



FIFTY YEARS • 1964 - 2014

The View from Here | 2013 Report to Community

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The View from Here

As we so often say here at Polk State College, it is good to be us. In 2013, however, it was more accurate to use the word *great!*

In the pages that follow, you'll see exactly what I mean. Our enrollment continued to grow — even as every other public college in the state saw it level off or decline. We were approved to offer our fourth bachelor's degree, the Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Sciences. We made a slew of facilities enhancements, expanded our international study options, and opened a new high school. To top it all off, our annual economic impact was officially pegged at nearly half a billion dollars — that's huge!

Yes, in 2013, it was certainly great to be us!

A remarkable 2013 now gives way to 2014, the year in which Polk State will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

For five decades, we have provided Polk County with affordable, accessible, world-class education. We have started our students on the path to a better life, guided them along their way, and stood proudly at the end of the commencement stage, ready to congratulate them on their accomplishments.

As we begin this 50th year, Polk State College is bigger and better than ever before — and only growing more so by the day. The view from here, is very, very bright.

Now, on behalf of Polk State's District Board of Trustees, our faculty and staff, our students, alumni and, supporters, I am proud to offer this report of our progress in serving Polk County.

We are very proud. We know you will be too.

We are Polk.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eileen Holden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

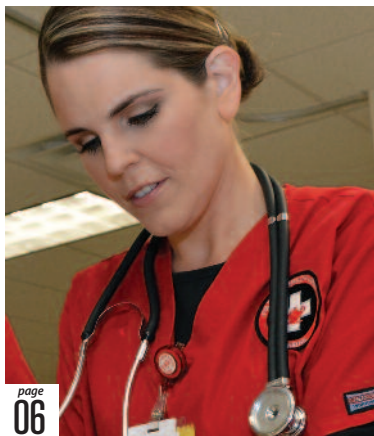
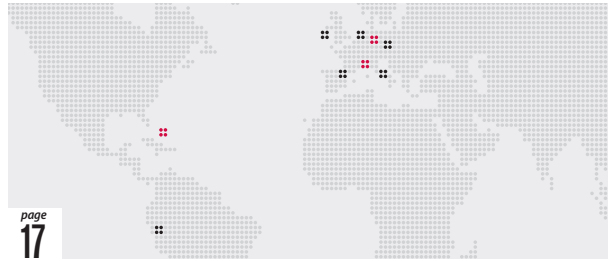
Eileen Holden, Ed.D.
President



The return on students' educational investment at Polk State is

17.3%

page 02



02 Polk's economic impact pegged at \$481.8 million annually

16 Polk goes global with expanding international study options

30 District Board of Trustees

04 New bachelor's degree in Aerospace to launch in 2014

18 Polk State Lake Wales Arts Center's first year was full of variety

32 Endowed Teaching Chairs

06 Bachelor of Science in Nursing gets accredited fast

20 New high school gives students a second chance at education

34 Diversity report

08 Public safety institute earns CALEA's Accreditation with Excellence

22 My Brother's Keeper, service for needy students, marks first anniversary

35 Polk State Corporate College

10 Enrollment growth continues

24 Internship Program gives students a competitive edge

36 Polk mourns Frederick T. Lenfestey, founding president

12 Polk again leads state in graduate employment rates

26 Polk alumna Rita Smith receives statewide honor

38 Polk Celebrates Career, Life of Gary Baker

14 Facilities improvements

28-29 Alumni News and Notes

39-47 2013 Polk State Athletics Report



From its first days, the College has been inextricably linked to the local economy. Founding President Fred Lenfestey, sketching on a pad during a meeting, designed the College's first shield, including an orange and a shovel to represent the area's interests in citrus and phosphate mining.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

POLK STATE COLLEGE
STOKES LOCAL ECONOMY

IN 2011-12 POLK STATE HAD A TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF

\$481,800,000

THE COLLEGE'S TOTAL IMPACT
EQUATES TO APPROXIMATELY

3.3%

OF POLK COUNTY'S ECONOMY.

The return on students' educational investment at Polk State is

17.3%

Due to their increased earnings, students will recoup the cost of their Polk State education within about nine years.

"WE ARE CERTAINLY VERY PROUD OF THIS DATA. POLK STATE TRULY IMPACTS 'THE BOTTOM LINE' OF ITS COMMUNITY, ADDING OVER \$480 MILLION IN ANNUAL INCOME TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY THROUGH THE EARNINGS OF OUR GRADUATES. THAT'S A HUGE IMPACT, AND WE EXPECT THAT TO GROW IN THE COMING DECADES."

POLK
STATE
COLLEGE
JANUARY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

THE
DETAILS

In January 2013, Polk State's EMS Program reported that 100 percent of its students taking the state paramedic certification exam in late 2012 had passed, far exceeding the statewide pass-rate average of 60 percent.

January 9, 2013

Polk State Emergency Medical Services Program Again Surpasses State on Paramedic Exam

A study released in March 2013 pegged Polk State College’s annual economic impact on Polk County at nearly half a billion dollars.

Idaho-based Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl. (EMSI) conducted the study, as part of a broader examination of the impact of the entire Florida College System (FCS).

EMSI found that in 2011-12, Polk State had a total economic impact of \$481.8 million.

Of the College’s total economic impact, \$443 million is a direct result of increased earnings students and alumni receive because of their Polk State College education.

The remainder of the College’s economic impact is comprised of operational expenditures.

The College’s total impact equates to approximately 3.3 percent of Polk County’s economy.

“We are certainly very proud of this data,” said Polk State President Eileen Holden at the study’s release. “Polk State truly impacts ‘the bottom line’ of its community, adding over \$480 million in annual income to the local economy through the earnings of our graduates. That’s a huge impact, and we expect that to grow in the coming decades.”

Business leaders across the county said the study put firm numbers on contributions they’d always known were huge.

“This study quantifies what we’ve always known — that Polk State’s impact reaches far beyond its campuses and classrooms,” said Steve Scruggs, executive director of the Lakeland Economic Development Council.

“Polk State helps to create a pipeline of more highly trained workers, which is invaluable in attracting new businesses to the area. At the same time, having a quality, affordable higher-education institution right here at home goes a long way in retaining talent in Polk County. Polk State is an invaluable resource in the economic development of our county.”

David Petr, now president of the Central Florida Development Council, said:

“Polk State College is one of the best tools I have in my economic development toolbox. When speaking with business

leaders interested in moving to our area, they demand a highly skilled workforce to fuel their businesses. The dedicated faculty and staff at Polk State have created the ideal setting for success, offering exceptionally qualified job candidates to our community every semester.”

The EMSI study also examined Polk State College’s return on investment, both for students and taxpayers, finding:

- For students, the return on their educational investment at Polk State is 17.3 percent. Put in another perspective, the average Polk State student’s lifetime earnings will increase by \$6.60 for every dollar they invest in their education at the College. Thanks to their increased earnings, students will recoup the cost of their Polk State education within about nine years.
- The rate of return taxpayers see on their investment in the College is 10 percent, which far exceeds the 3-percent rate generally expected for long-term government investments, as well as the 7-percent average return on stocks and bonds. As such, the state actually makes money off its investments in Polk State College.

A more detailed look at wages in Polk County found that those who have an associate’s degree earn \$36,500 annually by the midpoint of their careers; this is 35 percent higher than those who have only a high school diploma. Because they earn higher salaries, Polk State’s graduates help to expand Florida’s tax base by \$54 million each year, the study found.

The EMSI study of Polk State was part of a broader look at the impact of the entire FCS. The results of that study showed that the 28 FCS institutions pump an additional \$26.6 billion per year into the state’s economy.

“We are certainly very proud of the data,” Holden added. “It shows what Floridians have known for years: the state college system is a great investment and has a huge impact on the state’s economy.”

“

THE RATE OF RETURN TAXPAYERS SEE ON THEIR INVESTMENT IN POLK STATE COLLEGE IS

10%

WHICH FAR EXCEEDS THE 3-PERCENT RATE GENERALLY EXPECTED FOR LONG-TERM GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS.

”



The College also surveyed its students and aviation employers to gauge the need for the new degree.

Among the findings the College submitted to the state was that, according to the Florida Department of

Economic Opportunity, there were 8,093 aviation-related jobs statewide in 2012, with 375 annual job openings projected through 2020.

However, existing similar programs within the state, offered at Jacksonville University, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, and the Florida Institute of Technology, produced a combined 250 graduates in 2009-10. That number, the College indicated, includes an untold number of out-of-state students.

Plus, College research showed that with an impending global pilot shortage — Boeing predicts 1 million commercial airline pilots and maintenance technicians will be needed by 2031 — and other factors at play within aviation, the state's need for trained aerospace personnel is growing by the day.

Polk's Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Sciences will go a long way in addressing that need by offering aspiring pilots, flight instructors, and airport managers the most affordable option in Florida for attaining a bachelor's degree.

In its degree proposal submitted to the state, the College included letters of support from a wide range of airlines and related operations, including Airbus, American Eagle Airlines, the Bartow Municipal Airport Development Authority, ExpressJet Airlines, FedEx, the Florida Aero Club, the Florida Airports Council,

the Florida College System Aerospace Consortium, Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport, GoJet Airlines, the Jacksonville Aviation Authority, Lakeland Linder Regional Airport, the National Aviation Academy, the Polk Aviation Alliance, the Polk County School Board, Silver Airways, Spirit Airlines, SUN 'n FUN, Miami-based Wayman Flight Training, and Winter Haven Municipal Airport.

John Small, senior director of workforce education at the Polk County School Board wrote:

"Many students in our school are interested in careers as professional pilots or other aerospace professionals, and they are currently able to pursue postsecondary education through Polk State College's Associate of Science degrees in Professional Pilot Science or Aerospace Administration. However, to complete a bachelor's degree in these fields, they must enroll at a private institution or leave Florida. Polk State College's Aerospace Sciences bachelor's degree program will allow our students to affordably complete their baccalaureate education close to home, thereby increasing access to the aerospace field. Polk State and the Polk County School Board have a long history of collaboration to provide the best educational opportunities for the citizens of Polk County. The proposed degree is just one more example of this collaborative relationship."

The bachelor's in Aerospace Sciences will become the College's fourth baccalaureate program, in addition to Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management, Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, launched in 2010, 2011, and 2012 respectively.

Polk State Aerospace Celebrated Donated Plane, Embry-Riddle Training Agreement in 2013

The first year of Polk State's Aerospace Program was a series of big headlines.

The program launched in January 2013, offering an associate's degree in Professional Pilot Science, and by August had added an associate's degree in Aerospace Administration. That expansion was quickly followed by state approval for the College to offer a bachelor's degree in Aerospace Sciences, planned to launch in 2014.

In addition to its growing degree offerings, Polk State Aerospace also experienced a boon in 2013 with FedEx Corp.'s donation of a retired Boeing 727 to SUN 'n FUN. The plane will be used to teach cockpit procedures and aviation maintenance, said Polk State Aerospace Director Eric Crump.

"There's nothing like learning on an actual plane," he said.

Later in the year, Polk State Aerospace inked an agreement with Embry Riddle Aeronautical University — Worldwide. Under the academic agreement, Polk State students can seamlessly transfer their coursework to Embry-Riddle — Worldwide, a world leader in aviation-oriented higher education, giving them more options for their baccalaureate and advanced degrees.

Additionally, JetBlue partnered with the College, giving students access to its training facilities in Orlando. The airline's employees will mentor students during their studies.

"We've had explosive growth. The theme of this year, easily, has been realizing dreams," Crump said.



THE DETAILS

Misty Roper, a resident of Bartow, is the first Polk State student to ever win first place in the Florida Collegiate Honors Council Writing Contest. She won for her poem, *Semele*.

February 27, 2013
Polk Student Wins First Place in Statewide Poetry Contest



Nursing was the College's first Health Sciences program, established in 1965. To keep pace with the advancing healthcare field, the College through the years expanded its offerings to include Cardiovascular Technology, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, Emergency Medical Services, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Physical Therapist Assistant, Radiography, and Respiratory Care. While all these programs focus on different areas of healthcare, they all share a tradition of excellence: Students in all these programs regularly outperform their peers in the state and nation on required licensing exams.

ACCREDITED—FAST!

Polk's BSN Reaches Key Milestone Just a Year After Launch

Just a year into its existence, Polk State's Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree received accreditation from the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) — a remarkably quick feat for a new program.

"What this means is that Polk State is meeting strict national standards for everything from its curriculum to its facilities and resources," said Polk State Nursing Director Annette Hutcherson in April 2013, after the College received word of the accreditation.

"It's very unusual for a program to get accreditation in its first year of operation, and of course we are very proud."

Polk State's BSN Program launched in fall 2011. The NLNAC site assessors visited the program in October 2012, when they recommended accreditation be granted.

In March 2013, the NLNAC's commissioners met and approved the recommendation for accreditation, which was granted retroactively to the 2012 site visit. Therefore, Hutcherson explained, accreditation was achieved just a year after the launch of the program.

"On behalf of the Board of Commissioners, we thank you for your commitment to quality nursing education," wrote Sharon Tanner, chief executive officer of NLNAC, in a letter to Hutcherson announcing the accreditation.

The NLNAC is now known as the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).

Hutcherson said national accreditation is more than a point of pride for the College, it also directly aligns with its ultimate mission of helping students to succeed.

"This is huge news for our students. We graduated our first class of BSN students in December 2012, so now even our very first

class can say it graduated from a nationally accredited program," Hutcherson said.

"One of the requirements for many graduate nursing programs is that students have a baccalaureate degree from a nationally accredited program."

The ACEN is nationally recognized as the accrediting agency for all types of nursing education by a host of government agencies, as well as employers.

Numerous members of Polk County's healthcare industry offered their congratulations to the BSN Program.

"Achieving national accreditation gives Polk State's BSN Program a recognized mark of excellence. I'm not surprised that the BSN Program was able to quickly achieve accreditation, as quality is what has long characterized Polk State's Nursing



POLK
STATE
COLLEGE
MARCH

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

March 11, 2013

*Siblings Studying at Polk State Lakeland Collegiate
Named to All-Florida Academic Team*

March 14, 2013

*Polk State EMS Students Act
Fast to Revive Patient*



Program. Polk State College provides an educational climate that supports the students to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective professional nurses. We are fortunate to have such a high-quality nursing program in our community," said Janet Fansler, executive vice president, chief operating officer, and chief nurse executive at Lakeland Regional Medical Center.

Added Brenda Sponsler, former chief nursing executive at Bartow Regional Medical Center: "National accreditation is proof that a program knows what it is doing. This accreditation is significant because Polk State is right here, down the road for the area's nurses. To be able to get a bachelor's degree from a nationally accredited program without having to travel or do an online program, that's huge," she said.

Sponsler said the BSN's accreditation is further evidence of the exceptional job Polk State does in educating nurses.

"Polk State Nursing is fabulous. I would hire from Polk State any day. I think it stands head and shoulders above other programs in the area," she said.

The Polk State BSN's initial accreditation is effective for five years, which is the maximum amount of time allowed at initial approval. The College will then have to undergo another self-assessment and site visit to receive reaccreditation. If reaccreditation is granted, Polk State will have to renew its accreditation every eight years.

