

**The Florida College System Council of Presidents  
State Board of Education Meeting, February 9, 2022  
Submitted by Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti, President, Polk State College and  
Chair, Florida College System Council of Presidents**

**Now is The Time to Expand Nursing Education Programs**

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Last summer the Florida Healthcare Association commissioned a report which painted a bleak picture projecting that 14 years from now, our state will lack 59,100 nurses including 37,400 registered nurses (RN) and 21,700 licensed practical nurses (LPN). Over the past two years each of us has witnessed first-hand how vital our healthcare workers and first responders are to the wellbeing of the entire state. This is why we stand with fellow Presidents from the Florida College System (FCS) Council of Presidents - which is comprised of leadership from each of the state's 28 colleges – to encourage our statewide elected leaders to prioritize funding to provide a sustainable solution for quality nursing care.

Our Florida community and state colleges are well positioned to provide a long-term solution to filling the systemic gap in nurses for the State, as its most cost-effective and accessible higher education provider. In 2020-2021, the Florida College System students completed 17,477 programs in allied health care (upper and lower division), up from 16,556 in 2018-2019.

However, we need a bold five-part solution to address the short-and long-term nursing shortage:

1. **Faculty Recruitment and Retention:** Our colleges must be able to recruit and retain qualified faculty by raising faculty salaries. Additionally, expand creative course scheduling outside the 12-hour scheduling model for in-field nursing professionals to teach and to provide more options to students.
2. **Patient Simulation Facilities:** To advance high quality nursing education programs through the state, our facilities need students to be learning in the high tech environment used in today's health care environment. These nursing laboratory learning experiences need to include equipment that will most effectively prepare students for clinicals and future employment.
3. **Clinicals:** In partnership with hospitals and medical facilities, colleges are reimagining the clinical experience, structure, and locations to increase program enrollment. Alternative clinical experiences will further assist healthcare providers with nursing shortages.
4. **Articulation:** The local effective articulation of nursing programs from technical colleges, to the Florida College System institutions, and to the state universities will provide ease of access to stackable credentials for the State's citizens. This would allow a seamless flow enabling students to earn the degree they desire (e.g., CNA, LPN, RN, BSN, MSN, doctoral programs in nursing) to meet the workforce demand.

5. **Public/Private Partnerships:** The private sector will be an essential partner to address the nursing shortage. Colleges are actively engaging with *local* medical centers and practices, education institutions, and business leaders to expand nursing program opportunities and increase the number of students enrolled. These public/private partnerships are being developed and leveraged by our colleges across that state.

There is no denying that the need for healthcare workers has never been greater as our next generation of nurses, respiratory therapists, and first responders will continue to serve as frontline heroes, aiding future disaster and other recovery efforts. In order to advance the above, increased and sustainable funding from the state and private partners is needed. In addition to needed funding to address the nursing challenge, the FCS Council of Presidents is committed to supporting Governor DeSantis' goal of accelerating Florida to become #1 in workforce by 2030. To that end, the FCS Council of Presidents is working with our state's elected leaders and have requested \$60 million in program funding this legislative session. The requested funding is only one step in the direction of responding to Florida's need for healthcare workers and for essential workforce programs.

We are committed to ensuring the needs of our healthcare workers are met, and in doing so, that the state continues to build the skilled healthcare workforce necessary to care for every Floridian.

*Dr. Angela Garcia Falconetti is President of Polk State College and Chair of the Council of Presidents (COP). Dr. Tonjua Williams is President of St. Pete College and Chair of the COP Policy and Advocacy Committee.*