

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Polk State College appoints Dr. Anne B. Kerr as interim President**

**Thursday, February 5, 2026** — The Polk State College District Board of Trustees voted on Thursday to appoint Anne B. Kerr, President Emerita of Florida Southern College, as the interim President of Polk State. Dr. Kerr, a seasoned higher education leader with decades of experience in Florida’s academic landscape, will guide the institution through its next chapter following Dr. Angela Garcia Falconetti’s appointment as interim President at the University of North Florida.

“Polk State is poised for continued excellence and innovation under Dr. Kerr’s leadership. Her proven track record assures us that the College is in more-than-capable hands as we build on our strong foundation,” Board Chair Ann Barnhart said. “We also extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Falconetti for her eight years of dedicated service, during which she advanced our mission and strengthened community ties, which will benefit generations to come.”

Dr. Kerr brings a wealth of expertise to Polk State. She holds a doctorate and a master’s degree from Florida State University, as well as a bachelor’s degree from Mercer University. Prior to her 20-year tenure at Florida Southern, Dr. Kerr held various educational positions in Florida and Virginia, building a strong foundation in administration and student services.

During her presidency at Florida Southern, Dr. Kerr spearheaded numerous initiatives that elevated the college’s profile and infrastructure. Under her leadership, the Barney Barnett School of Business and Free Enterprise, the Ann Blanton Edwards School of Nursing and the School of Physical Therapy were established, along with the School of Architecture. Doctoral programs in Education, Nursing, Physical Therapy and Psychology were also launched. Enrollment grew substantially, retention increased and student quality soared, with Florida Southern recognized as a “Top Producer of Fulbright Scholars.” Career services also flourished, with 98% of students either working or attending graduate programs in Dr. Kerr’s last year at Florida Southern.

During her tenure, the College also added 22 new buildings, expanded or renovated 20 others and restored many of its iconic Frank Lloyd Wright-designed structures. Additionally, institutional net assets tripled.

Dr. Kerr was named to the Tampa Bay Business Hall of Fame in 2017. She also serves on the nationally recognized Edyth Bush Foundation Board and volunteers with the international Bible Study Fellowship local chapter.

Her interim presidency at Polk State is expected to maintain momentum in academic programs, community partnerships and student support initiatives. Polk State serves more than 14,000 degree-seeking students and an additional 9,000 individuals in workforce training programs annually across its locations in Winter Haven, Lakeland, Bartow and Lake Wales.

She shared her enthusiasm for the role.

“I am honored to step in as interim President and thank Dr. Falconetti for her outstanding leadership that has positioned Polk State for ongoing success,” Dr. Kerr said. “I look forward to collaborating with the Board, faculty, staff and students to sustain and accelerate the College’s upward trajectory, ensuring we continue to provide quality education and workforce training opportunities for all.”



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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.