The College's associate's degree in Nursing has been nationally accredited since the 1980s.

Hutcherson credited the success of the BSN Program to its partnerships in the area healthcare community and its faculty members, including Mavra Kear, initial coordinator for the program.

Polk State College's BSN Program was created in response to demand from area hospitals for more highly educated nurses, and enrollment has exceeded projections every semester since it launched.

The BSN Program emphasizes creative and critical thinking to help nurses improve the care they provide to their patients.

"Graduates of the BSN Program possess professionalism, leadership skills, and advanced awareness of not only their role as nurses but of the healthcare system overall," Hutcherson said.



“
POLK STATE NURSING
IS FABULOUS.
**I WOULD
HIRE FROM
POLK STATE
ANY DAY.**
I THINK IT STANDS
HEAD AND SHOULDERS
ABOVE OTHER PROGRAMS
IN THE AREA
”



Polk's public safety institute is named after Kenneth C. Thompson, an Air Force veteran who served as Haines City's chief of police for 18 years. Even after retirement, he was dedicated to public service, becoming a city commissioner, vice mayor, and mayor, serving in the latter position from 1993 until he died in 2001. The Institute was dedicated in his honor in 2002, a prime example of the College's reflection of the community it serves.



EXCELLENCE ACHIEVED

Public Safety Institute Is First of Its Kind to Earn CALEA's Accreditation with Excellence

Polk State's Kenneth C. Thompson Institute of Public Safety is the first training academy of its kind to receive Accreditation with Excellence from CALEA, an internationally recognized credentialing authority.

The Institute received the Accreditation with Excellence Award from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies Inc. (CALEA) in March 2013, during its annual conference in Charleston, S.C.

The Institute is the first training academy associated with a college or university to receive the award in the nation. It has been accredited through CALEA since 2007.

"Achieving renewed CALEA accreditation — and now Accreditation with Excellence — is a big deal, and it is a testament to the hard work of our entire team at the Institute. We are extremely proud of this designation," said Polk State President Eileen Holden.

Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd offered his congratulations: "The Polk State team at the Institute holds themselves to the highest possible standards, so that they can educate and produce some of the best law enforcement officer candidates in the nation," Judd said. "I am very proud of the men and women who have worked so hard to earn the prestigious Accreditation with Excellence designation."

Virginia-based CALEA was established in 1979 to improve the delivery of public safety services. It does this primarily by maintaining a body of standards that were developed by

“
I AM VERY PROUD OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE WORKED SO HARD TO
EARN THE PRESTIGIOUS ACCREDITATION WITH EXCELLENCE DESIGNATION.
”

public safety practitioners that cover a wide range of public safety initiatives. Law-enforcement agencies, public safety communications agencies, campus security forces, and training academies that meet the standards receive CALEA accreditation, an internationally recognized designation.

The Institute is one of only 20 training academies in the country to receive CALEA accreditation and was the first training academy associated with a college or university to earn CALEA accreditation. Reaccreditations have been awarded on a three-year cycle.

Now, the Institute belongs to an even more elite group of CALEA agencies — those that have received Accreditation with Excellence.

The Accreditation with Excellence Award was established in 2011 to recognize agencies that effectively use their CALEA accreditation to set the benchmark for public safety professionalism.

Agencies that receive the award must have received at least two consecutive accreditations and must be free of any noncompliance issues on their most recent assessments.

Additionally, agencies must meet several criteria, including using the CALEA Accreditation process as a tool for continuous organizational improvement; addressing the intent of the CALEA standards, beyond compliance; and collecting, reviewing and analyzing organizational data for the purpose of improvement.

Only 99 agencies have received the award since it began, and only five of the recipients have been training academies. The Institute is the first training academy associated with a college or university to receive the award.

Polk County Sheriff’s Office Capt. William Mann, also director of the Institute, said the award is a direct result of partnerships within the local law enforcement community.

“Receiving this distinguished award is both an honor and a tribute to the quality of the team members we have assembled from Polk State College, the Polk County Sheriff’s Office, the Lakeland Police Department and the Winter Haven Police Department,” he said.

“Achieving the status of Accreditation with Excellence is due to their tireless efforts and teamwork, and a relentless dedication to our mission.”

In addition to training provided through the Institute, Polk State Public Safety offers associate’s and bachelor’s degrees in Criminal Justice, as well training and degrees in Emergency Medical Services and Fire Science.

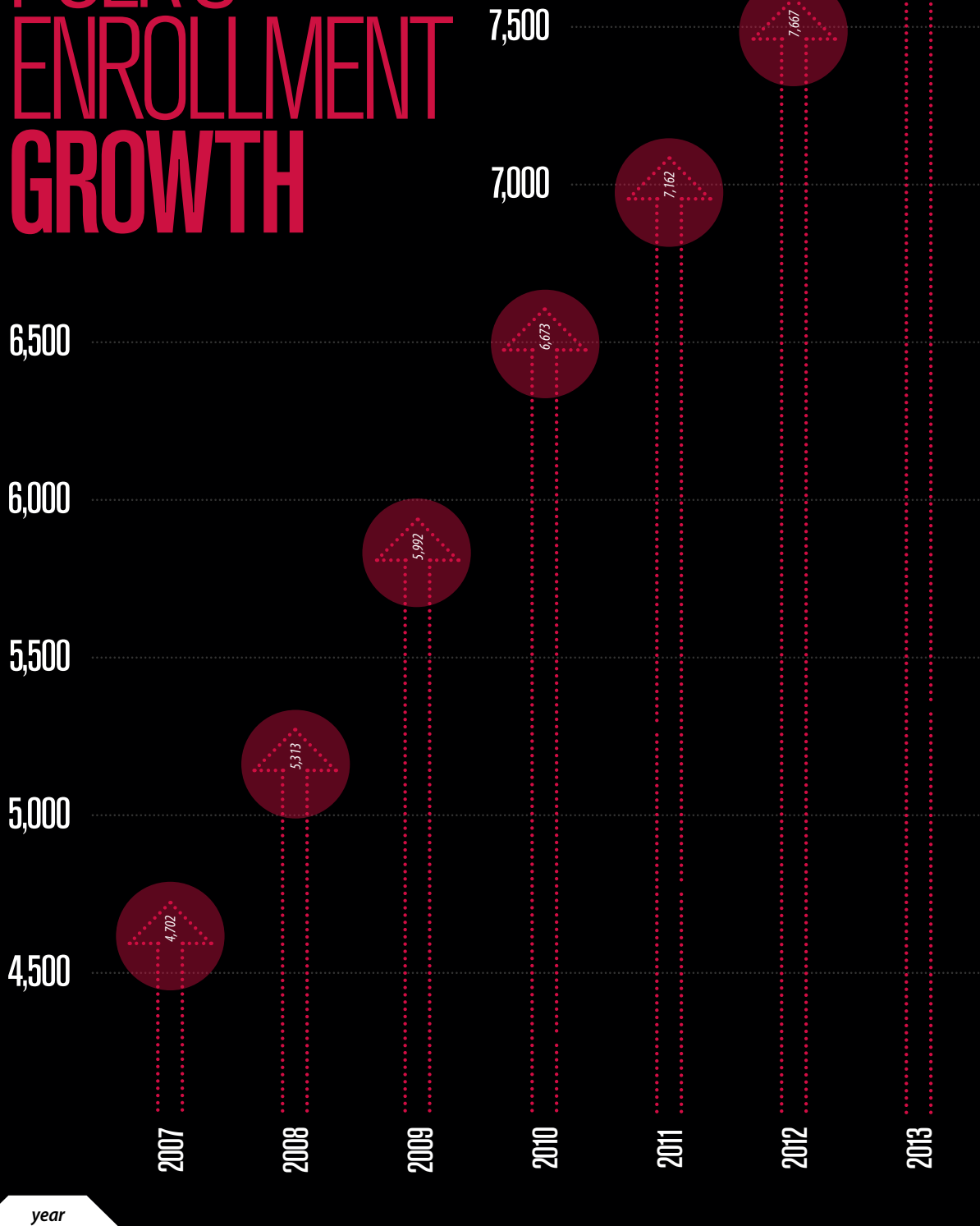




Enrollment growth has been part of the College's story since the very beginning. When the College opened its doors in 1964, more than 1,100 students had signed up to take classes, more than twice the number expected.

POLK'S ENROLLMENT GROWTH

full-time equivalent students



POLK STATE COLLEGE
MAY

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14

May 2, 2013
Polk State Lakeland Collegiate High School Student Wins Silver Garland Award

THE DETAILS

More than 3,600 second-graders came to Polk State for All Kids Read, where they watched Polk State Theatre students act out four children's books. The goal was to foster the children's interest in both reading and theatre.

May 3, 2013
Students from Across County Flock to College for All Kids Read Event

Polk State College saw its enrollment continue to increase in 2012-13, bucking the statewide trend of flat or declining growth.

According to data released by the Division of Florida Colleges in August 2013, Polk State experienced a 2.1 percent gain in full-time-equivalent enrollment in 2012-13, from 7,667 to 7,828.

Polk State was the only college in the 28-institution Florida College System to post an enrollment increase. The 2012-13 report included the summer, fall, and spring terms. The average system enrollment declined by 5.9 percent.

Vice President for Academic Services Kenneth Ross attributed the College's growth to a number of factors.

"I give a lot of credit to our bachelor's programs," he said. "Like every degree and program Polk State offers, the bachelor's degree programs were strategically developed to address workforce needs. Awareness is spreading that this College offers workforce-based bachelor's degrees at the area's most affordable price point — which is why we see enrollment in those programs continue to grow."

Polk State College launched its Bachelor of Applied Science in 2010, following it with the Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 2011, and the Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice in 2012. In 2013, it was approved to offer the Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Sciences; that degree will launch in fall 2014.

More bachelor's degrees are in development.

Enrollment in the bachelor's programs has increased every semester since each launched.

Ross said another factor in the enrollment growth has been a new "concierge" service, which involves employees calling students to remind them of outstanding tuition or fees, or other requirements they need to fulfill.

This service has resulted in fewer students being purged from classes at the drop/add deadline each semester.

"It comes down to improved communication between the College and the students," Ross said. "The students know what's expected of them when they walk up to the doors."

In fall 2013, more than 12,600 students were enrolled in classes



at Polk State's campuses in Lakeland and Winter Haven, as well as at centers in South Lakeland and Lake Wales.

The majority of Polk's students are studying toward the Associate in Arts degree, which is parallel and fully transferrable to the State University System, however a large portion study in the College's workforce-based Associate in Science degree programs.

The remaining students are in the bachelor's programs or a variety of certificate programs designed to lead to immediate employment opportunities.

Enrollment Services and Outreach Coordinator Matina Wagner, who works on the front lines of recruitment efforts, attributed the enrollment bump to increasing awareness of what Polk State has to offer.

"I think more and more people are realizing the value of a state college," Wagner said. "Economically, it just makes more sense. People are minding their dollars and they're realizing that the quality is there. They can get the same rigor that they would at other schools without breaking the bank."

Polk State College is the county's largest and most affordable higher-education option.

Saul Reyes, dean of student services at Polk State Winter Haven, proudly notes that many employees at the College also play a role in growing enrollment, such as those in the Admission Office, Advising, and Student Financial Services. The enrollment growth is especially sweet reward for those who work with students one-on-one, because it means more are realizing the power of a Polk State education.

"It's an honor to see the excitement in students' eyes when they first enroll at the College . . . to witness students' realization that college is going to change their future and their family's future, it's the best part of the job," he said.

“
LIKE EVERY DEGREE
AND PROGRAM POLK
STATE OFFERS, THE
BACHELOR'S DEGREE
PROGRAMS WERE
**STRATEGICALLY
DEVELOPED**
TO ADDRESS
WORKFORCE NEEDS.
”



Polk State has long adapted to meet the needs of its students and area employers. Within the first decade of its existence, the College had developed a diverse range of courses to serve the area's tourism industry, including training for students who wanted to become professional water skiers and courses in hotel-motel management.

NO.1—AGAIN!

Polk Leads State Graduate Employment Rates

For two years running, Polk State College has led all other public colleges in preparing graduates for immediate employment.

Data released in 2013 showed that 86 percent of students in the College's workforce-based programs secured employment within just months of graduation.

Polk State College outranked all other 27 Florida College System institutions, and was well ahead of the statewide job-placement average of 74 percent.

It was the second consecutive year that Polk State had led the state in graduate employment.

Polk State President Eileen Holden described the data as quantitative evidence of the College's success in serving both students and employers.

"Every class we schedule, every program we offer, and every degree we confer is tied to meeting workforce needs in our community. We provide our business partners with the workforce they need to prosper and our students with the knowledge and training they need to enjoy gainful careers. This is the reason we exist, and it always will be, no matter where we rank on the list — but, yes, being ranked No. 1 in back-to-back years is very exciting," she said.

The Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) released the data, which pertain to graduates in 2010-11, the most recent year available. Workforce-based programs include Associate in Science degree programs, Educator Preparation Institute, and the many certificates Polk State College offers.

Peter Usinger, director of institutional research, effectiveness and planning for the College, said that it is particularly striking that Polk State graduates were successful in securing jobs even during a period of steep unemployment.

During the last quarter of 2010, Polk County's average rate of unemployment was 12.2 percent, higher than the statewide average during the same period of 11.1 percent, according to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

By the fourth quarter of 2011 — at the end of the period examined by the recent FETPIP data — Polk County's unemployment rate had improved to only 11.1 percent, still well above the state's 9.5 percent.

"Polk's unemployment is persistently higher than the statewide average. At the same time, Polk State's graduates are getting jobs at higher rates than graduates of any other public college in Florida. The data validate the education Polk State provides — there is real demand for our graduates," Usinger said.

Also significant is that Polk State workforce program graduates earned an average full-time wage of \$40,864, according to the FETPIP data. That is above the county average of \$35,243, according to the Central Florida Development Council.

Polk State's state-leading graduate employment is the result of its deep integration with the local business community, Usinger said. Area employers serve on advisory boards for the College's degree programs, helping to guide and shape curricula to match real-world expectations, and input from the business community is also vital to new degree development.

The result of the College's collaboration with employers, and its success in helping graduates secure employment, is best told through the stories of individual graduates, such as Manal Awad.

Awad graduated from the College's Nursing Program in May 2013, and knows firsthand the difference a Polk State degree makes. When she graduated, she had already been hired as a full-time nurse at Winter Haven Hospital, making approximately \$48,000.

"I'm going to spoil myself with a new car — probably a Camry," she said. "Getting my AS at Polk helped me get my foot in the door at Winter Haven Hospital and will help me get where I want to go."

TWO GRADUATES, TWO PROGRAMS, BOTH HIRED RIGHT AWAY

For a decade, Dorian Sheppard was an account representative in the telecommunications industry, but when her employer merged with another, her job disappeared.

Rather than stay in her field, Sheppard saw an opportunity to make a life change, and enrolled in Polk State College's Respiratory Care Program.

