



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Aug. 31, 2016

CONTACT: Sheila Nichols
850-484-1428; snichols@pensacolastate.edu

PSC Receives 5-Year Federal Grant for Educational Talent Search Program

PENSACOLA, Fla – Pensacola State College has received a \$342,720 per year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to renew its Educational Talent Search (ETS) program. The five-year grant totals more than \$1.7 million.

ETS identifies and assists middle school and high school students, encouraging them to graduate from high school and then successfully enroll and complete college or vocational training.

Over the next five years, at least 714 students (including 214 from middle school) will be served. Two-thirds of program participants will come from families that meet U.S. low income guidelines and whose parents have not earned a four-year degree.

The Talent Search program has been located at PSC for the past 30 years, reaching schools in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, according to Linda Sheppard, ETS program director.

“This grant renewal includes a much needed increase of about \$34,000 per year,” Sheppard points out. “Now we can reach more students in more schools and provide more services to help them be successful at the college of their choice.”

“Talent Search provides students the opportunity to tour and learn about other colleges and universities to broaden students’ awareness of the many opportunities available at different schools. Each year, about 40 to 50 percent of ETS graduates decide to begin college at PSC.”

While Talent Search provides academic tutoring along with career planning, academic and financial counseling to its participants, the real strength lies in the personal interest that students receive from the program specialists.

“We take the students on bus tours to visit colleges in neighboring states as well as Florida colleges and universities at no cost to the students. All ETS services are free to program participants and their families,” Sheppard explains.

“Most of these students are the first in their family to go to college and they are not sure where to begin. We introduce them to scholarship opportunities, help them with applications, the financial aid process, and make them aware of additional costs like out-of-state tuition and living expenses.”

Ty'Drick King, a 2016 graduate of Pensacola High School, says ETS helped tremendously on his journey to attending Florida State University this fall.

“During my senior year, Talent Search gave me helpful information on the college application process, scholarships and decisions regarding my future in college,” King says.

Destinee Brundidge also graduated from Pensacola High in June and says she is attending FAMU because ETS specialists encouraged her to follow her dreams.

“The Talent Search program helped me find the necessary tools to get where I needed to be and my specialist was always supportive of my decisions,” Brundidge says.

With 25 years of experience at PSC and nine of those as ETS program director, Sheppard sees first-hand the improved college readiness of ETS participants.

“It works!” she says enthusiastically. “In our previous five-year cycle, 75 to 80 percent of ETS program grads went on to enroll in post-secondary education at vocational, two-year, or four-year institutions.

“ETS helps students stay focused and get ready for college academically, psychologically and emotionally. Statistics show that students who complete ETS have a higher college graduation rate than students who do not participate in a college readiness program such as the Educational Talent Search Program.”

While numbers and success rates are impressive on yearly reports, Sheppard emphasizes that the caring relationships that are established between students and the ETS specialists – Lynne Butcher, Marcy Matthews-Bethea and Christi McCarley – are important beyond measure.

Tytieyanna Young, a 2016 Pine Forest High graduate who is beginning her freshman year at PSC agrees that ETS specialists are pivotal to the program.

“The specialists have truly become like family to me,” Young says. “They have opened not only doors, but my mind set. I believe in me a little bit more because of the program and I am more excited about my future.”

For more information, contact PSC Marketing Director Sheila Nichols at 850-484-1428.

PHOTO CUTLINE: Talent Search specialist Marcy Matthews-Bethea (left) goes over college information with Tytieyanna Young, a recent Pine Forest High School graduate.