

## State Board of Education Meeting

President Falconetti Talking Points

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

TCC, Student Union Ballroom

444 Appleyard Drive

- Good morning, State Board of Education members. It is an honor to address you today as President of Polk State College but also in the capacity of Chair of Policy and Advocacy and Vice Chair of the Council of Presidents for the Florida College System.
  - Recognitions:
    - Commissioner Corcoran
    - Senior Chancellor Hall
    - Chancellor Hebda
    - Chancellor Mack
    - District Board of Trustees
    - DBOT Chair Cindy Hartley Ross (also at the helm of the Trustee commission of the Association of Florida Colleges).
  
- As Vice-Chair of the Florida College System's Council of Presidents, I share with you the Council of President's priorities for the 2021 Legislative Session:
  - **Conserve** the Florida College System's budget. As you are well aware, Florida's colleges take pride in serving as the primary source of workforce education in every county throughout our state.
  
  - **Invest** in our colleges' infrastructure. Despite more classes being online due to the pandemic, our colleges still need safe and well-maintained classrooms and lab spaces for many programs including law enforcement and health sciences.
    - Financial support in the form of Public Education Capital Outlay, or PECO, funding with renovation/remodeling will assist with the reconstruction of our aging facilities and further prepare our colleges for mass student return to campuses and sites.
  
  - **Maintain** funding for the Complete Florida Plus Program. This supports vital services including:
    - The online catalog of distance learning programs
    - Statewide advising
    - The Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative
  
- As President of Polk State College, I share with you some of our successes to illustrate the critical importance of these legislative priorities.
  - Polk State serves more than 15,000 degree-seeking students each year, as well as 9,000 individuals in workforce training programs.
  - Polk State boasts the highest employment and continuing education rate in the state for our Associate in Science graduates, as well as some of the highest rates for our Associate in Arts and baccalaureate degree graduates.
  - Approximately 70% of our students remain in our community after graduation, becoming highly skilled leaders, entrepreneurs, teachers, nurses, public safety

professionals, pilots, and more.

- Whether a student is benefiting from the Associate in Arts degree program and 2+2 articulation to the State University System, completing their baccalaureate degree at Polk State, or is with us for as little as 8 weeks in a short-term workforce training program, they are receiving quality education that will contribute to the economic development of our community.
  - **That is why We are Polk** and through the pandemic we have served as *part of the solution* for Polk County. Our graduates are serving on the frontlines and our College has pivoted to upskill and reskill individuals seeking new opportunities.
  - **Fast Forward:** The College's *Fast Forward* rapid credentialing initiative, made possible by approximately \$600,000 through the Emergency Education Relief Fund, is providing critical workforce training to unemployed, underemployed, and furloughed workers at no cost to them.
  - **Metallica:** At the national level, Polk State received a \$100,000 grant from Metallica's All Within My Hands Foundation and partners with the American Association of Community Colleges to provide individuals with Computer Numeric Control (CNC) Machining training, also at no cost to students.
  
- We all gather here today with the same goal – to actualize the economic development of our communities and the State of Florida by developing a skilled workforce. We all know this starts with providing the opportunity of success for all students. I want to recognize everyone in this room for the work that they do at all levels of our education system. Thank you.