"I shadowed a respiratory therapist and immediately fell in love with it," said the Lakeland resident. "Respiratory therapists work in all areas of the hospital and they save lives. I had to find what I wanted to do, but once I found it, I knew it was right for me."

Sheppard graduated from the Respiratory Care Program in May 2013, and was hired just over a month later at her employer of choice, Lakeland Regional Medical Center.

"Getting hired so quickly was very important to me and my family. If I'd had to wait to find a job, or if I'd had difficulty in getting hired, that would have been a hardship on us all," she said.

From her first day on the job, Sheppard said, she felt prepared to handle the challenges and responsibilities that come with the field of respiratory care.

Respiratory therapists help patients who are having difficulty breathing to manage their conditions. On any given day, Sheppard manages ventilators for patients who can't breathe on their own, administers medications, and provides emergency response to patients in cardiac or respiratory arrest.

"I was trained to do this, and I was confident in my abilities from the very first day," she said. "I have no regrets about changing careers. I've found personal fulfillment. I'm very glad I went to Polk State, too. The College holds students to higher standards and those standards are what people notice when it comes time to get a job."

Meanwhile, Cornelius Jackson had earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Flagler College and a Master



of Business Administration from Phoenix University, and was in the midst of a successful career in banking.

But something was missing.

"I always wanted to go into teaching, but never really had the opportunity."

After visiting the classroom of a friend who teaches, Jackson was inspired to make a change, and he decided to use Polk State's Educator Preparation Institute (EPI) to make it happen.

The EPI is an accelerated training option for anyone who has a non-education bachelor's degree and wants to become a teacher.

"Polk is local and it's a great program. It offers Saturday and online classes, which is great for a professional looking to change careers," he said.

Jackson completed the EPI in October 2012, and the next school year began working as a business teacher at Lake Gibson High School. In the time that passed between him completing EPI and being hired, Jackson turned down other job offers in his field because he felt certain his Polk State training would lead him to a teaching position.

"I didn't feel that I was jeopardizing my future by turning down those offers. I knew I would get a job," he said.

The EPI prepared him to succeed from the moment he entered his classroom, he said.

"If I hadn't done the EPI, I wouldn't have been prepared at all. They give you all the keys, and you're ready to go," he said.

"Teaching has turned out to be way better than I thought it would be. The kids are fantastic, and I feel that I'm really affecting the community in a positive way."

— “ —
POLK IS LOCAL AND
IT'S A GREAT PROGRAM.
**IT OFFERS
SATURDAY
AND ONLINE
CLASSES,**
WHICH IS GREAT FOR A
PROFESSIONAL LOOKING
TO CHANGE CAREERS
— ” —



In 2014, the College opened its Polk State Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center in Bartow, exactly 50 years after it marked its humble beginnings at the former Bartow Air Base. The new facility features state-of-the-art technology and building techniques, a stark contrast to how the College started, when the first employees lamented the lack of water fountains.

UPDATES AND ENHANCEMENTS

Polk State made a number of changes to its campuses and centers in 2013 to better serve its students. Here is a look at some of the most significant projects of the year:

1. Winter Haven Health Center Lobby

After decades without even minimal updates, the space was completely renovated in 2013. The project included tripling the size of the trophy case to create a visual focal point, installing a concession stand and adding architectural details to the ceiling. The lobby also received new flooring, paint, signage, and lighting. Additionally, the bathrooms were updated. The final result is a modern, exciting entryway to the Health Center that complements the previously updated gym floor.

2. Lakeland Academic Center

To make way for Polk State Lakeland Gateway to College Collegiate High School, a former nursing classroom was renovated into faculty offices and a modern teaching space. The new high school's conference room also received technology updates, and new digital signs and security enhancements were added.

3. Polk State Airside Center

To accommodate Polk State Aerospace, which relocated from the Winter Haven campus in late 2013, an area once used for cubicles was reconfigured to house the program's flight-simulation technology. Work will continue through 2014 to make the most efficient use of the Airside Center, as many programs once housed there have relocated to the Polk State Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center.

4. Lakeland Wellness Center

A former 4,800-square-foot storage building on the northeastern edge of campus was transformed into Polk State Lakeland's Wellness Center. The Lakeland Wellness Center now houses a cardio room complete with treadmills, ellipticals, stationary bikes, weight machines, and free weights; men's and women's locker rooms; and an aerobic room for group exercise.



1



2



3



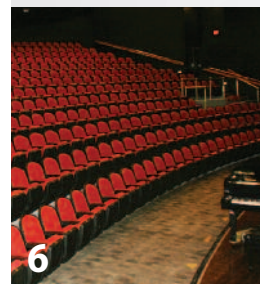
4



5



THE NEW CONSTRUCTION, REMODELING AND NUMEROUS RENOVATIONS HAPPENING AT THE COLLEGE ARE ALL ABOUT MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS... IT'S ABOUT PROVIDING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT OUR STUDENTS NEED TO SUCCEED.



6



7



5. Lakeland Campus Library

To complement renovations that were made to the Polk State Lakeland TLCC (Teaching/Learning Computing Center) in 2012, the College installed new carpet and painted the Lakeland Campus Library.

6. Winter Haven Fine Arts Theatre

Those attending Polk State Theatre or Music productions now enjoy the show from the comfort of new seats that were installed in early 2013. The seats vary in size from 21 to 23 inches, and all feature lumbar support and higher backs, making for a cushier viewing experience. Upgrades to the theatre also included installing energy-efficient house lighting, new carpet, glow-in-the-dark lighting on the stairs to improve patron safety, and perimeter lighting on the stage for increased performer safety.

7. Teaching and Learning Innovation Centers

Both the Lakeland and Winter Haven campuses opened 2013 with ribbon-cutting ceremonies for their Teaching and Learning Innovation Centers; Lakeland's TLIC is located in LLC 2269, Winter Haven's is in a modular building on the southern edge of campus. Both are full of cutting-edge technology, video and multimedia creation and editing equipment, green-screen studios, and video conferencing technology. Faculty members are using the TLICs for technological training, collaboration on instructional projects, and development of multimedia content. The TLICs were made possible through the generosity of Boyer Building Corporation.

8. Winter Haven TLCC (Teaching/Learning Computing Center)

The TLCC, where hundreds of students each day go to study, meet with tutors, and take tests, received dramatic upgrades in 2013. Located on the second floor of Polk State Winter Haven's Learning Resources Building, the space now has a new corridor and student seating area, more computer workstations and study rooms, and improved separation between the testing and study areas. The area has all-new finishes, too, from carpet to furniture. Work will continue in 2014 to further upgrade the testing area and create additional office space.

Polk State Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center Now Open

In January 2014, just in time for its 50th anniversary, Polk State College celebrated the opening of its Polk State Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center (ATC) in Bartow.

"Five decades ago, Polk State College began humbly, on the grounds of the Bartow Air Base," said Polk State President Eileen Holden.

"Now, 50 years later, we're back, with a state-of-the-art facility that will house our most cutting-edge programs. Bartow will always be part of the College's history, of course, and now with the ATC, Bartow is part of the College's bright, exciting future, too."

The Polk State Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center is located off State Road 60, at the intersection of Technology Drive and Venture Bend.

Measuring 47,000 square feet, the architecturally striking building houses high-tech degree programs such as Engineering Technology, Supply Chain Management, and Computer Network Engineering Technology, as well as the Polk State Corporate College, which provides in-demand workforce training for industries as varied as advanced manufacturing and information technology.

The building came to life through the work of Polk-based firms Furr & Wegman Architects and Rodda Construction.

The Polk State Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center was made possible through Clear Springs' donation of 20 acres of land and \$12 million to the Polk State College Foundation, and the support of numerous other donors.



GEORGE URBANO
DISTRICT DIRECTOR
OF FACILITIES

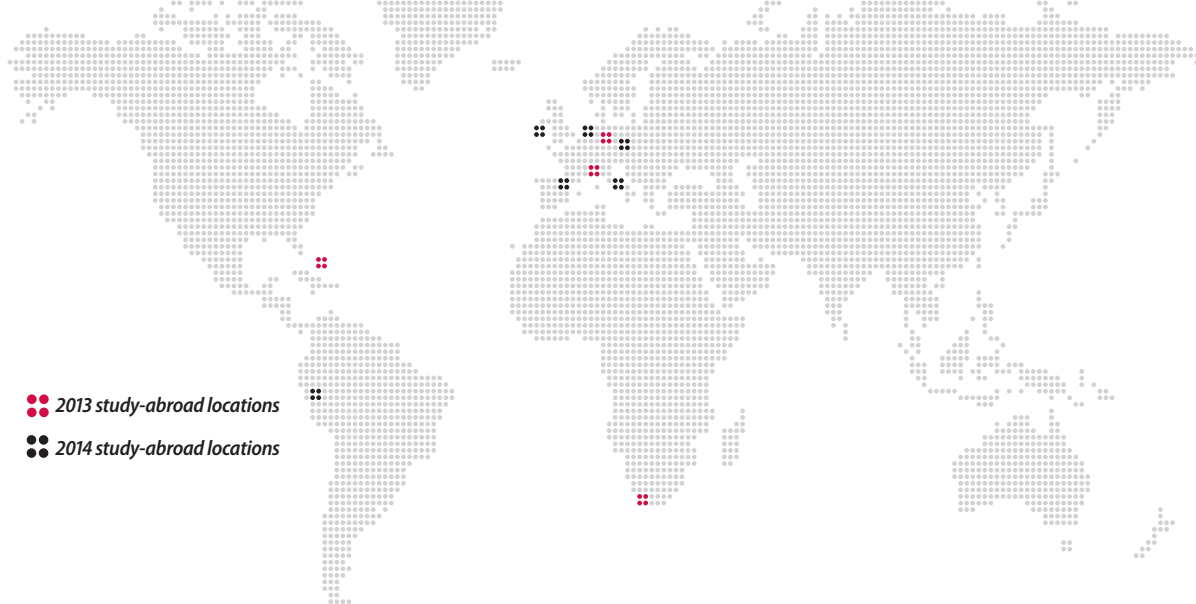


8

July 20, 2013
Occupational Therapy Assistant Program Has
100-Percent Pass Rate on Certification Exam

THE
DETAILS

Polk State's Occupational Therapy Assistant Program enrolled its first class in 1999. Since then, the program has consistently exceeded the national pass rate on the National Board Certification in Occupational Therapy exam. Passing the exam is a requirement for working as an occupational therapy assistant.



●● 2013 study-abroad locations

●● 2014 study-abroad locations

The group was based at Forfar, a research station operated by International Field Studies, a nonprofit for teachers who run field study programs. Each day consisted of eight to nine hours studying topics such as the Andros Barrier Reef, erosion patterns and the effects of climate change.

“We really got to open the students’ eyes to differences in the world,” said Biology Professor Anthony Cornett, who led the trip along with Biology Professor Logan Randolph and Earth Science Professor Natalie Whitcomb.

“Coming from a fairly homogenous cultural and environmental background, a lot of students don’t really know any different than what’s around them. Now they have a better understanding of a different environment and culture that’s so unlike what they’re used to.”

Perhaps the most enduring lesson for students came from a series of interviews they conducted with Bahamian residents about climate change and efforts to conserve the conch, an important food source and cultural symbol for the country. Students visited a half-dozen settlements on the island, conducting interviews at each stop. In the process they learned about the different ways of life around the Andros.

Upon returning, the students compiled their videotaped interviews into a documentary for the Bahamas National Trust, which manages the country’s national parks.

Student Kristiana Heath, a resident of Babson Park who completed her Associate in Arts degree at Polk in 2013, described the trip as deeply enriching.

“I was learning constantly. Even if it wasn’t ‘instructional’ time, the professors would still constantly point things out, from different types of mangroves to limestone formations,” she said.

Cape Town, South Africa

Later in the year, Business Professor Herb Nold and four students from the College’s Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management Program traveled to Cape Town, South Africa, to attend the Golden Key International Honour Society’s South African Conference.

Golden Key is the world’s largest collegiate honor society; Polk State’s chapter was chartered in 2011, and membership is limited to high academic performers in the College’s bachelor’s programs.

None of the students who visited Cape Town had previously traveled outside the United States. While abroad, they took part in conference activities and conducted a workshop on the impact an organization’s culture makes on its ultimate success. They also ventured into the city, where their views on the world were forever changed.

“I’d have to say that the most influential moment during this trip was the township tour,” said student Joshua Moore, a resident of Lakeland. “The ‘townships’ are communities that are made out of shipping crates and include houses, pubs, and convenience stores. The people of these communities have no running water, rely mostly on local markets to generate income, and have communal bathrooms. Personally, this showed me how much we, as Americans, take for granted.”

continued on page 35

“

STEPPING OUT OF
THE TRADITIONAL
CLASSROOM AND INTO
THE WORLD

**SHIFTS
PERSPECTIVES**

ABOUT OUR INDIVIDUAL
ROLES IN THE GLOBAL
ARENA AND
MARKETPLACE.

”



Today, Polk State has campuses in Lakeland and Winter Haven, and centers in South Lakeland and Lake Wales, and in 2014 expanded again with its Polk State Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center in Bartow. Back in 1968, the College was celebrating the completion of a single building — the Learning Resource Center, the first building completed on the Winter Haven campus. The Learning Resources Building is still a hub of activity on campus. On any given day, it hosts 60-plus classes and approximately 2,700 students either attend classes within the building or access other services offered under its roof.

OPEN FOR THE ARTS

Polk State Lake Wales Arts Center Marks Busy 2013

Polk State College celebrated the opening of its Polk State College Lake Wales Arts Center in early 2013, and followed it with a busy slate of programming and the hiring of its first director for the location.

In late 2011, the College and the Lake Wales Arts Council announced an innovative collaboration that involved the College accepting the title to the historic, iconic Lake Wales Arts Center, located at 1099 State Road 60 East.

In exchange, the College agreed to renovate and maintain the 1920's building, and use it to offer the community dynamic arts opportunities.

After months of renovations, including unexpected work to reinforce the building's roof, the Polk State College Lake Wales Arts Center officially opened in March 2013, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by approximately 150.

The ceremony featured musical performers from the College and the community. Attendees included former state Sen. JD Alexander, Lake Wales City Commissioner Michael Carter, Lake Wales Arts Council President Barbara Connor, and Lake Wales Charter School District Superintendent Jesse Jackson.

The ceremony proved a brief celebratory respite in what was otherwise a bustling year for the newest Polk State location.

Academic classes commenced early in the year, including Ceramics, Design, Digital Photography and Music Appreciation.

By May, the Center had its first director, Osubi Craig, who brings to his new job a mix of experience as an arts administrator and artist. He went to Florida A & M University on a music

scholarship, majoring in Industrial Engineering while also playing in the Marching 100 and jazz ensemble.

After spending time in the northeast, performing and teaching, he returned to Florida to earn a master's degree in Arts Administration from Florida State University.

He held positions in grants and research at FAMU and Florida Memorial University before coming to Polk State.

"This position is everything I could have dreamed of," Craig said. "There's this beautifully renovated building, resources to host performances and events, and a community that wants to participate in the arts. We made huge progress in offering exciting new cultural opportunities in 2013, but we're just getting started here at the Polk State Lake Wales Arts Center."

