

## ALACHUA CORPORATE TRAINING CENTER

### Executive Summary

Alachua County has the fourth largest concentration of biotechnology companies in this region, as published in the newsletter of the *Council of Economic Outreach*, 2003. The city of Alachua has a genuine interest in attracting businesses to its area, especially the biotechnology industry. In response to the business and educational needs of the city of Alachua, the administrators of Santa Fe Community College were approached by the City's executives about expanding the College to this rural small town. The city of Alachua's intention is to position itself to attract specific industry to this area of the County by establishing a corporate training center.

The **Vision 2010** document states that, "the city of Alachua shall partner with other groups, such as the Alachua Chamber of Commerce, **Santa Fe Community College**, the University of Florida and the Alachua County School Board to develop a welcoming atmosphere for businesses. The **goal of the city** of Alachua through the formation of public/private partnerships will actively solicit desired businesses and firms, especially small businesses and clean industries, to locate in the City."

As a result of several meetings, the city of Alachua and the College have come together in an effort to establish a corporate center in that area. The Santa Fe Community College Alachua Corporate Training Center's **purpose will be to train a comprehensive workforce to satisfy those business needs of the expanding biotechnology industry, the health related industry, the bio-manufacturing industry, the construction industry, and the information technology industry.** This proposed center would provide, but is not limited to the following:

1. Increase a more educated workforce for training to work in the expanding biotechnology industry in the Progress Corporate Park in Alachua.
2. Broaden opportunity for more collaboration efforts between the institution and local industries to provide customized training for new and expanding businesses.
3. Increase training opportunities for employees of city, county governments, and local businesses
4. Increase access to postsecondary education.
5. Increase educational support services to the local citizens.
6. Increase the opportunity for the local citizenry to participate in continuing and community education learning programs.
7. Increase access to computer technology and the Internet.
8. Provide virtual high school for secondary students, and distance education for postsecondary students.

The Alachua Corporate Training Center will be located on the north side of U. S. Highway 441, on approximately ten acres across from the Progress Corporate Park. This 22,800 square foot facility will consist of classrooms, computer labs, chemistry and biology labs, vocational/technical-training areas to accommodate training technicians in biotechnology, construction, information technology, and bio manufacturing. Courses in developmental, adult, and continuing education will be offered. Also, the facility will house a community boardroom and commons area. It is estimated that 150-200 potential local employees will be trained annually at the proposed center. And, in about six years, this facility, at full capacity, will serve nearly 1,500 to 1,800 students. The total cost of planning, developing, constructing, maintaining and equipping this facility will be approximately \$3.4 million.

### **Santa Fe Community College**

Santa Fe Community College provides quality instruction and educational programs leading to Associate of Arts degrees (AA), Associate of Science degrees (AS), and/or Certificates of Training, as a comprehensive public two-year institution. Currently, 14,456 students are enrolled in credit courses in the College's education and training programs. The **mission of** the College is "adding value to the lives of our students and enriching our community." The College's goals and strategic initiatives for academic years 2002-2004 include the following:

- Service communities in Alachua and Bradford counties through Educational Centers and specialized programs.
- Increase service to business and industry through professional development and corporate training.

In addition to its main campus in Gainesville, the College has centers in Starke, Archer, and downtown Gainesville, and a center under construction in the Lake Region area of southeastern Bradford County. This four corners approach to serving the Alachua and Bradford County area has one missing component – the northwestern sector of Alachua County and the extreme western part of Bradford County.

### **Economic Status of Population**

Personal income per capita, median household income, and free or reduced lunch were some indicators used to determine the economic well being of residents in the county and of those who live in and around the city of Alachua. To determine economic status the number of students eligible for free or reduced lunch was used. The elementary and middle school students who transfer to Santa Fe High School average about 49% in eligibility for free and reduced lunches. For children living in poverty, learning activities pose a challenge to succeeding academically.

Studies show a direct correlation between economic status and educational attainment. Economically disadvantaged individuals are less likely to have attained a high school

diploma or have attained a bachelor's degree than those individuals of middle-income levels. This segment of the population is underserved, resulting in the need for education in developmental, adult, and information technology in this area. This target area, specifically, has a **critical need for higher education and economic opportunities.**

### **Population Estimates Within a Twelve-Mile Radius of Alachua, Florida**

The new educational center will be situated in the small town of Alachua in northwest Alachua County on U.S. Highway 441 (see map on page 16). **Alachua** is a small town located in rural North Central Florida. The population in Alachua proper is approximately **6,318**, as documented by the U.S. Census, 2000. Steve Dopp, Senior Planner for Regional Planning at the **North Florida Regional Planning Council** reported that the population within a twelve-mile radius of Alachua is **124,150**.

The Corporate Training Center located in northwest Alachua County will play a vital role in assisting businesses in this region by providing a comprehensive workforce to accommodate needs related to biotechnology, health sciences, bio-manufacturing and information technology industry. The College has the potential to become a catalyst in maintaining professional development for area businesses and for economic renewal.