

PRESS RELEASE

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Education Commissioner Jim Horne and Community Colleges Chancellor David Armstrong Announce \$2.5 Million Donation to Community Colleges From Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida
Gift part of more than \$10 million donated by state's leading health care company to support nursing programs at Florida institutions of higher education

TALLAHASSEE — Education Commissioner Jim Horne and Community Colleges Chancellor David Armstrong today announced the single largest gift made to the Florida Community College Foundation in its history. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF), the leading health care company in the state, donated \$2.5 million to the foundation to support nursing and allied health programs in Florida's community colleges.

"We appreciate Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida's commitment to supporting our institutions of higher learning in high demand areas," said Commissioner Horne. "This donation is a perfect example of ways in which partnerships between the public and private sector can yield positive results for education and industry in our state."

The gift was announced today at the State Board of Education meeting in Tallahassee. Since 2002, BCBSF has donated more than \$10 million to public and private colleges and universities to address the nursing and allied health professions shortage. In addition to the \$2.5 million donated to the Florida Community Colleges Foundation, BCBSF has donated gifts totaling \$4.5 million to eight of Florida's state universities and more than \$3 million to private colleges and universities in Florida.

"This initiative is a responsive, visionary model of collaboration and partnership among academic institutions and the healthcare community" said Russ Jollivette, group vice president for Public Affairs at BCBSF. "It is a meaningful social investment that embodies our commitment to the public good by supporting the education of nursing students."

Florida is projected to need 34,000 additional nurses by 2006. Florida's Community Colleges are addressing that need with programs in allied health, partnerships with state universities, and four-year baccalaureate programs in nursing.

"We have been at the forefront of addressing the state's critical workforce needs in nursing and allied health as well as other industries," said Chancellor Armstrong. "This generous grant will fund scholarships and enable many community college and workforce education students to enroll in and graduate from our nursing and allied health programs. It is a true investment in the future of our students."