With Craig in place, a slew of special events commenced in 2013.

The Arts Incubator series began in June, hosting internationally acclaimed pianist Byron Sean and Polk State Humanities Professor and cellist Derek Menchan.

In August, the location hosted the first Polk State Lake Wales Arts Integration Summer Training Institute. More than 30 local teachers attended the three-day program, led by Polk State Theatre Professor Ilene Fins, to learn how to incorporate the arts into the teaching of everything from geometry to poetry.

"In no uncertain terms, the Arts Integration project is about trying to change the world," Craig said. "Teachers are the most direct link to our young people, and they are some of the most influential people in their lives. We want to keep the educational approach fresh and new, engaging and joyous, for both the students and teachers. Through the program, we give teachers the toolbox to help their students absorb information in new ways."

During the Institute, educators learned things like connecting Shakespeare to pop music, and ways to use dance to help students learn geometry.

"I'm excited to go back to my fellow teachers and show them that arts integration doesn't have to be extra activities you add on to your day. It can be easily incorporated into any subject or lesson," said Brannan Lawson, a visual arts teacher at Hillcrest Elementary School in Lake Wales.

POLK STATE COLLEGE
SEPTEMBER

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
				<i>September 1, 2013</i> <i>Polk State Aerospace Has Its First Licensed Pilots</i>									
				<i>September 4, 2013</i> <i>Polk State Hosts Dr. Ben Carson</i>									
								<i>September 5, 2013</i> <i>Students Travel to South Africa for Golden Key Conference</i>					
											<i>September 12, 2013</i> <i>Battle of the Bands Features Polk State Entry</i>		



Growth Continues at Polk's JD Alexander Center

Polk State's JD Alexander Center, located in downtown Lake Wales, continues to see rapid growth, a trend that didn't miss a beat in 2013.

During the 2012-13 academic year, the Center served 1,512 students, offering 188 course sections. By comparison, in 2009-10, the first year of operation, the Center served 474 students and offered 98 sections.

"The community has really caught on to what is possible here," said Polk State JD Alexander Center Director Cheryl Garnett, who was hired as the permanent director in 2013, after having previously served in an interim capacity.

"You can almost — except for a couple of lab requirements — complete your whole Associate in Arts degree right here, within these four walls. We're also offering courses toward the Bachelor of Applied Science degree and Educator Preparation Institute (EPI) courses for aspiring teachers."

To keep up with the growth, the Center is now offering classes six days a week, from as early as 7:30 a.m. to as late as 9:30 p.m. The Center also increasingly employs cohort scheduling, so students get the courses they need in quick succession; doing so allows the students to still work or care for families, and allows the Center to serve as many students as possible.

"Our goal is to fully utilize the building — we have to, to keep up with the demand," Garnett said.

Among the highlights of 2013 were services provided through the Student Success Center. Each month, about 1,400 students access the Student Success Center, which offers innovative programs and services that incorporate different learning styles, all to support a student-centered learning environment.

"If you want to further your education, if you want to be part of a local student body, you can do all that right here at the JD Alexander Center," Garnett said.



A month later, the Arts Center hosted famed surgeon, author, and public speaker Dr. Benjamin Carson Sr. Carson spoke at Lake Wales High School, recounting for a standing-room-only audience his impoverished childhood and the path education provided to a better life.

Afterward, Carson shared lunch with community leaders and Polk State students at the Arts Center.

"It meant a lot to me to see someone who's been through the same kind of adversity I'm going through," said student Nikela Sullivan, who named financial struggles and growing up in a single-parent home as her own daunting circumstances. "He's one person who has dealt with that adversity and has been victorious. That gives me hope."

Also in September, the Arts Center welcomed its first artist-in-residence, Saddi Khali, a photographer, writer, and performance artist. During his three-week stay in Lake Wales, Khali gave lectures and workshops to area schools, and photographed scenes around the city for a collection of new work that was displayed at the Arts Center's Michael Crews Gallery.

During a wrap-up event in October, residents expressed their appreciation for having experienced Khali's talents.

"Saddi came to our school and told us to put ourselves in the shoes of someone else and write from that point of view," said Allison Milian, a Lake Wales High School student and budding poet. "Just in doing that, I got to know my fellow classmates better. We had to really put ourselves out there. We sat in a room and got to know each other — and we might not have done that otherwise."

"Doing that gave me confidence in my poetry. I felt like I belonged because I was with people who all like to write poetry, too."

The Arts Center was also a catalyst for performances by Vocal Trash, a group that uses recycled items as instruments and sings about environmental sustainability, and Randy Corinthian, a South Florida-based saxophonist, producer and educator.

The variety and impact of the Arts Center's 2013 events are but a taste of what the community can expect in years to come, Craig said.

"We're going to offer cultural experiences that are relevant to everyone, and through that diverse programming, members of this community will have a deeper understanding of themselves as individuals, but also those all around them."

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

September 18, 2013
Polk State Approved for Bachelor's in Aerospace Sciences

THE DETAILS

Polk will use its \$1.6 million award from the U.S. Department of Labor to add a mechanical design and fabrication concentration to its Engineering Technology degree.

September 20, 2013
Polk Receives \$1.6 Million Department of Labor Grant



Polk's collegiate high schools put higher education within reach for its youngest students, and are just one example of the College's efforts to increase accessibility throughout its history. Back in the 1970s, the College — working under the slogan "If you yearn to learn, we reach to teach" — was holding night classes in high schools throughout the county and operating a van equipped as a mobile counseling and registration center. College personnel also set up booths in shopping centers and malls. *The Ledger* described the outreach as a "move to spread the gospel of education."

SECOND CHANCES

New Polk State High School Helping Students From Troubled Circumstances Achieve Education

Dustin Powell doesn't hesitate when asked to imagine a life without Polk State Lakeland Gateway to College High School.

"I'd be in jail," he said.

Powell is 19, well-spoken with an easy smile. He loves the outdoors and dreams of one day becoming a wildlife officer.

But growing up, he never fit in at traditional schools. He blames it partly on attention deficit disorder, partly on never feeling accepted by his schoolmates or teachers. Whatever the reason, he got into trouble — first schoolyard mischief, then scrapes with the law.

"Most of my memories from when I was a kid are of being in the principal's office. I was always getting detentions," he said. By his senior year of high school, things had reached a breaking point and Powell was no longer attending classes. He spent eight months out of school, delivering pizza and foundering.

"I still knew what I wanted to do, but I didn't see a way to make it happen. I thought it was too late for me," he said.

Then he learned of Polk State's newest high school, and suddenly he could see a path out of his troubled childhood to an education and the career of his dreams.

Now, he's on track to graduate with his high school diploma and a handful of college credits in May 2014. He plans on training at Polk State's Kenneth C. Thompson Institute of Public Safety to begin his career in law enforcement.

"I had to do everything wrong before I got it right, but thankfully I was able to make it here, to get out of trouble with my head still above water, and make it to Gateway," he said.

Polk State Lakeland Gateway to College High School opened its doors in August 2013, as one of the newest institutions added to the Gateway to College National Network.

Gateway to College serves students who have dropped out of — or are unlikely to graduate from — high school, helping them to earn both a high school diploma and substantial college credit.

During its first semester of operation, Polk State Lakeland Gateway served 45 students. They ranged in age from 16 to 21 and came from all over the county. Many had not attended school for at least six months. Homelessness and teenage pregnancy — they're just a couple of the serious social issues represented in the first class.

What the students all had in common was this: They had every reason to give up on getting an education, but Gateway offered them one last chance — and they had to take it.

"It's really incredible when you hear about the enormous obstacles these students have faced, and that now they're turning it around to achieve what just a short time ago seemed impossible," said Polk State Lakeland Provost Steve Hull. "They came from some really desperate points in their lives, and now a high school diploma and a college degree are within reach."

To serve the students who face the most challenging of circumstances, Polk State Lakeland Gateway holds classes in the afternoon and at night, allowing students to work or care for their families. For added accessibility, coursework is delivered in a blended — online and face-to-face — format.

Students also receive tutoring, one-to-one instructional support, and assistance with navigating social services — anything to help eliminate the obstacles standing between them and academic success.

In addition, Polk State Lakeland Gateway students are required to take at least three college courses, for a total of nine credit hours.

“That’s crucial,” Hull said. “We demystify the college experience for students, helping them to get a jumpstart on college studies.”

Like Polk State’s two other collegiate high schools, Polk State Lakeland Gateway is free to attend, further easing the students’ entry into higher education.

At the end of the first semester, Polk State Lakeland Gateway Director Sallie Brisbane said seeing the college experience demystified for her students was just one of the dramatic changes she’d witnessed.

“These students have been given a second chance, and you can see it in the way they carry themselves. They walk a little taller, speak a little stronger. They’re taking part in campus activities. They’re making plans for their futures,” she said.

A perfect example: Whitney Ellenburg.

Ellenburg, 19, had her life turned inside out early in 2013, when her parents moved to Polk County and she remained in Tennessee. She spent months staying with various friends and relatives, quickly entering in a downward spiral. At her lowest point, she attempted to commit suicide, she said.

By the spring, she had come to Florida, but her situation only worsened, thanks to many factors, from her dad’s health problems, to the death of her great-grandmother, to her parents’ divorce.

Ellenburg’s education, she said, was no one’s priority. Not even hers.

She was out of school for eight months, but like her classmates, she has found the ability to start again at Polk State Lakeland Gateway.

“I just grabbed at this,” said Ellenburg, who lives in Auburndale. “I knew I had to get my high school diploma and that no one was going to make that happen but me.

“But here, we’re not totally on our own. The teachers really want to help the students get what they need. They’re here trying for us every day, even on the days when we don’t want to try for ourselves.”

Since coming to Polk State Lakeland Gateway, Ellenburg said, she’s grown to love school, and she’s more focused than ever on graduating from high school, getting a college degree, and becoming — well, she wants to become a lot of things.

“A baker, a physical therapist and a pharmacist. But right now I’m focused on the pharmacist, she said.”

Collegiate High Schools Report Another Successful Graduating Class

Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School and Polk State Lakeland Collegiate High School reported another high-achieving graduating class in 2013.

At Polk State Chain of Lakes, located in Winter Haven, 100 percent of the senior class — comprised of 147 students — graduated. Of those, 37 students had completed their Associate in Arts degree by the end of their senior year.

Among those who didn’t complete their degrees, the average number of college credits earned was 49; the Associate in Arts degree consists of 60 credits.

Polk State Lakeland Collegiate’s 2013 senior class included 119 students, who also achieved a 100-percent graduation rate. Of those, 42 students earned their Associate in Arts degree by the end of their senior year.

Among those who didn’t complete their degrees at Polk State Lakeland Collegiate, the average number of credits earned was 54.

Not only did the Class of 2013 earn the credits, they also earned high grades.

At Polk State Chain of Lakes, 74 students had a grade-point average of 3.75 or higher; 22 had a GPA between 3.5 and 3.749; and 29 were between a 3.2 and 3.49.

Polk State Lakeland Collegiate had similar results, with 72 graduates achieving a GPA of 3.75 or higher; 20 earning a 3.5 to 3.749; and 19 earning between a 3.2 and 3.49.

Members of the 2013 class went on to study at institutions such as Flagler College, Miami International University of Art & Design, Rollins College, Stetson University, and public universities across the state.

Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate and Polk State Lakeland Collegiate are public charter high schools that allow students to fulfill the requirements for their diplomas while also earning college credits. Both schools serve juniors and seniors who meet rigorous academic criteria.



Whitney Ellenburg

Dustin Powell



Polk State's My Brother's Keeper is just one example of the College making a positive impact on its community. Students in the College's approximately 50 clubs and organizations contribute more than 20,000 hours of volunteer service annually, from mentoring kids to cleaning up local lakes.

SERVING OUR STUDENTS

My Brother's Keeper Celebrates One Year of Helping Needy Students

Polk State's My Brother's Keeper, a service for needy students that began as a bowl of cereal bars in one professor's office, celebrated its first anniversary in 2013.

"Instead of pretending we don't have homeless students, Polk State, with the help of so many generous donors, has addressed the issue head on. We want to be part of the solution," said Polk State President Eileen Holden.

"If we chip away at it a little at a time, we will make systemic change."

My Brother's Keeper had its beginnings in the observations of Carole Shelton-Toney, a psychology professor and the College's coordinator of veteran services.

Toney, who served 10 years in the Army's Quartermaster Corps, the service that provides soldiers with food and supplies, always kept a stash of snacks in her office. In time, she realized her students weren't coming to her just for something to quell their afternoon munchies.

They were coming to her for the only food they might eat all day.

"They were genuinely hungry. If I had cereal bars, for instance, I would see students take one and then take a couple more to put in their backpacks so they would have something to eat later," she said.

Her bowl of cereal bars would often only last a couple hours.

As the students came by more frequently, some asked her for personal hygiene items, or if she knew of a place where they could wash their clothes. She became aware of some

students who were "couch surfing" — that is moving from one friend's house to the next, with no permanent place to live. There were others who lived out of their cars.

"I started stockpiling all this stuff at my desk," Toney said. "Then I started asking other professors if they'd seen the same thing — and they had."

Something had to be done.

Toney teamed with Director of Grants Administration Jennifer Fiorenza and fellow Psychology Professor Katrina Smith to solve the problem.

The solution became My Brother's Keeper, whose name expresses the responsibility we all have to help others, Toney said.

Today, My Brother's Keeper is a modular building on the campus of Polk State Winter Haven, with shelves full of canned and microwavable food, bins brimming with deodorant, shampoo, and other personal necessities, and a bank of computers for students who need to write a resume or search for a job.

It is a physical place where students — no matter what they need — can come to get help.

And come they have — My Brother's Keeper served more than 500 students in its first year.

My Brother's Keeper is a service-learning project, one of many at the College, in which students utilize their in-class learning to benefit the community. Students work at the modular, accept donations, and connect those in need with appropriate resources.



Carole Shelton-Toney

POLK
STATE
COLLEGE
NOVEMBER

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

November 4, 2013
College Honors Veterans with
Events on Lakeland, Winter
Haven Campuses

November 7, 2013
Polk's International Education
Week Includes Guest Lecture by
Stonehenge Researcher

November 13, 2013
Polk State's Peter Usinger Becomes New
President of the Association of Florida
Colleges; First from Polk to Hold the Position

As word of Polk State's project to help needy students has spread, businesses and individuals from across the College and county have stepped forward with food, personal hygiene items, furniture for the modular building, money, and so on.

To strengthen connections with the community that has so warmly received My Brother's Keeper, Toney began assigning students in her classes the task of collecting business cards. Those cards now cover the walls of the My Brother's Keeper building and serve an important purpose, Toney said.

"It helps them to think about what they might want to do as a career, and it gets them started on networking. Getting a job nowadays is all about who you know," she said.

Some students have gotten jobs by calling the numbers on those cards and mentioning My Brother's Keeper, a huge step on the path out of the circumstances that led them to seek help in the first place, said student supervisor Casmore Shaw.

