

# Funding roundup

BY MATTHEW DEMBICKI OCTOBER 6, 2023

**MiraCosta College** has received two grants for more than \$1.6 million from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to advance biotechnology and biomanufacturing education for diverse, underrepresented community college and high school students.

“Through experiential learning, we prepare people for tomorrow’s jobs, enhance socioeconomic development and transform communities,” said MiraCosta College President/Superintendent Sunita “Sunny” Cooke, who also serves on the **American Association of Community Colleges** board of directors. “Investments like these don’t just fund programs; they fuel innovation, serving as the lifeblood of America’s technological and economic leadership on the global stage.”

The first grant for \$649,986 will go toward a project to make science more accessible and open to students through hands-on instruction of industry-relevant skills. It will include distributing to high schools components of laboratory kits that will foster transitions from high school to community college bioscience programs. MiraCosta’s Bioscience Workforce Development Hub is collaborating with the Bay Area Bioscience Education Community and **Laney College** on the project.

MiraCosta also received a \$1 million NSF grant to create pathways for students in emerging biomanufacturing technologies. The project will offer internship, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship experiences in biomanufacturing, targeting underrepresented groups in STEM. The goal is to enhance the employability of MiraCosta students and address the need for an inclusive, diverse and skilled workforce in the industry, according to the college.

## Florida

**Palm Beach State College** will use a \$50,000 donation from Alphazyme, an enzyme development and production company based in Jupiter, Florida, to purchase two instruments for its biotechnology laboratory to best prepare students to work in the industry.

Alphazyme is a member of the college’s Biotechnology Business Partnership Council and employs graduates of PBSC’s associate in science degree and certificate programs in biotechnology. In fact, its first two employees were PBSC alumni and another one was hired last year, according to the company.

“The ability to learn and use this state-of-the-art equipment will give our students a distinct advantage when launching their careers,” Alexandra Gorgevska, chair of PBSC’s biotechnology department, said in a release. “In fact, Alphazyme is purchasing one of these instruments for themselves, so it is perfect timing for us to train students on the same equipment they’ll encounter in their internships with Alphazyme and other business partners.”

The equipment the college plans to buy are two types of liquid chromatography instruments used to separate molecules for use in research and industry.



Palm Beach State College will buy new state-of-the-art equipment for its biotechnology laboratory thanks to a gift from local business partner Alphazyme. (Photo: PBSC)

## *Massachusetts*

**Quinsigamond Community College** has received a three-year, \$675,000 Transition to College grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to support adult learners in its adult basic education programs.

“Transition programs such as Future Focus help support some of our nontraditional students who are often parents, working full-time, or individuals who haven’t used the English language in a college setting before,” said Gilmarie Vongphakdy, who coordinates the Future Focus Program that serves adult learners. “Also, this funding

allows us to increase our offerings from five courses to eight courses and provide laptop loans. Lack of technology is a big barrier for many of our students.”

### *New Jersey*

**Union College of Union County, New Jersey** will use a five-year, \$3 million Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (DHSI) grant from the U.S. Education Department. It will use the funding to expand and enhance its academic offerings, program quality and institutional stability to increase the opportunity and success of all students at the institution.

Union’s project includes career services, retention efforts, expanded academic programs and professional development for employees.

### *Texas*

**Texas State Technical College** (TSTC) also will receive a five-year, \$3 million DHSI grant that it will use to help 1,225 low-income and Hispanic students access higher education at all three of its campuses.

The college will use the funds for faculty and staff professional development, technical spaces and new computers. It will also cover one-on-one tutoring, academic advising, financial aid and career counseling.

“There are four main goals to come out of this so that group of students will be tracked,” said Adele Clinton, TSTC’s vice president of retention services. “Number one, you have to recruit them. There are enrollment numbers, and then they need to persist from one semester to the next. And then graduate and be placed (in the workforce), and then make higher wages.”

### *Pennsylvania*

**HACC, Central Pennsylvania’s Community College**, will use a \$75,000 donation from The GIANT Company to improve accessibility at its campuses by installing automatic doors and/or openers for building access. The project will begin this fall and be completed in 2024.

“For many years, The GIANT Company has proudly partnered with HACC, including supporting the Inclusion and Diversity Fund for Excellence and scholarships to students from diverse backgrounds,” GIANT President John Ruane said in a release. “We are honored to help HACC improve accessibility across its campuses as part of our

100th-anniversary celebration by creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students, faculty, and campus visitors to learn, connect, and thrive.”

## *Washington*

**Bellingham Technical College** (BTC) and **Walla Walla Community College** (WWCC) are partnering to boost the number of students in professional technical programs and increase their chances of finishing school and landing high-wage jobs.

The colleges have announced they will share a \$2.75 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Education Department for their Redesigning Professional Technical Programs for Student Access & Success project.

While the colleges are located at opposite sides of the state, their similarities make them ideal partners for this project, according to a release. Both institutions are open-admission and offer educational opportunities in high-wage, high-demand careers in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, information technology and others.

Last fall, the typical student enrolled in professional technical programs at both institutions was older than 25, first-generation and financially disadvantaged, according to officials. So both colleges are focusing on increasing access to their workforce training programs and boosting completion rates for part-time students. That includes testing flexible learning models in professional technical programs to help better adhere to students’ family and work schedules.