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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Polk State to launch Commercial Vehicle Driving Program thanks to \$2 million FloridaCommerce Florida Job Growth Grant

Monday, August 31, 2026 – Governor Ron DeSantis announced Polk State College as one of several institutions to receive FloridaCommerce Florida Job Growth Grants in Jacksonville today in areas including aerospace, maritime defense and commercial transportation. At Polk State, the \$2 million grant will advance quality training and create a highly skilled pipeline of Commercial Driver's License (CDL) drivers to fulfill local workforce needs.

Key developments will include:

- A new CDL training facility at the Polk State Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center in Bartow, which will include an 80,000-square-foot driving pad to support behind-the-wheel training requirements.
- Financial assistance for qualifying students.
- The development and strengthening of new and existing partnerships in a variety of growing fields, including logistics and transportation, aviation and aerospace, manufacturing and defense.

"We are grateful for Governor DeSantis, FloridaCommerce and the Polk County Legislative Delegation's continued investment in workforce education at Polk State College. This support underscores our success in providing quality training that is vital to Florida's economy," said Polk State President Anastasios Kamoutsas. "Affordable, short-term workforce training opportunities give students clear paths to rewarding careers, strengthen the talent pipeline that local employers rely on, and help build a stronger, more resilient community and state for years to come."

CareerSource Polk's 2025-2026 Regional Demand Occupations List includes heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers with an approximate 1,000 annual openings.

Polk County's strategic location along the Interstate 4 corridor makes it the leading logistical epicenter, with access to two major airports, four county airports, more than 300 miles of rail, three seaports within 90 miles and dozens of major roadways. This intersection of critical transportation hubs relies on trucks as the essential first- and last-mile link that keeps global air, rail and sea freight moving from manufacturers to warehouses and onward to their final destinations. Critical military operations, including MacDill Air Force Base and Patrick Space Force Base, also rely on commercial motor carriers as a vital component of the nation's defense supply chain.

This initiative builds on Polk State's strong track record of engagement with local economic leaders. The College's Florida Job Growth Grant proposal received letters of support from the Bartow Economic Development Council, Central Florida Development Council, Haines City Economic Development Council, Lakeland Chamber of Commerce, Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce, Northeast Polk Chamber of Commerce and Winter Haven Economic Development Council.



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About Polk State College

Located in Polk County, Florida, and established in 1964, Polk State College is a multi-campus institution serving more than 14,000 students with Bachelor of Applied Science, Bachelor of Science, Associate in Arts, and Associate in Science degrees, as well as 9,000 individuals in a wide range of certificate and workforce training programs. The College also operates three charter high schools.

Polk State's advantages include small class sizes; hands-on learning; dedicated faculty; day and night classes; online options; affordable tuition; excellent financial aid; and a diverse community and vibrant student life, including fine arts opportunities, clubs, and intercollegiate athletics.