While food remains the largest portion of the help My Brother's Keeper provides, it has expanded to encompass other services, too, including resume preparation and specialized assistance for veterans.

The students who utilize My Brother's Keeper largely like to remain anonymous, but they all have inspiring stories. Toney shared the story of a student who gradually became thinner during the course of a semester. His family was going through economic hardships and he wasn't eating. My Brother's Keeper helped him find a food assistance program.



A Service Learning Project **POLK STATE COLLEGE**

Another student had her laptop stolen, leaving her unable to take online courses. She got a new one through the My Brother's Keeper scholarship fund.

There was another student who found a place to live and a job. She recently graduated.

What's just as inspiring as stories such as these, Shaw said, is the extent to which the College and community have banded together to help students who need it most. He's certain that those who have learned about My Brother's Keeper, been touched by its mission, and have offered their help, have gained just as much as those who have received food or toiletries.

"It gives me chills," Shaw said. "People here genuinely care."

— “ —
MY BROTHER'S
KEEPER SERVED
MORE THAN
500
STUDENTS IN ITS
FIRST YEAR.
” —



Casmore Shaw

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

November 19, 2013
Polk State EMS Student Helps Revive Man After Heart Attack

November 20, 2013
*Polk State Theatre Gives Special Performance of **The Fantasticks** for 400 Area Students*

November 22, 2013
Nurses from Puerto Rico Studying in Polk's Robotic Surgery Credential Program



In 2013, members of the College's Career Development Services and Internship Program staff presented a series of workshops to help students prepare for success in the working world. Topics ranged from networking to projecting a professional image, including tips for how to dress for job interviews. Back in 1965, students received advice on their personal appearance through an entry in the Student Handbook that read: "All students are expected to dress neatly and be clean. Women shall wear dresses, suits or skirts, and blouses. Men shall wear suits or slacks, and shirts. All shirts must be tucked in, except waist-length shirts manufactured to be worn out."

COMPETITIVE EDGE

New Internship Program Helps Students Get Ahead in Workforce

Polk State College students are gaining new skills, experiences, and a competitive edge through an Internship Program launched in early 2013.

"Internships are, of course, tremendous learning opportunities for students, thrusting them into the professional world and making their classroom studies take on real-life meaning," said Polk State President Eileen Holden. "For the businesses, too, interns add tons of value, as they contribute to an operation's productivity and help move it forward.

"But for all the benefits to be had through internships, Polk State lacked a coordinated process for connecting students and employers. We listened to our business partners, and of course our students, and created the Internship Program as a way to meet the needs of both sides."

Heading up the Internship Program is Lynn Chisholm, who acts as a liaison between the College's students and area employers, helping to create mutually beneficial internships. Chisholm, a Polk State alumna who previously worked in human resources and workforce development for the City of Lakeland, divides her time between meeting with students to learn about their interests and aspirations, and meeting with area employers to better understand their interests in hiring Polk State interns.

Then, she compares her notes and, acting as a sort-of internship matchmaker, connects the students and businesses she thinks have the most to gain from one another. Students still have to interview or follow whatever hiring protocol the business requires, but Chisholm's pre-screening gives the students a greater chance of landing the internships they desire — and a greater chance that the businesses will be satisfied with the interns they hire from the College.

Jarred Willis



In 2013, the Internship Program helped place just under 50 students in positions at a wide variety of employers, such as Florida's Natural, SUN 'n FUN, United Way, and the YMCA, just to name a few. In another sign of the first-year growth, by the end of 2013, more than 200 students and alumni, and 115 employers, had registered with the Internship Program, expressing their interest in its services.

"We were very pleased with the response from the community to the Internship Program," Chisholm said. "We received so many valuable requests for students to participate in meaningful work, and the feedback received was that the experience was predominately beneficial for both the students and the businesses.

"Many times the internships have led to job opportunities, which shows that our workforce programs are meeting the community's needs and that our students are gaining the right experience to be assets to the Polk County business community."

Among the students to utilize the Internship Program was Jarred Willis, a Haines City resident pursuing his Associate in Arts degree. He used the Internship Program to land a stint with Bond Clinic's Better Bladder Center. In his internship, Willis created an informational video for patients that incorporates animation to explain a medical procedure.

"I think going through the Internship Program helped give me some credibility to the employer," Willis said.

"I'm really grateful for the opportunity I've had at Bond. I've had to learn a lot of new things to complete the project, and it's sharpened my knowledge in a lot of different areas. This

“MANY OF OUR INTERNSHIPS HAVE LED TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES, WHICH SHOWS THAT OUR PROGRAMS ARE MEETING THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS.”

experience is great for my resume, and I know that it's going to help set me apart when it's time to look for a job."

Also using the Polk Internship Program in its first year was Sumer Allen, a Lake Alfred resident who graduated with her Associate in Arts degree in December 2013. She will continue her education at the University of Central Florida to earn a bachelor's degree in Event Management.

The Internship Program helped her get a position at The Lakeland Center, where she learned about event management firsthand, from booking to post-event cleanup.

"I learned that in event management, nothing ever goes as it should. You just have to take it in stride and be quick on

your feet. I also learned the importance of customer service," Allen said.

Allen's supervisor during her internship was Allison Jones, director of event services, who said having a formal process for connecting interns and businesses was a huge step for Polk.

"You get a better pairing," she said. "Knowing that the students have a sincere interest in a certain area is important. Yes, they're green, but they want to get the skills. That means the businesses are going to get something from the students as well as help them get started in their field."

For more information on the Internship Program, visit polk.edu/interns.

“WE LISTENED TO OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS, AND OF COURSE OUR STUDENTS, AND CREATED THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AS A WAY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF BOTH SIDES.”



Sumer Allen

Rita Smith, 1974 Grad, Receives Lifetime Achievement Award



Polk State alumna Rita Smith, a national advocate against domestic violence, received the Association of Florida College's (AFC) 2013 LeRoy Collins Lifetime Achievement Award.

The award is one of the highest bestowed by the AFC. Smith is the first alumna of Polk State to receive the award.

"We at the College are so very proud to call Rita Smith one of our own," said Polk State President Eileen Holden.

"She has dedicated every day of her career to advocating against domestic violence. Her work has led countless women and children out of dangerous, frightening situations to safety and security. She is an inspiration."

Smith, a Winter Haven native, graduated from Polk State College in 1974, and now leads the Denver-based National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV).

"I am honored to do this work every day, because I know when I go home, I've saved lives," Smith said. "This award recognizes me as an individual, but the thing I'm pleased about is that the work is being recognized. Domestic violence work is being seen as valuable and something that should be honored. That's what is important to me.

"It's also very exciting because Polk State is being seen as a place where people who want to change the world can begin that process."

Smith grew up in Winter Haven as the youngest of six children. Her father, Vernon Smith Sr., had an eighth-grade education and worked as a military cook. Later, he owned Sonny's Café, which catered to day laborers, and worked as a cook at Winter Haven Hospital. Her mother, Sarah, operated an in-home daycare for many years.

Soon after graduating from Winter Haven High School in 1972, Smith realized that a college degree was the key to a good-paying job. She enrolled at what was then Polk Community College, located just a few blocks from her home, becoming the first in her family to go to college.

Two years later, she earned her Associate in Arts degree in psychology. Smith described her time at Polk as invaluable.

"Polk State started to expand my view of what was going on in the world and how I could impact it," Smith said. "It started in me a vision for myself and what I could achieve."

Polk's influence on her way of thinking has been helpful throughout her career, Smith said.

"At the national level, in working to stop violence against women, I have to understand how other people perceive problems and solutions," she said. "I began being able to do that while at Polk State."

After Polk, Smith went on to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology from Michigan State University.

Her career path took her to Colorado, where she worked at a residential treatment center for emotionally disturbed children. Though she enjoyed the work, her curiosity was piqued when she noticed a newspaper advertisement for a counseling position.

She had some experience as a counselor, and decided to apply. During the job interview, she learned the position was at a battered women's shelter — and just like that, she became aware of domestic violence, an issue she'd never heard of previously.

Her college courses never addressed domestic violence, so she learned everything on the job. Soon, however, she realized that many of the children she had previously worked with at the residential treatment center were acting out because they had experienced family violence. She also learned that problems arise when people do not feel safe in their homes, and how important it is to make homes safe for children.

The biggest shock, she said, was realizing that domestic violence could happen to anyone.

"It can and does happen to anyone, and to lots more people than most of us realize," she said in a 2011 interview with Polk State, prior to receiving its Distinguished Alumnus Award.

"It was a very newly defined social problem when I began working in the field in 1981. It had not been identified as a crime or social ill until the very late 1970s. Before that, as Gloria Steinem said once, 'for women it was just called life.'"



She briefly returned to Florida to work in the film industry, but still dedicated time to the domestic violence cause, volunteering for Peace River Center in Lakeland and serving on the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence board of directors.

In 1992, she returned to Colorado and was hired as conference coordinator for the NCADV.

A few months later, the executive director was fired. Smith and another staff member remained, and together they rebuilt the organization.

Today, the NCADV is a national nonprofit that works at a grassroots level to end domestic violence. Its national board consists of advocates who work in the field every day, keeping the organization focused on its mission.

In her role as executive director, Smith builds corporate partnerships and secures donations. She is also often called on to speak about domestic violence, having appeared on national news broadcasts and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

Politicians also call upon Smith for her knowledge about domestic violence and passion to end it. She was present in the Oval Office in 2010 when President Barack Obama signed the *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act*. She has also met several times with Vice President Joe Biden and

visited the White House during the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations.

Smith said the greatest accomplishment thus far in her career has been contributing to the *Violence Against Women Act*, originally passed in 1994 and then reauthorized every five years since. The act combined new provisions to hold domestic violence offenders accountable with programs to provide services to victims.

Her work, however, is far from done, Smith said. Society needs to take a harder line on domestic violence on a community level, Smith said, and young people need better education on what defines a healthy relationship.

"I think what will make the biggest difference is having a significant number of men who say, 'This isn't how you treat someone you love; this isn't how a good man acts,'" she said.

Smith said she is also interested in working to help Winter Haven expand its resources for domestic violence victims.

Smith received the award at the AFC's annual convention in Orlando in November 2013.

The AFC is the professional association for Florida's 28 public community and state colleges, their boards of directors, employees, retirees and associates.

“

POLK STATE STARTED TO
EXPAND MY VIEW OF
WHAT WAS GOING ON IN
THE WORLD AND

**HOW I
COULD
IMPACT IT...**

IT STARTED IN ME
A VISION FOR MYSELF
AND WHAT I COULD
ACHIEVE.

”



From left, Association of Florida Colleges Immediate Past-President Byron Todd, Polk State alumna Rita Smith, Polk State President Eileen Holden, and Association of Florida Colleges Executive Director & CEO Michael Brawer at the ceremony where Smith received the 2013 LeRoy Collins Lifetime Achievement Award. Smith graduated from Polk in 1974 and now leads the Denver-based National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

George A. Kalogridis, 1973 Grad, Now Leads Walt Disney World Resort

Polk State College alumnus George A. Kalogridis was named president of Walt Disney World Resort in early 2013, 42 years after he was hired as a busboy during the early days of the Orlando attraction.

His ascent to the highest ranks of the Disney empire has its humble beginnings in Polk County. He is the grandson of a Greek immigrant and the son of Tony Kalogridis, a small-business owner who operated Tony's Pharmacy in Winter Haven for many years.

After he graduated from Winter Haven High School in 1971, Kalogridis enrolled in what was then Polk Junior College. To pay for his higher education, he landed a job bussing tables at Disney's Contemporary Resort, becoming one of the original employees hired for the opening of Walt Disney World Resort that same year.

Toeing the careful balance between work and education paid off for Kalogridis in 1973, when he earned an Associate in Arts degree from Polk. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Central Florida.

In 2010, Polk State College honored him with its Distinguished Alumnus Award.



As the Walt Disney Company grew into a global entertainment behemoth, Kalogridis climbed its corporate ladder. He has served as general manager of the Grand Floridian Beach Resort, vice president of EPCOT, senior vice president of operations at Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, Calif., chief operating officer at Disneyland Resort Paris, and president of the Disneyland Resort.

His dedication to Disney and the experience he has amassed in his 42-year career have all positioned him well for his newest role. According to Walt Disney World: "Throughout his career, Kalogridis has proven himself to be a leader in the travel and leisure industry, as well as a respected partner in the community."

Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Chairman Tom Staggs lauded Kalogridis' "operational expertise, leadership and passion."

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

Polk State College Honors Steve Hogan and Robert R. "Bobby" Green



In May 2013, Polk State presented its Distinguished Alumnus Award to Steve Hogan, a 1989 graduate and chief executive officer of Florida Citrus Sports.

Florida Citrus Sports is a nonprofit event management company that produces the Capital One Bowl, Russell Athletic Bowl, Florida Blue Florida Classic, and other

Central Florida events designed to boost the area's economy and benefit at-risk children and educational initiatives.

Hogan received a bachelor's degree in Advertising and Public Relations from the University of Central Florida in 1991. He worked for McCaw Communications and *The New York Times* before joining Florida Citrus Sports in 1995. He worked his way up to events manager, assistant executive director, and interim executive director, taking over the position of CEO in 2006. Hogan also currently serves as the president of the Football Bowl Association.



In December 2013, Polk State presented its Distinguished Alumnus Award to Robert R. "Bobby" Green, a 1985 graduate and city manager for the City of Auburndale.

Green went on to receive his bachelor's degree in Public Administration from the University of Central Florida in 1987, and his master's degree in Public Administration from the University of South Florida in 1988.

A native of Auburndale, he was elected to the Auburndale City Commission in 1980, when he was just 21. In 1982, he was elected mayor, becoming the youngest elected mayor in Florida's history.

He has been city manager since 1991, ranking him as the county's longest-serving city manager. He leads a staff of 168 employees, reports to five elected officials, and oversees a municipal budget of \$31 million.



Jordan Burks is a music teacher at Auburndale Central Elementary. He earned an Associate in Arts degree from Polk State in 2010 and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in Music Education from Florida Southern College. In addition to teaching, he gives private lessons, and performs with a local band as well as his church worship group.

Renee Heacock is a registered nurse at Lakeland Regional Medical Center. She attended Polk State on a soccer scholarship, graduating with her Associate in Arts degree in 2007 before moving on to Florida Southern College, where she completed her bachelor's degree in Nursing.

Janie Hughes has worked as an oncology infusion nurse at the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa for 10 years. She graduated from Polk State in 1999 with her Associate in Science degree in Nursing, which helped her change the course of her life from migrant worker to registered nurse. She is now back at Polk State, studying in its Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program. She plans to graduate with her BSN in 2016.

Greg Littleton received the Spirit of Leadership Polk award from the Leadership Polk Alumni Association. Littleton is a 1987 graduate and president and chief executive officer of Citizens Bank & Trust. He is also a member of the Polk State District Board of Trustees.

Ali Mann has been named Sportswoman of the Year at St. John Fisher College (Rochester, N.Y.). Mann was the 2013 valedictorian at Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School, graduating with both her diploma and Associate in Arts degree. Mann plays setter for the St. John Fisher volleyball team, and is also studying pharmacy. Sportswoman of the Year is an honor rarely given to a freshman player.

