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PVCC Partners with U.Va.'s Morven Farm to Offer Unique Classroom for Horticulture Students

Charlottesville, Va. – Piedmont Virginia Community College horticulture students will have a superb training ground and hands-on classroom thanks to a new partnership with the University of Virginia's Morven Farm.

The highly landscaped, 3,000-acre historic estate features thousands of tree and plant specimens spread across several types of landscapes – woodlands, meadows, wetlands, crop fields and an orchard – and half a dozen gardens, both ornamental and informal.

Located 10 minutes from PVCC's campus and less than three miles south of Monticello, Morven was once managed by Thomas Jefferson on behalf of his protégé and "adoptive son" William Short, U.S. minister to the Netherlands and to Spain in the 1790s and America's first career diplomat.

Designated both a national and Virginia historic landmark, with a formal garden designed in the 1930s by noted landscape architect Annette Hoyt Flanders, Morven was featured in Virginia's inaugural Historic Garden Week in 1929 and has been a part of every Garden Week since.

"We could not be more delighted that the U.Va. Foundation has agreed to the partnership, which permits

PVCC horticulture students to experience this matchless learning environment at Morven," PVCC President Frank Friedman said. "For our students who aspire to work in Central Virginia's green industry, it presents an exceptional education and career opportunity. It is also another example of the unique partnership between PVCC and U.Va."

"Morven has an amazing collection of plants, well-planted gardens and beautifully landscaped grounds," said Cole Burrell, assistant professor of horticulture at PVCC, author of numerous horticulture books and a lecturer in the landscape architecture program at U.Va.'s School of Architecture.

"At Morven, PVCC students can study garden design, specific plants, plant groupings, ecosystems and more," said Lesley Sewell, an assistant professor of horticulture at PVCC. "The types of hands-on study are limitless."

For instance, a planned class project will involve redesign of the gardens at Morven's entrance. Students also will help prepare Morven for Historic Garden Week in late April, when the formal gardens are open to visitors.

PVCC has offered horticulture classes since the late 1980s, and the horticulture program has grown steadily, Sewell said, in response to strong demand in the region, where many estates and farms employ managers or contractors for landscape restoration, preservation and renovation.

After starting with a few classes, then offering a career studies certificate, PVCC began offering an associate degree in horticulture in 2007, with the option to transfer into Virginia Tech's horticulture program to complete a bachelor's degree. In the past five years, more than 85 students have enrolled in PVCC horticulture classes.

The new partnership follows trial classes held at Morven this spring and fall. "The results far exceeded our expectations," said Stewart Gamage, director of the Morven Project at the U.Va. Foundation.

Morven was given to the U.Va. Foundation in 2001 by businessman and philanthropist John W. Kluge, to be used for educational and charitable purposes, while maintaining the character of a traditional Albemarle County estate.

"Academically, Morven is a platform that the students cannot find anywhere else," Gamage said, "and this is exactly what John Kluge envisioned – that the gardens would be used."

"The staff at Morven is a major resource for the classes," said Laura Voisin George, historic research specialist at Morven. "They are excited to engage with the PVCC students and share insights from their decades of collective experience."

PVCC is a state-supported, nonresidential two-year college. As part of the Virginia Community College System, PVCC serves the City of Charlottesville and the counties of Albemarle, Buckingham, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson. Since PVCC opened in 1972, more than 108,000 students have taken classes, and the college has awarded more than 10,100 associate degrees and certificates. For information, visit www.pvcc.edu.

For information about Morven and the U.Va. Foundation, visit www.uvafoundation.com/morven.

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