indicate the number one reason for dropping out of school is financial. If we can help them financially, they can concentrate on academic success," said Scott MacLachlan, interim provost and dean of student services at PBCC in Palm Beach Gardens.

"The scholarship is for the best of the best. All they need is the money and the mentoring, and they're going to make it," Zorovich said. "This is one of those (grants) that you hold your breath and pray that it's funded. You love to see the grants that go directly to students."

Math Professor Roy Boulware is the principal investigator for the project and will implement the project with Dr. Valerie Burks, who leads PBCC's Honors College. "This is a unique opportunity for students interested in mathematics, as they will be given focused support, faculty mentoring, and other education enhancing activities to ensure success in their studies," Boulware said.

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 the bachelor's degree, associate degrees, professional certificates, career 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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