Brenda Patterson is the fine arts and programming librarian for the Lakeland Public Library. She graduated from Polk in 1989 and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in Psychology and master's degree in Library Science from the University of South Florida. Her work includes arranging special events for the library, such as book discussions and author visits.

Shane Reynolds is now rescue chief of the Lakeland Fire Department. He earned his Associate in Science in Fire Science Technology from Polk State in 2003 and his Associate in Science in Emergency Medical Services in 2005. He is now currently studying toward his Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management degree at the College.

Mayra Hidalgo Salazar received a full scholarship to Sarah Lawrence College, one of the nation's top private liberal arts colleges. Hidalgo Salazar came to America as an undocumented immigrant from Costa Rica when she was a young child. After graduating from high school in 2009, her immigration status made pursuing higher education difficult. However, at Polk State she found an affordable, accessible path to her Associate in Arts degree, which she earned in 2011. At Sarah Lawrence, she will study public policy and Spanish language and literature. She is considering eventually attending law school.

Ashley Troutman is a field representative for Woodmen of the World, and provides insurance and investment services to members of the Lakeland community and surrounding areas. He serves on the Lakeland Code Enforcement Board and the Advisory Board for Lighthouse Ministries. He is also a graduate of Leadership Lakeland Class 27 and the 2013 Citizens Academy. Troutman graduated from Polk State in 2001.

“
IF POLK STATE
COLLEGE HADN'T
OPENED
ITS DOORS
TO ME,
I DON'T
THINK I WOULD
HAVE ANY HOPE
OF FINISHING
MY EDUCATION
—MAYRA HIDALGO
SALAZAR
”

Do you have an interesting story to share?

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH POLK

Polk State College loves to share the stories of its alumni and the difference they're making in the world. Send your alumni updates to news@polk.edu.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Polk State's District Board of Trustees



chair **LINDA
PILKINGTON**



vice chair **DAN
DORRELL**



board member **RICARDO
GARCIA**



board member **GREG
LITTLETON**



board member **TERESA
MARTINEZ**



board member **MARK G.
TURNER**

Polk State College, like all of Florida's public colleges, is governed by a local District Board of Trustees that serves without compensation. The trustees are appointed by Florida's governor and are vested with governance of all matters of College policy, programs, building, budget, and personnel.

Polk State's District Board of Trustees elected new leadership in fall 2013, in accordance with state statute. Board members unanimously elected Linda Pilkington as chair and Dan Dorrell as vice chair. Both will serve one-year terms in their elected positions. In December 2013, Gov. Rick Scott reappointed Trustee Mark Turner; his new term ends in May 2017.

Linda Pilkington is director of community and government relations at Heart of Florida Regional Medical Center. She is now retired from the practice of nursing and has extensive experience in healthcare marketing, nursing education and community and government relations, and has held leadership positions in higher education, healthcare, and nursing administration. She holds a bachelor's degree in Nursing from the University of the Philippines and a master's degree in Teaching Nursing in Biophysical Pathology from New York University. She was a governor's appointee to the Central Florida Regional Planning Council; current board member and past chairwoman of Citizen CPR; graduate of the inaugural class of Leadership Polk; board member and finance committee member of Polk Works (which in 2014 becomes CareerSource Polk); chair of the board of the Haines City Northeast Polk County Regional Chamber of Commerce (2013); school advisory committee member of Ridge Career Center; member of the Polk

Academies advisory board; member of the Polk State Corporate College advisory board; and a member of the Legislative and Government Committee of the Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce. She was a past chairwoman of the Polk State College Foundation.

Dan Dorrell is a certified public accountant (CPA) and partner at Cross, Fernandez & Riley, LLP. He was a member of Polk State's first graduating class, and his extensive community involvements include service on the Sebring Utilities Commission, the Sebring Chamber of Commerce, the Highlands County Family YMCA, which he helped to found, and the Florida State University and Polk State College Alumni Associations. He also serves on the board of SunTrust Bank and helped to found the Highlands County Leadership Program. He is a veteran of the Florida National Guard and holds a bachelor's degree in Finance from Florida State University, as well as an Associate in Arts degree from Polk State.

Ricardo Garcia is the owner and operator of Gulf Coast Avionics Corp. of Lakeland; Pacific Coast Avionics of Portland, Ore.; and Central Florida Avionics & Instruments of Leesburg. He serves on the board of directors at the SUN 'n FUN Fly-In and the Consortium Board of the Central Florida Aerospace Academy.

Greg Littleton is president and chief executive officer of Citizens Bank & Trust. He graduated from Polk State College in 1987. He went on to attend Freed-Hardeman University in Tennessee and graduated in 1989 cum laude with a degree in finance. He has been at Citizens Bank & Trust since 1997 and has been president since 2001. He currently serves as immediate past chairman for the Central Florida Development



Council, an executive committee member and past chair for Polk Vision, board member and treasurer for the Polk Museum of Art, and board member and president-elect for the Greater Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce. He has served on the board of directors for the Florida Bankers Association, Florida Bank Pac, and the Lake Wales Arts Council. He has also served as past president for the Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce, East Polk Committee of 100, and was a member of the Florida Statewide Passenger Rail Commission. In 2012, he received the College's Distinguished Alumnus Award. He and his wife, Julie, and their two daughters, Currie Ann and Anna Beth, live in Winter Haven.

Teresa Martinez is the founder and president of the Institute of Spanish Communication Inc., and a Polk State College alumna. Aside from working in language instruction, translation, and interpretation, she has also produced and hosted Spanish programming for radio and television. She is the author of the bilingual book *Success in Exile — Five Decades of Cuban Stories*. A native of Cuba, her family fled the country for Polk County when she was 15. After graduating from Polk State in 1975, she attended the University of Central Florida, graduating with a bachelor's degree in Spanish. She spent 11 years teaching Spanish at Lakeland High School. She is the chairwoman of the Hispanic Club of Lakeland, which is in charge of the Annual Polk Hispanic Festival. She has served on the boards of directors

of the Lakeland Area Chamber of Commerce, Central Florida Speech and Hearing Center, and the Imperial Symphony Orchestra. The Lakeland Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners gave her its Women of Distinction Award, and the Central Florida Development Council selected her as the International Individual of the Year in 1997. She received the Governor's Point of Light Award, and in 2006 the Polk County Board of County Commissioners proclaimed Teresa Martinez Day in recognition of her contributions during the 2004 hurricane season. In 2013, she received the Entrepreneurship Golden Garland Award from the Ledger Media Group.

Mark G. Turner is an attorney practicing in the areas of real estate, estate planning, probate and guardianship, business law, and civil litigation. He is a native of Winter Haven and a current board member and past president of the Polk State College Foundation. He is also past president of the Greater Winter Haven Area Chamber of Commerce. He has served in leadership roles for the American Red Cross, Community Foundation of Greater Winter Haven, Girls, Inc., Habitat for Humanity, and Main Street Winter Haven. He is a graduate of Leadership Winter Haven and Leadership Polk, and was a Florida Blue Key Leadership Honorary member at the University of Florida. He has a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Florida and his Juris Doctor degree from Stetson University College of Law.

THE COLLEGE HAS GIVEN STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACCESS AFFORDABLE, HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION FOR 50 YEARS, AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO FOR DECADES TO COME. PLUS, IT HAS A HUGE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY BECAUSE OF ITS WORKFORCE-TARGETED DEGREE OFFERINGS, WHICH PREPARE STUDENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND INCREASED EARNINGS. THE COLLEGE HAS DONE SO MUCH TO IMPROVE PEOPLE'S LIVES IN SO MANY DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY. I AM HONORED TO SERVE THE COLLEGE IN ANY WAY I CAN.

—LINDA PILKINGTON, CHAIR

“
I WAS AT POLK
AS A STUDENT IN
THE FIRST YEAR
OF ITS EXISTENCE.

NOW, 50 YEARS LATER,
I'M VICE CHAIR OF ITS
DISTRICT BOARD OF
TRUSTEES. IT'S A LITTLE
OVERWHELMING. I
DON'T THINK THAT
HAPPENS VERY OFTEN.

IT'S VERY UNIQUE
AND I STILL
HAVEN'T GOTTEN
OVER IT.

— DAN DORRELL,
VICE CHAIR

Polk Names Six Endowed Teaching Chairs in 2013



11 years
at Polk
**DAVID
ALEXANDER**



24 years
at Polk
**KAYE
BETZ**



14 years
at Polk
**GREGORY
HARRIS**



4 years
at Polk
**MAVRA
KEAR**



5 years
at Polk
**LOGAN
RANDOLPH**



22 years
at Polk
**LAUREL
SMITH**

Six professors were recognized in 2013 as Endowed Teaching Chairs. Established in 1996, these awards have been granted to deserving and talented professors 69 times, representing more than \$385,000 in funding. Each winner is granted \$5,000, which can be used for a variety of learning environment improvements, such as continuing education, professional education opportunities, the purchase of state-of-the-art technology and equipment, attendance at educational conferences and seminars, and enrichment trips that strengthen the professor's teaching ability.

David Alexander is the recipient of the MIDFLORIDA Credit Union Endowed Teaching Chair and is a professor of Humanities/Ethics and World Religion. This is the second Endowed Teaching Chair he has earned during his 11 years at Polk. The creator of a diverse range of classes and the Interfaith project, he has served as the department coordinator at Polk State Lakeland and on the Multicultural Committee. He focuses strongly on leadership development and mentoring. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in History in 1978, his master's in Philosophy in 1987, and a second master's in History from the University of Florida in 1992, where he also taught. He graduated with a Ph.D. in 1994, and graduated with his second doctorate in 2002.

Kaye Betz is the recipient of the Attorney Endowed Teaching Chair. She joined Polk in 1986 as an adjunct mathematics instructor and computer specialist, and has been a full-time mathematics faculty member for 24 years. She has served on numerous committees, and is currently department coordinator of the Mathematics Department and Faculty Senate vice president at Polk State Lakeland. She assisted in the development of the College's Quality Enhancement Plan and

has taken a leadership role in its implementation. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from the University of Florida and a Master of Education degree in Mathematics Education from Georgia State University. She plans to use the Endowed Teaching Award to further her knowledge of the history of mathematics to enhance the Explorations in Mathematics course she teaches.

Gregory Harris is the recipient of the Theatre Seats Endowed Teaching Chair. He joined Polk in 1999 and is a Psychology professor and the department coordinator and assessment coordinator for the Social Sciences Department. This is his second Endowed Teaching Chair. He has served in leadership roles on the Faculty Senate and on many other committees. He is president of the Alumni Association Board and a board member of the Polk State College Foundation. He holds an associate's degree from Polk, a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Central Florida, and a master's degree in Psychology and Counseling from Troy State University. He is using his award funds to complete his doctoral degree in Higher Education Leadership at Grand Canyon University, to enhance technological pedagogy in his classroom, and to assist students in experiential learning.

Mavra Kear is the recipient of the Lakeland Regional Medical Center/ Winter Haven Hospital Endowed Teaching Chair. She joined the College's Nursing faculty in 2009. She led the design and implementation of Polk's Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, which earned national accreditation in 2012. She serves as faculty liaison to Lakeland Regional Medical Center. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees in Nursing from the University of Florida and a doctorate in Nursing from the University of South Florida. She has used the award money to purchase



a laptop computer to develop interactive video lectures for online courses, and to attend a clinical conference on the newest evidence-based care guidelines.

Logan Randolph is the recipient of the Banking Endowed Teaching Chair. He has been a full-time biology professor at Polk since 2008. He serves as the Winter Haven Science Department Coordinator, teaches in the Honors Program, and participates in service-learning initiatives. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Botany, a Master of Science in Mycology and Botany, and a doctorate in Botany and Anthropology, all from Miami University. He has used the award money to help facilitate the first year of Polk State's Bahamas-based field science courses, to enhance greenhouse collections, and to expand the assortment of living material in the College's laboratory, especially colonies of living species in naturalistic habitats so that students can observe their behavior and their development.

Laurel Smith is the recipient of the Thelma Raley Endowed Teaching Chair. She joined Polk in 1991 and is a Wellness professor, Wellness department coordinator, and the employee wellness coordinator. A leader in the Florida College System Activities Association, she was named to its Hall of Fame and its Softball Hall of Fame and also has a leadership role in the National Junior College Athletic Association. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education from the State University of New York College at Cortland, and a Master of Science in Physical Education from Emporia State University in Kansas. She is using her award funds to undergo and videotape cardiovascular tests that she will use in class discussions. She will also attend the Cooper Institute of Aerobic Research, the American College of Sports Medicine's Annual Meeting, and the 5th World Congress on Exercise in Medicine.

INTERNATIONAL STUDY

continued from page 17

Strasbourg, France

In late 2013, students who participated in the College's second Scholarobotics Academy traveled to Strasbourg, France, to present their research at the 3rd Annual RAMSES (Robotic Assisted Microsurgical & Endoscopic Society) Symposium, an event attended by physicians from around the world.

Scholarobotics is a summer program for high school students offered in partnership with Winter Haven Hospital. Students study anatomy, physiology, and medical terminology, and get an introduction to robotic surgery.

This year, the 16 students in the program worked in groups completing research projects aimed at advancing the field of robotic microsurgery. This included building a robotic surgical assistant to transfer sutures and an ultrasound probe out of the surgical field, and building a robotic arm to irrigate the surgical area as needed for the physician's visibility.

In November, the students traveled to Strasbourg to present their projects.

Like their fellow international travelers, the Scholarobotics students say they'll never be quite the same after their experience abroad.

"My eyes have definitely been opened to different cultures

and different ideas," said Charde Blocker, a senior at Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School. "The thing that impressed me the most is how much history there was in Strasbourg; much more than I'm used to seeing every day in Winter Haven."

Natalie Weekfall said the experience reaffirmed her plans to become a medical doctor.

"Being able to see what I want to do with my career right in front of me, and to hear from various doctors from various fields as they presented their experiments, it really inspired me to continue on this path," said Weekfall, also a senior at Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate, adding that she plans to possibly specialize in robotic surgery.

The College's truly international year also included a study-abroad trip to Germany, Italy, and Switzerland; a busy International Education Week late in the year, complete with a guest lecture by a Stonehenge researcher based at the University of Buckingham; and a group of nurses from Puerto Rico who came to Winter Haven to study in the College's Robotic Surgery Credential.

In 2014, the College will continue to increase its international offerings to include programs in Marseille, Barcelona, Germany, Ireland, the Bahamas, Eastern Europe, Peru, Rome, Paris, and Amsterdam.

“

BEING ABLE TO SEE
WHAT I WANT TO DO
WITH MY CAREER
RIGHT IN FRONT OF
ME, AND TO HEAR
FROM VARIOUS
DOCTORS FROM
VARIOUS FIELDS AS
THEY PRESENTED
THEIR EXPERIMENTS,
IT REALLY
**INSPIRED
ME TO
CONTINUE
ON THIS
PATH.**

”

2013 Full of Diversity in Ways Big and Small

At Polk State College, our commitment to diversity is evident every single day, in ways big and small — and 2013 was no exception.

