



Prof. Alcantar

Chemical Engineering Professor Tests Cactus Effectiveness for Providing Clean Water in Natural Disasters

Tampa, Fla. (August 18, 2010) – The greatest need during a natural disaster, such as the earthquake in Haiti, is the need for essential services and basic needs such clean drinking water. Norma Alcantar, associate professor of chemical engineering, has received a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to study the use of cactus mucilage to clean polluted water.

Having recently returned from Haiti, the results from the work will provide information on water quality and detrimental changes on this valuable resource due to natural events such as an earthquake in an urban setting. We will be able to determine the required amount of cactus mucilage to provide clean drinking water in terms of gallons of water per family per period of time. It is expected that this project will objectively assess if cactus mucilage is a possible long-term solution to provide clean drinking water in such events.

The grant, totaling \$100,000 will be used to determine two important objectives: (i) to determine how earthquakes impact water quality and accessibility, (ii) to test the effectiveness of the cactus mucilage in cleaning polluted water.

Professor Alcantar and her research are featured on the National Science Foundation's "Live Science" website <<http://www.livescience.com/culture/water-purification-alcantar-sl-100812.html>>.

The University of South Florida is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of only 25 public research universities nationwide with very high research activity that is designated as community engaged by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF was awarded \$380.4 million in research contracts and grants in FY 2008/2009. The university offers 232 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, specialist and doctoral levels, including the doctor of medicine. The USF System has a \$1.8 billion annual budget, an annual economic impact of \$3.2 billion, and serves more than 47,000 students on institutions/campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee and Lakeland. USF is a member of the Big East Athletic Conference.

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