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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Florida College System Foundation presents \$54,057 to Polk State College Foundation for student scholarships

Wednesday, September 16, 2026 – Polk State College student Annastasia St. Louis works full time, pays her own expenses, and continues taking classes each semester as she prepares for a career in diagnostic medical sonography.

St. Louis shared her story on Tuesday evening during a presentation recognizing a \$54,057.54 contribution from the Florida College System Foundation to the Polk State College Foundation.

“The scholarships we recognize today support students preparing for careers in nursing and allied healthcare, as well as those who are the first in their families to attend college,” said MaryLynn Magar, Vice Chair of the State Board of Education. “These students are pursuing opportunities that can change their own lives and help meet important needs across our state.”

The funding will support Polk State students through the Nursing and Allied Healthcare Scholarship, First Generation Matching Scholarship, and 21st Century Dream Makers First Generation Scholarship. Together, the programs help students pursuing critical healthcare careers and those who are the first generation in their families to attend college.

“My journey through college has not always been easy,” St. Louis said. “I work full time, pay my own bills, and make sacrifices so I can stay enrolled. This scholarship takes some of that weight off my shoulders. It allows me to focus more on my classes and keep moving toward the career I have worked so hard for.”

St. Louis is a Winter Haven resident pursuing an Associate in Arts degree at Polk State. Changes in her family circumstances required her to move in with her aunt while continuing to manage financial and educational responsibilities. She works full time as a household manager while attending classes, including during the summer.

“Annastasia’s story is one of resiliency and represents the students we are dedicated to serving,” said Dr. Henry Mack, Commissioner of Education for the Florida Department of Education who addressed the audience Tuesday evening. “This scholarship is a well-deserved honor, and a powerful reminder of what students can achieve through hard work, character, and a commitment to learning. Opportunities like this not only open doors for one student; they strengthen our schools and Florida’s future.”

Despite the pressure of balancing work, school, and other responsibilities, St. Louis remains focused on completing her degree. She expects to graduate in spring 2027 and apply to the limited-admission Polk State Diagnostic Medical Sonography Program.

Her interest in the field was strengthened by a personal medical experience during which a sonographer helped her feel informed and reassured.

“I remember how much it meant to have someone explain what was happening and help me feel safe when I was worried,” St. Louis said. “I want to provide that same comfort and reassurance to my future patients.”

Scholarships provided through the Florida College System Foundation assist students with tuition, fees, books, and other educational expenses. For students such as St. Louis, that assistance makes it possible to remain focused on completing a degree.



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“Annastasia’s perseverance reflects the strength and determination of Polk State students,” said Polk State President Anastasios Kamoutsas. “The Florida College System Foundation’s investment will help more students earn credentials, enter meaningful careers, and meet critical workforce needs throughout Polk County and Florida.”

Polk State College Foundation Board Chair Bo Boyte said the mission is all about increasing access to quality higher education.

“By removing those financial barriers, the Nursing and Allied Healthcare Scholarship, First Generation Matching Scholarship, and 21st Century Dream Makers First Generation Scholarship give hardworking students the opportunity to keep moving forward,” Boyte said.

Through its partnership with the Florida College System Foundation, the Polk State College Foundation continues to expand access to education and career opportunities for students who may otherwise struggle to afford college.

“This scholarship is more than financial assistance,” St. Louis said. “It reminds me that I am not pursuing this dream alone and that other people believe in what I can accomplish.”

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.