In October, during our annual Hispanic Heritage Month celebration, we hosted our first-ever Hispanic Melting Pot, an interactive webcast.

Polk State alumna and current District Board of Trustees member Teresa Martinez moderated this event at the Lakeland campus. Serving as panelists were Rosalinda Collins, professor of French and Spanish; Saul Reyes, dean of student services at Polk State Winter Haven; Sheila Rios, professor of business administration and computer information technology; Carolina Rodriguez, academic adviser; and Martha Santiago, dean of academic affairs at Polk State Winter Haven.

During the Hispanic Melting Pot, participants both in person and online submitted a wide range of questions, such as “What is the difference between ‘Hispanic’ and ‘Latino?’” and “What are the differences between the various Spanish-speaking countries?”

With all of our monthly cultural celebrations, Polk State strives to include strong educational components, and the Hispanic Melting Pot proved to be a prime example of those efforts.

You could hear from their reactions — “Wow, I never knew that” was a common utterance — that participants truly did have their eyes opened to the Hispanic culture.

The webcast of this event is still available at hispanicmeltingpot.weebly.com.

During November’s Disability Awareness Month, the College again hosted the Tampa Bay Strong Dogs, a semi-professional wheelchair basketball team.

As the Strong Dogs zipped down the court of the Polk State Winter Haven Health Center, you could see a new awareness set in among attendees: The Strong Dogs may be confined to wheelchairs, but they’re not letting anything stand in their way.

Also in 2013, Polk State convened its seventh class of its ELITE Educational Leadership Enhancement Program. ELITE — Exceptional Leaders with Innovative Talents and Excellence — combines mentoring and professional development to help mid-level minority and female employees advance professionally.

ELITE VII is the largest class we’ve had yet; fittingly enough, it is comprised of seven members who represent both the Lakeland and Winter Haven campuses, and departments from Nursing to Student Financial Services to Communications.

Since ELITE began, 34 employees have participated. Of those, 15 have been promoted and 18 have developed projects that have been implemented at the College.

Also in November, the College hosted its first-ever Veterans Day events on both the Lakeland and Winter Haven campuses. Student-veterans were honored for their service and given the opportunity to network with one another, a variety of vendors, and College departments. It was the College’s way of saying to this very special group of students: We recognize your sacrifices and your challenges, and we’re here to help you reach your educational goals.

These are the “diversity headlines” for 2013, but as I mentioned earlier, diversity is also evident every day in smaller ways. One that never fails to impress me is when I see students take their counterparts “under their wing.” I regularly witness students give one another advice on how to dress appropriately for class, interview for a job, or follow good study habits.

To me, this speaks volumes about the diversity at Polk State. Race, religion, socioeconomic background, none of that matters in these moments; it’s about students helping students be the best they can be.

As we in the Office of Equity and Diversity like to say, “Diversity is the Uniqueness in You,” and at Polk State, diversity is the uniqueness in all of us.



Valparisa Baker
Director of Equity and Diversity



Generosity of Business Community Defined 2013 at Corporate College

Rob Clancey



For Polk State's Corporate College, 2013 was the year of giving.

As plans came together for the 47,000-square-foot Polk State Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center (ATC), the Corporate College and the Polk State College Foundation reached out to the area business community for its support.

Clear Springs, a land company headed by chairman Stan Phelps, had donated \$12 million and 20 acres of land toward the project in 2008. Clear Springs' transformational gift was followed by the Polk County Board of County Commissioner's investment of \$2.5 million to underwrite the infrastructure of the building.

With the Clear Springs and county gifts, the building was a certainty — but just what it would contain was still uncertain.

Polk State Corporate College Director Rob Clancey envisioned a state-of-the-art learning center, where students would have access to real-world equipment and distance-learners would feel as if they were right there in the classroom.

To make that happen, the College knew, it would need even more support. As 2013 progressed, and the ATC's grand opening in January 2014 approached, the community and other stakeholders answered the College's call.

"It was amazing, and so inspiring, for us to receive the response we did," Clancey said. "Polk State didn't build this building and outfit it with so much state-of-the-art technology, the people of Polk County did."

The College received \$2 million in in-kind donations, including a \$1-million process training unit (PTU) from Rockwell Automation, a leader in industrial automation, Endress +

Hauser, a supplier of measurement and automation equipment, TriNova, a provider of measurement and process services; and AMJ, the Florida division of TriNova.

From the Refrigerating Engineers & Technicians Association, the college received ammonia cooling equipment, which like the PTU will allow for applied, hands-on learning.

In addition to the \$2 million in in-kind donations, the College received nearly \$250,000 in support from area employers and individuals. Practically every room of the building bears the name of a local firm that gave to the cause. A prime example is the Mosaic Auditorium, so named after The Mosaic Company gave \$75,000 to the Polk State College Foundation.

“WHAT 2013 PROVED IS THAT THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY OF POLK COUNTY SUPPORTS THIS COLLEGE AND THE STUDENTS IT IS TRAINING FOR THE LOCAL WORKFORCE. WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO ALL OUR PARTNERS.”

The list of other supporters reads like a who's-who of Polk County's business community.

"What 2013 proved is that the business community of Polk County supports this College and the students it is training for the local workforce. We are so grateful to all our partners," Clancey said.

The ATC is located at 310 Technology Drive in Bartow. In addition to the Polk State Corporate College, which provides a wide range of workforce training programs, it houses high-tech degree programs. The building will serve more than 7,000 students annually.

Frederick T. Lenfestey



Frederick T. Lenfestey, Polk State College's founding president, who oversaw two decades of remarkable growth, and who even at the height of the country's civil rights struggles insisted the College be "color blind," died Oct. 16, 2013. He was 92.

"President Lenfestey's leadership during his 18-year presidency, and his support after he retired, helped shape this institution into what it is today. He led with integrity and a strong commitment to academic excellence and student success. He meant so much to this place and to the tens of thousands of students it has served — even if he never met them personally, his impact certainly touched their lives," said Polk State President Eileen Holden.

Lenfestey was born in Tampa in 1920, and earned his first college degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Tampa. An Army veteran who served in the Battle of the Bulge and during the Korean War, he went on to earn master's and doctoral degrees in Education from the University of Florida.

His career in higher education initially took him across state lines, when he accepted a position as an associate professor in Georgia. However, it was in Florida that he emerged as a leader in higher education, serving as vice president of what was then Pensacola Junior College.

In 1964, he began his tenure as the first president of what was then Polk Junior College, having beaten out 40 other applicants from around the country for the job.

He took on the assignment with a simple, direct goal, as he recalled in a 1974 interview at the College:

"(School board members) asked when they employed me, 'What is your ambition? What do you hope to do ultimately?' And I am not sure whether I gave them the right answer ... but I said, 'I know that you want me to say that my ambition is to become president of Harvard.' But I said, 'Right now, my ambition is to start up a fine institution in Polk County and beyond that, I have no ambition right now.'"

With that in mind, Lenfestey got straight to work, turning the grounds of the Bartow Air Base into the county's first source of public higher education. He and his faculty and staff had just eight months between his hiring and the first day of classes.

PRESIDENT LENFESTEY LED WITH INTEGRITY
AND A STRONG COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC
EXCELLENCE AND STUDENT SUCCESS.

Holden said she has often thought back to the challenges her predecessor faced in building the College from nothing, and she never fails to be amazed by what has grown from those humble beginnings.

"What most impressed me about President Lenfestey, from the first moment I had the opportunity to meet him, was his abiding passion for public higher education and his unshakable conviction that access to an affordable college degree would be a game-changer for the people and communities of Polk County. I have also been profoundly impacted by the legacy of his courage. It's hard for most of us to fully grasp the vision that was involved in 'starting up a college from scratch' at a time in which higher education was thought by many to be a luxury item," she said.

The key to getting the College off the ground, Lenfestey said years after it opened, was pure hard work:

"Because we had this kind of 'gung-ho' attitude, we managed to do things in short order that just never would have been done had it been



done in a university framework of, 'Let's all get together and discuss it and have a scholarly philosophy before we really get at it,'" Lenfestey recalled in the same 1974 interview.

The efforts all paid off in September 1964, when Polk welcomed 1,107 students, nearly twice the number expected.

"It was kind of like opening a store and selling out on the first day," Lenfestey said in 1974.

From the start, Lenfestey insisted that Polk's open-access policy be taken in the most literal of terms — it would never deny education to anyone who sought it. Even as the country was embroiled in the civil rights movement, Polk became the first public institution in the county to be integrated.

"He and his colleagues here at the College understood that higher education wasn't a luxury — it was a necessity for our region," Holden said. "He was a pioneering advocate for the values of integrity and diversity we talk about today. He believed in 'access for all' at a time when that belief itself involved courage. Because of him and people like him, the College is a better place — and so are the communities we serve."

Polk opened and proceeded "on the basis of telling anybody that came out to enroll, if they met our minimum enrollment requirements, why then they can come in. We didn't stipulate any color of the skin," Lenfestey said in a 1975 interview.

In a 1989 interview, he recalled his directive to the College's first faculty members: "You are color blind."

That early dedication to integration is perhaps best typified by a story Robert Henne recounted after Lenfestey's death. Henne was one of the first faculty members hired at the College, and also its first athletic director.

Soon after the College was founded, it was invited to participate in a basketball tournament in Orlando, Henne said. However, none of the other teams were integrated.

Henne took the situation to Lenfestey, who insisted that if all Polk's players — even the one African-American — couldn't play, none of them would.

Organizers of the tournament, Henne said, reluctantly agreed to allow Polk to participate.

"To me that meant he was a good person, a good Christian, and he believed what he was doing was right," Henne said.

"He was trying to accommodate the entire community, and there were many African-Americans who needed the ability to go to a junior college. They couldn't afford a university. Polk was there for them."

Henne also recalled that Lenfestey once commented that integration within the athletic teams was more important than winning seasons.

Lenfestey's presidency was also marked by rapid growth. During his 18-year tenure, according to *The Ledger*, enrollment grew to nearly 6,000 students. The College also moved from its Air Base beginnings to a permanent campus in Winter Haven, and by the time Lenfestey retired, it was also holding classes in Lakeland. Planning for the Lakeland campus — now the College's largest — was also under way.

Lenfestey also oversaw the incorporation of the Polk State College Foundation in 1976.

Even as the College grew and served an ever-increasing enrollment, its first students cherished their interactions with Lenfestey, who always had time to stop, talk, and listen to them.

"I was a member of the Student Government Association (SGA)," said Dan Dorrell, a member of Polk's first graduating class who is now vice chair of the District Board of Trustees. "I remember one night, he invited all the SGA officers over to his house for dinner. That was not something college presidents were known for typically doing.

"The impact he had on this community is as large as anybody has ever had, when you think of the thousands and thousands of students who have gone through Polk State."

Lenfestey retired from the College in 1982, saying at the time: "The College is in good financial shape, we have a good faculty, and good administration. The only thing that is happening is that I'm getting older."

Even after his retirement, he continued to support and advocate for the College, and his name — which students and employees see every day on the exterior of the Winter Haven Fred T. Lenfestey Student Center — will always be inextricably linked to Polk State and its impact in the community.

Frederick T. Lenfestey early in his tenure as president.

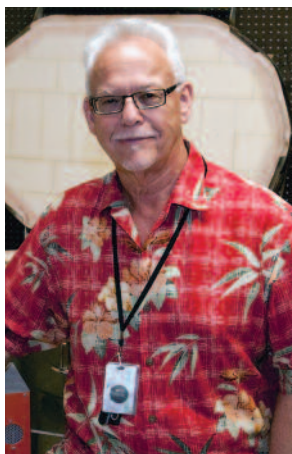
“ ”

THE IMPACT HE HAD ON
THIS COMMUNITY IS

AS LARGE
AS ANYBODY
HAS EVER
HAD,

WHEN YOU THINK OF
THE THOUSANDS AND
THOUSANDS OF
STUDENTS WHO HAVE
GONE THROUGH
POLK STATE.





Polk Celebrates Career, Life of Gary Baker

In December 2013, Polk State Art Professor Gary Baker retired after 37 years of service to the College. Sadly, just weeks after his retirement, Baker passed away at the age of 66. During his decades-long career, he inspired and encouraged countless students, sharing with them his love for the arts and his belief that everyone is an artist in their own way. Professor Baker's legacy is tireless dedication to the College, its mission and its students — a legacy that will not soon be forgotten by his students or colleagues.



Our Year in Sports | 2013 Report to Community



NATIONAL ATTENTION

Volleyball Posts 23-17 Record During Tough 2013 Schedule

The Polk State College women's volleyball team wanted national recognition in 2013 — and that's exactly what it got.

The Eagles not only earned a national ranking, they were also ranked in Florida, took second place in the Suncoast Conference, and posted a 23-17 record during a highly competitive schedule.

"I think other teams around the country and the state are starting to notice us," said second-year head coach German Del Valle.

Del Valle set out to put Polk in the national spotlight in 2013 by assembling a particularly challenging schedule.

At the start of the season, he booked the Eagles to play in Iowa's Reiver Classic. The event not only featured three nationally ranked teams, it was also the first time in program history that the Eagles played out of state.

In Iowa, Polk opened the season with a victory and came within match point of upsetting No. 16 Western Wyoming.

Riding that momentum, the Eagles put their biggest victory in the record books when they downed No. 6-ranked Salt Lake Community College, which eventually played its way into the National Junior College Athletic Association's (NJCAA) national semifinals.

"It was awesome," Del Valle said of the upset. "It definitely set a tone for the season and gave us an early shot of confidence."

The showing in Iowa resulted in the Eagles being ranked No. 15 in the NJCAA national poll in early September.

The Eagles backed their early-season success up by playing well in one of the toughest states in the country; Suncoast Conference opponents College of Central Florida, Hillsborough, Florida State College at Jacksonville, Miami Dade, and State College of Florida were all either nationally ranked or received national votes.

Polk State was one of the few to challenge the aforementioned state powerhouses.

As the regular season played out, the Eagles upset State College of Florida with a 3-0 victory in its own tournament. Polk was also the only team to go undefeated in the event.

Polk also held its own in the Suncoast Conference, taking second place behind national semifinalist Hillsborough.

The Eagles showed consistency as they attended the NJCAA Region 8 tournament for the third year in a row, taking fifth for the second year in a row, just two victories from attending the national tournament.

To further solidify their rise, the Eagles closed out the season ranked No. 17 in the NJCAA and fourth in the state.

"We met our goals and created a national and statewide reputation as a solid program," said Del Valle. "We're setting even higher goals for 2014."



"...OTHER TEAMS AROUND THE COUNTRY AND THE STATE ARE STARTING TO NOTICE US."



IN 2013 THE EAGLES POSTED A 34-16 OVERALL RECORD



UPS AND DOWNS

Baseball Struggles with Thin Roster in 2013, But Posts Numerous Highlights

In 2013, the Polk State College baseball program was once again right in the thick of the Suncoast Conference race.

