



# INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE

Institutional Advancement Department

## NEWS RELEASE

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### IRSC EXPANDS BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAMS

#### *New educational opportunities to focus on Florida's top growth fields*

Fort Pierce, FL – Indian River State College received unanimous approval from the State Board of Education to launch three new Bachelor's degree programs in the high-growth fields of Biology, Digital Media and Human Services.

"Indian River State College's program proposals clearly documented very strong student and employer demand for these programs, excellent collaboration with other educational institutions and highly qualified faculty and outstanding facilities to provide first-class Bachelor's degree programs in these new disciplines," commented Dr. Will Holcombe, Chancellor of the Florida College System.

IRSC President Dr. Edwin Massey met with IRSC students to announce the new Bachelor's degree programs, which target rapidly growing industries offering well-paying career opportunities. The new programs will prepare area residents to meet the workforce needs of the region's emerging biotechnology and life science cluster, cutting-edge digital media companies, and the expanding human services sector, which provides counseling and social services for children, families and senior citizens. Over 75 area employers in the life sciences, digital media and human services wrote letters to the Florida Board of Education supporting IRSC's program proposals.

"As our region continues to evolve into the Research Coast, these new Bachelor's degree programs will create a pipeline of highly skilled employees for the new types of knowledge-based jobs that are being attracted to our area. With our state economy beginning to strengthen and diversify, it is very important that residents of our region have access to higher education which will prepare them for 21<sup>st</sup> Century careers," said Dr. Edwin R. Massey, IRSC President. "The expansion of Baccalaureate-level education further builds and reinforces IRSC's role as our region's state college."

IRSC will launch the new programs in January 2011, and applications will be accepted beginning July 15, 2010. The programs were selected based on a needs assessment of student interest, employer demand for graduates, economic development trends, projected job growth, and an in-depth analysis of College resources such as qualified faculty, facilities, library and technology.

The new Bachelor of Science degree in Biology will prepare students for careers in life sciences, including biotechnology, medical and pharmaceutical research, health informatics, lab technology, environmental protection and diagnostic services.

“Our shared vision with IRSC of a bona fide nationally recognized Research Coast demands that the region’s education system provide greater access for employers to a well-trained work force as well as greater employment opportunities for our residents,” said Dr. Walter J. Tabachnick, Director of the University of Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory in Vero Beach. “Our laboratory provides an array of educational and employment opportunities for future IRSC biology students and graduates.”

According to the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, over 1,287 projected job openings will be available for graduates with a Bachelor’s degree in Biology in the region this year. By 2015, the number of new and replacement jobs in the life sciences is projected to exceed 6,000.

“It is critical that Indian River State College move forward with the development of Baccalaureate degrees in Biology,” said Dr. Richard A. Houghten, Founder/President/CEO of Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies. “At Torrey Pines there are currently job openings for Research Technicians that would be well-suited for Baccalaureate degree holders in Biology. More students with Biology Bachelor degrees will also mean more students in the graduate school pipeline in the life sciences. I strongly support the efforts of IRSC in the development of this new degree program.”

The new Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Digital Media will address the growing demand for digital media employees across many industries requiring knowledge of web design, graphic design, gaming, video, animation, modeling and simulation. Digital Domain, a major computer animation company locating in this region has committed to creating a minimum of 500 jobs with an average annual salary over \$64,000 by the year 2014, providing unprecedented employment opportunities for local residents in the high-skill, high-wage digital media industry. Students will be able to specialize in Graphics and Web Design, Gaming and Video and Modeling and Simulation.

“The educational resources of IRSC and willingness to address our workforce needs, were important factors in deciding to locate our studio in Port St. Lucie,” said John Textor, Managing Principal, Wyndcrest Holdings, LLC/Digital Doman Florida. “The facilities, staff and curriculum for IRSC’s Associate Degree in Digital Media, and now the Baccalaureate level program, gives our company confidence that we will be able to staff our facility with highly-skilled workers from the local community.”

“I’m so excited,” said Daniel Oria, 20, a student in the College’s Digital Media Institute and President of the Campus Coalition Government, the IRSC student government association. “I’m interested in a career in 3-D modeling and animation. Now, I can continue to develop my skills in the latest software and my creativity at IRSC with great teachers in an atmosphere I really love.”

The new Bachelor of Science Degree in Human Services will offer specializations in Youth and Family Studies, Addictions Studies and General Human Services to meet the expanding workforce demand for family and children services, mental health counseling, and services for victims of crime, senior citizens, those in poverty, and other vulnerable populations.

“Based on our belief that victims of crime deserve the most qualified support in the aftermath of the crime, I assure you that the State Attorney’s Victim Services Program will be a source of future employment opportunities for graduates of Indian River State College’s Human Services Baccalaureate Program,” said Harriette Rowe Hill, Director, Office of the State Attorney, 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit.

Over the next five years, the number of new and replacement jobs in human services in the area is projected to exceed 8,000.

“We’ve been eagerly waiting for this Human Services program,” said Renee Dalessio, 47, who is a Guardian Ad Litem appointed by the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court to protect the interests of children in legal proceedings and serves as a volunteer for the Victim Assistance Program. “I just graduated with my Associate degree and now I can continue to earn a Bachelor’s Degree to prepare for a career in counseling.”

IRSC already has in place state-of-the-art settings for the new programs equipped with specialized technology. The Digital Media program will be housed in the Kight Center for Emerging Technologies, which helped to attract the Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies to the area and will serve as a production facility for Digital Domain until its permanent building is constructed in Port St. Lucie.

The Human Services program will be based in the McCabe Foundation Human Services Suite at the Treasure Coast Public Safety Training Complex, the nation’s most comprehensive public service training facility. The Human Services Suite provides a variety of environments suitable for individual and group counseling as well as specially designed facilities for working with children and adolescents.

Students in the new Biology program will benefit from the College’s well-equipped biology and chemistry laboratories, which have been developed with input from research scientists. Soon to be constructed at IRSC’s St. Lucie West Campus in the region’s biotechnology hub is a sophisticated

50,000 square foot STEM Building (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), which has been specially designed to serve as the home for the Bachelor's in Biology program.

In line with the IRSC mission to provide ready access to quality education, the programs will be taught by IRSC's highly-qualified faculty, with small classes and affordable tuition that is 1/3 less than public universities and about 85% less than the cost at private colleges. IRSC is accredited by the prestigious Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to offer Bachelor's degree programs. In addition, the programs will be offered with many financial aid opportunities and the convenience of local campuses and online instruction.

These newly approved programs will build on IRSC's existing Bachelor's degree programs in Organizational Management, Public Safety Administration, Health Care Management, Education and Nursing, which were introduced in January of 2008. Over 2000 students are currently enrolled in Bachelor's degree programs at IRSC, and the College's first 200 Baccalaureate graduates recently received their degrees, prepared to enter the workforce or continue into graduate studies.

IRSC will begin accepting applications for the new programs on July 15, 2010. Students interested in the new programs can get a head start by enrolling in general education courses and prerequisites during the Fall Semester. For more information, call 1-866-792-IRSC or (772) 462-4722 in St. Lucie County.

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