

BERNADETTE RUSSELL, PROVOST, PALM BEACH COMMUNITY COLLEGE, BOCA RATON CAMPUS

Provost links campus with the community

As a community college provost, one of Bernadette Russell's main roles is to form connections between her campus and the community. Her goal is for community leaders to understand how they can support the campus as a resource to the community, she said.

"You run the entire campus but you always make time for the community," she said.



BERNADETTE RUSSELL

Since arriving at Palm Beach (Fla.) Community College's Boca Raton campus last September, Russell has been pleased with how responsive the community is to the campus. "I get more out of the community than the effort I have put in," she said.

Russell's outreach efforts to the community take many

forms. She does the following:

- **Makes presentations to community groups.** Russell speaks first about the role of community colleges in the nation, then about the role of PBCC in the county, and finally about the importance of her campus for the local community. She explains the importance of the campus' workforce education programs to the economic development of the area.

A pleasant surprise for Russell has been that community organizations have sought her out for these presentations. She has not had to request time at their meetings.

Audience members invite her to speak to other organizations they belong to as well, she said. "It creates a whole series of networking with people who are committed to the community," she said.

The organizations have been generous in providing donations and scholarships, Russell said.

- **Arranges collaborations that give students experience and also help the community.** Russell focuses on projects that share issues students and faculty members value with the community. Protecting the environment is a big issue among her campus' students.

Russell is developing a research project with Boca Raton's mayor oriented toward understanding and protecting the local environment. Next fall, students enrolled in the honors college will work with staff members from the mayor's office to conduct the research.

That project will give them hands-on, practical experience, and they will learn by working alongside professionals. "This is a wonderful opportunity for our students to work with the mayor's office of the city of Boca," Russell said.

She is also helping students from the Ecology Club develop a community-based education project. The students attended the Clinton Global Initiative meeting at Tulane University in March. They came back with the idea of teaching children in local elementary schools about responsibly protecting the environment. They have developed activities for the children and are teaching other PBCC students how they can help.

They have also arranged for tree donations and plan to plant the trees at the elementary schools with the children's help.

- **Forms alliances with community groups to meet local needs.** Boca Raton's Promise Alliance for Youth approached Russell about a partnership to promote good mental health among young people in the community. She appointed a psychology professor to work with the organization because he has expertise in the mental health needs of young people. PBCC was recently honored for its participation, Russell said.

- **Develops continuing education courses that meet community needs.** Faculty members at the college are developing an emotional wellness workshop to offer to corporations in the community. It will teach employees skills to cope with emotional and mental health issues, Russell said.

Because mental health and emotional issues can lead to higher medical costs and decreased productivity, employers will benefit from offering this information to their employees, she said.

E-mail Bernadette Russell at russellb@pbcc.edu. ■

Offer nutrition programs to students

Eating right helps students concentrate and improves their sense of well being, said Bernadette Russell, provost of Palm Beach Community College's Boca Raton campus. That's why her campus hosted BEANS — Bringing Education about Nutrition to Students.

The weeklong event featured guest speakers, a health fair, and games, including "Are you nutritionally smarter than a fifth-grader?"

It was developed by faculty members and funded by the campus. ■