The Eagles posted a 34-16 overall record and placed third in the Suncoast Conference, finishing just one game out of second place, and barely missing a third consecutive trip to the state tournament.

The team concluded the season ranked eighth in the state.

Finding consistency was a hurdle for the 2013 squad and its third-year head coach Al Corbeil.

Before the season even began, losses of a non-statistical nature hindered the Eagles.

Corbeil and his staff lost three promising scholarship players, including a returning starter from the 2012 state championship team, for various reasons.

"It was hard to make that up," said Corbeil. "It was an up-and-down year."

The Eagles opened the 2013 campaign ranked No. 1 in the state and No. 3 in the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA).

The 2013 rankings were validated as the Eagles suffered just two non-conference losses heading into Suncoast Conference play.

Early in the season, the Eagles posted win streaks of seven and 11 games, however the lack of depth on their roster couldn't be masked as the season progressed.

Corbeil altered his lineup often, trying to find a successful mix, but positive results were difficult to achieve.

"We were really thin," said Corbeil. "That's just the nature of junior college baseball. It happens to every club, every year."

The season was highlighted by several individual accomplishments and honors.

Catcher Erik Hindmon (Ocala) was named the state's Defensive Player of the Year.



In 1964, the first season of play for Polk's baseball program, the team's schedule included just eight games. Today, the Eagles play more than 40 games in a season. They're also a force on the state stage, having won three Suncoast Conference Championships and two state titles. In 2012, the team also made its first-ever trip to the NJCAA JUCO World Series.

Closer Trey Norris (Frostproof) set the school record for saves with 14. The pitcher was named Fireman of the Year for both the Suncoast Conference and Florida College System Activities Association (FCSAA).

Pitcher Matt Pearce (Estero) closed out the season with a 6-1 record, a 17-inning scoreless streak, two complete games, and two games in which he struck out 10 batters. He was named FCSAA Pitcher of the Week to end the season.

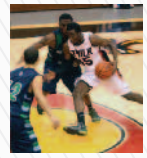
Outfielder Daniel Sweet (Mississippi) logged an ever-so-elusive cycle — posting a single, double, triple and home run in one game.

Additionally, five Eagles signed scholarships to four-year universities.

The 2013 season was one of discovery for Corbeil as he stretched his coaching skills to find victories.

"You can't take anything for granted," he said.





EVER THE COMPETITORS

Basketball Again Earns Suncoast Conference Title

Polk State's 2012-13 men's basketball team displayed the same competitiveness that has become typical under 13-year head coach Matt Furjanic.

With two returning starters from the 2011-12 team, the Eagles captured the Suncoast Conference regular-season title for the second time in three years, and the third time in six years.

They also achieved a No. 6 ranking in the state and overcame a season that saw injuries to three starters.

With just two returning starters — center Ismaila Dauda (Kano, Nigeria) and point guard Ralph Simmons (Charleston, S.C.) — the Eagles were challenged to find a productive starting lineup from its freshman class.

But the freshmen proved ready to perform.

Furjanic found a three-guard offense with its workhorses in Simmons, Brock Van Lier (Beaver Falls, Pa.) and Nafis Walker (Philadelphia).

With the strength of that three-guard offense as the centerpiece of the team, the Eagles clinched the Suncoast Conference.

"I was very proud of the way the kids played. They played with so much intensity," Furjanic said.

Riding the momentum of their victory over St. Petersburg to claim the Suncoast title, the Eagles headed into the state tournament for the third year in a row.

The sixth-ranked Eagles met traditionally strong Chipola College, which was ranked third in the country. Polk fell 70-47.

Despite the final score, the game was not without its high points, especially Dauda's posting of a double-double with 12 points and 11 rebounds.

Dauda was also named to the Florida College System Activities Association's (FCSAA) All Tournament team.

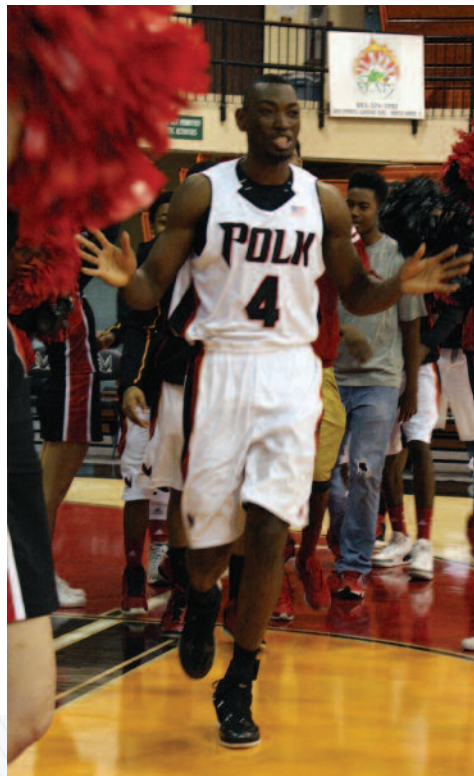


In 1964, Polk State's basketball team began its first season with a 2-7 record. Today, the Eagles have 12 Suncoast Conference Championships, including six earned under head coach Matt Furjanic, who is a member of three Halls of Fame.

The Eagles concluded the season with a 22-9 record.

"The freshmen will use this as a learning experience," Furjanic said. "Our goal was to win the league, and winning the Suncoast Conference Championship was something they can be proud of. Next year we will get bigger and stronger. I told them to remember this feeling so we can come back and have a different outcome."

Also during the season, Furjanic was named Suncoast Conference Coach of the Year for the sixth time in his 13-year career at Polk. He was also recognized by his hometown with his third Hall of Fame induction, this time into the Pittsburgh Basketball Club Hall of Fame.





RAISED EXPECTATIONS

Cheerleading Has Higher Standards, Is Reaching New Heights

The Polk State College cheerleading squad reached new heights during the 2013 season.

Competing for just the second time on the national stage, the Eagles finished in seventh place at the Cheersport College Nationals, improving from ninth the year before.

Thousands of college teams from all over the country descend upon Atlanta each year to compete at Cheersport.

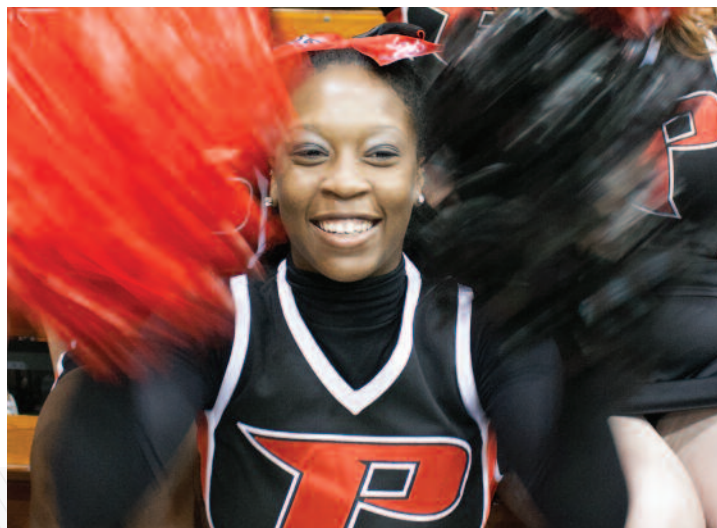
Polk's cheerleaders also captured the college division at the Florida State Fair in an event hosted by the National Cheerleaders Association.

Fourth-year coach Brittany Carson has become a progressive coach in a sport in transition — no longer is cheerleading about splits and three-tiered towers; it's heavy on strength, choreography, and intricate tumbling passes.

With more and more youth clubs popping up across the country, the quantity and quality of cheerleaders wanting to compete at the college level has improved significantly. Polk has reaped the benefits, Carson said.

"We now have the ability to do more stunt groups and the ability to do better pyramids," she said.

"The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) is making more rules involving safety and spotters, so you need a free person to spot. More is better, and the higher quality the cheerleaders, the better."



Carson has gone from simply looking for anyone to cheer to requiring participants to be able to perform specific tumbling skills.

"Seventy-five percent achieved that goal," she said of her 2013 cheerleaders.

She is also happy to welcome males, who provide strength as pyramid bases.

Last year the Eagles raised their standing in the junior college and college cheerleading arena, even though they had just one male squad member — Dervin Green.

Having Green on the squad meant that the Eagles could compete in the co-ed division at competitions.



In 1964, when Polk State was just getting started at the Bartow Air Base, the basketball team practiced in a facility with a wooden roof. Unfortunately, excessive rains led to the collapse of that roof, and the team was forced to play and practice wherever it could find space. Today, the College's basketball, cheerleading, and volleyball teams compete in the recently re-branded and updated Winter Haven Health Center, which features a four-sided electronic scoreboard, and floor to rival that of any professional team.

While other teams possessed as many as five males, and therefore were able to do more stunts, the Eagles held their own in competitions.

At the Florida State Fair, they claimed the college division, despite the second-place team's presumed advantage of having several male participants.

"We did really well," Carson said. "It was probably our best performance the entire season."

At Cheersport, the Eagles were briefly in fourth place, but a fall and minor mistakes on the second day landed the team in seventh — lower than where the team wanted to end, but still a remarkable finish.

"We finished seventh," she said. "It was only our second time to nationals. Out of all the teams, we were the newest program there. We raised the level and we're going to raise it again."



“
I GIVE THEM THE TOOLS. I'M THERE TO GUIDE AND MENTOR THEM.
THEY TRUSTED ME AND SAW WE COULD BE DANGEROUS.
”



POSITIVE CHANGES

Soccer Welcomes New Coach, Posts Winning Season

The 2013 season was one of positive change for Polk State College's women's soccer program.

The Eagles welcomed new full-time head coach Steve Linamen, an Auburndale native who brings a resume full of coaching experience and credentials, plus a professional vision for the program.

Linamen — just the second coach in the program's 11-year history — was hired just before the start of the season. Among his first moves was to hand out an exhaustive player's handbook, establish goals for the players, implement rigid training expectations, hold weekly evaluation meetings, and form a player's leadership council.



In 2003, Polk became the first junior college in Florida to offer women's soccer as an NJCAA sport. Since then, Broward College and Eastern Florida State College have added the sport, thus creating Region 8. The Eagles are seven-time Region 8 champions.

The Eagles were receptive and started the season with new energy.

"I saw a shift right from the beginning," said Linamen. "I give them the tools. I'm there to guide and mentor them. They trusted me and saw we could be dangerous."

The Eagles proved they were a threat as they began a climb back into Region 8 and national contention.

On the field, the Eagles, despite many injuries over their 2013 campaign, recorded their ninth winning season (7-5). The success was due to a strong defensive unit, and despite having just one goalkeeper.

The Eagles finished second in Region 8, behind national contender Eastern Florida State College, and went 3-0 against Region 8 opponent Broward.

The Polk State Eagles served notice that they are on their way back into the national picture by receiving votes in the National Junior College Athletic Association's polls.

Plus, goalkeeper Kayla Hanel, who signed with Webber International University, was recognized for her saves in goal and for reaching second on the National Junior College Athletic Association's ranking.

Hanel was one of the many players who enjoyed Linamen's approach to college coaching.

"I wish I could stay," said Hanel. "Coach Steve's approach to the game, the way he treated us and the extra time he and (Assistant Coach) Anthony Sandoval spent with me was just what I was looking for. They really care about the girls and the program."

In addition to Hanel, three other Eagles also signed scholarships to four-year universities.





Hall of Famer Laurel Smith was named the College's first fast-pitch softball coach in 1995. At that time, Polk games were played at what was then the Fairfax Complex, designed for slow-pitch softball. At Fairfax, Smith recalled, players competed downwind from the grill — the smell of hotdogs was always heavy on the field. Today, the

Eagles play at the five-field DiamondPlex, located on the same grounds as the former Fairfax fields, adjacent to the Winter Haven campus. One of the fields is dedicated to the College's team. The complex also includes a locker room, offices, restrooms, and concession stand — complete with an indoor grill.

CONTINUED RISE

Softball Again Earns Place in State Tournament

The Polk State College softball team closed out the 2013 season with another impressive campaign, further solidifying the Eagles as one of the top programs in the state.

The Eagles reached the FCSAA/NJCAA (Florida College System Activities Association/National Junior College Athletic Association) Gulf District Championship title game in Pensacola for the second time in three years.

Polk earned the berth to the annual state tournament by winning a share of the Suncoast Conference Championship title for the third time in the last five years.

Along the way, the Eagles set several individual records, earning Suncoast Conference and All State, as well as national awards.

"Talent-wise we are on par with anyone in the state," said head coach Jeff Ellis.

The Eagles, ranked ninth in the state, opened their state title run with a 6-1 victory over sixth-ranked Northwest Florida.

The contest featured home runs by Jen Hamil (Texas) and Stephanie Koutsoumbaris (Palm Harbor).

Polk next defeated Suncoast Conference opponent South Florida State College 5-1. Eagle Maggie Roberts (Lakeland/Lake Gibson) drilled a two-run home run in the contest.

The Eagles suffered their first loss of the tournament to fourth-ranked Chipola 11-0, but rebounded with a 6-0 victory over Hillsborough Community College.

The win sent the Eagles to the Gulf District championship game, where they would again meet Chipola.

Polk made a better showing the second time against the speedy Indians, but still fell to Chipola 7-1.

"Even though Chipola beat us, we didn't play scared," Ellis said. "We played them tooth-and-nail and that bodes well for next year."

Polk closed out the season with a 42-20 record, while the Indians claimed the state title.

Polk's deep run into the playoffs caused the College's trophy case to swell.

Koutsoumbaris, Roberts, and Rose Stevens (Bartow/Mulberry) were named to the FCSAA All-Tournament team, which is comprised of all teams in the state tournament, for their play in Pensacola.

Koutsoumbaris, Roberts, and Stevens, along with Taylor Bowen (Gainesville), were selected to the Gulf District All-Tournament Team.

Koutsoumbaris, Roberts and Stevens also gained national attention. Roberts and Stevens were named NJCAA Softball All-Americans and National Fastpitch Coaches Association All-South Region First Team members. Koutsoumbaris was named to the second team.

The Eagles were also recognized for their play in the Suncoast Conference. Polk placed the most players on the All-Suncoast Conference First Team with six selections including Bowen, Koutsoumbaris, Roberts, Stevens, as well as Haleigh Corbally (Havana) and Kylee Stearns (Lakeland/Kathleen).

In addition, Roberts was named Polk State College Female Athlete of the Year. She led the team in batting average (.479) and doubles (23).

Stevens set Polk State records for hits (97) and stolen bases (62). Her thefts ranked her fourth in the NJCAA.

Koutsoumbaris set a school record for runs-batted-in for a season with 70.

During the regular season, Bowen threw a no-hitter and tied the school record for strikeouts in a game with 14.

It's all part of the continued rise of the program.

"We've proven we're one of the best and that we belong at the state tournament," said Ellis. "It's what we've come to expect."





POLK STATE COLLEGE
999 Avenue H, N.E.
Winter Haven, FL 33881-4299

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit # 227
Lakeland, FL

*We are Polk.*TM

Polk State College | polk.edu | 863.297.1000