



CONTACT:

Stephanie Reck or Butch Oxendine
(352) 373-6907
info@studentleader.com
www.floridaleader.com/soty

Miami Dade Community College Student Named Finalist for the 2003 Florida College Student of the Year Award

Gainesville, Fla (4/03)—Vincent Lau Chan, a sophomore in Biomedical Engineering with a 3.69 GPA at Miami Dade Community College, is among seven finalists statewide vying for the title of 2003 Florida College Student of the Year.

Lau Chan and 19 other students from colleges and universities across Florida will share \$65,000 in scholarships and prizes. They will be honored Friday, April 11 at an awards ceremony and press conference held at the Capitol Building in Tallahassee.

Lau Chan was selected from 156 applicants in the annual scholarship program sponsored by *Florida Leader* magazine, SunTrust Education Loans, and Office Depot. The Florida College Student of the Year Award celebrates 16 years of recognizing outstanding Florida college students for their campus leadership, academic excellence, and financial self-reliance. Lau Chan's commitment to changing his campus is what qualified him for this prestigious award.

Lau Chan is currently in only his second year at MDCC—North, but he has already made a significant impact on the international student population on campus. Lau Chan is founder and former president of the International Student Organization. "Through this organization, international students are able to interact with American students and learn more about the United States," Lau Chan says.

While helping to aid international students, Lau Chan is also eagerly helping the community. He has coordinated numerous community events, including service projects benefiting the Special Olympics and the ESL/Foreign Language Department at MDCC—North.

Lau Chan made perhaps the greatest strides in supporting the financial needs of international students. In an attempt to lighten the bills caused by increasing textbook prices, he created a web site where students could exchange textbooks with one another. The web site, co-sponsored by the ISO, SG, and Phi Theta Kappa had nearly 50 exchanges after only two semesters. His financial relief efforts didn't stop here.

He found a federal tax law, the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, which allowed community college students a tax credit up to \$1,500 to spend on tuition and fees. Lau Chan believed this should also apply to textbooks, so he initiated a petition drive to add the textbooks to the law, and he collected over 1,000 signatures. The bill is currently sponsored by Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart.

In addition to working with international students, Lau Chan is the only student to be re-elected president of Phi Theta Kappa, an international honor society. He also has won PTK's Most Outstanding Provisional Member Award. "He's a quiet leader; he listens to the kids then leads by consensus by listening to what they want and what they need," says PTK Advisor Maria Mari.

Lau Chan is ethnically Chinese, but after being born and raised in Colombia, he believes he's Hispanic at heart. And there's no stopping him no matter what ethnicity he is. Lau Chan plans to attend a university to further his studies and would like to eventually work toward a doctorate.

The complete Florida College Student of the Year awards ceremony will air on Sunshine Network on May 21 at 5 p.m. and on May 27 at 10:30 a.m. It also will air throughout the month of June.

Students at 86 colleges and nearly 550 high schools throughout Florida read *Florida Leader*, founding sponsor of the Florida College Student of the Year Award. Now in its 20th year, Oxendine Publishing also produces the national leadership magazine *Student Leader*. See www.floridaleader.com/soty for more details on the annual scholarship program and the other finalists.