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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Polk State College will celebrate 125th commencement on December 9

Tuesday, November 23, 2021 — Polk State College will host its 125th Commencement Ceremony on Thursday, December 9, 2021, at the RP Funding Center in Lakeland, where members of the Fall 2021 Graduating Class will walk the graduation stage amongst their families, friends, and supporters.

The ceremony is a free ticketed event which will start at 6:30 p.m. at 701 W. Lime St. The College strongly recommends that participants and guests wear masks or cloth face coverings.

Members of the Fall 2021 Graduating Class who submitted their graduation application or survey by the October 29 deadline and indicated that they plan to participate in the ceremony will receive five tickets for their guests. Graduates should monitor their my.polk.edu emails for information from the RP Funding Center Box Office regarding how to redeem tickets electronically. Graduates themselves do not need tickets to participate in the ceremony. Children under the age of 2 also do not need tickets.

More information about tickets, regalia, diplomas, and the live video stream that will be available for viewing can be found at polk.edu/academics/graduation.

The ceremony will feature remarks from Polk State President Angela Garcia Falconetti and December 2021 Distinguished Alum Mark Miller, a paralegal for Holland & Knight, LLP.

“Commencement marks a significant milestone in the lives of our students, and Polk State College is proud to celebrate its newest graduates who will join a network of more than 55,000 alumni,” Falconetti said. “With 70 percent of Polk State students remaining in Polk County after graduation, their success is our success as they soar to new heights as highly skilled healthcare professionals, first responders, business leaders, educators, and more.”

The Fall 2021 Graduating Class is comprised of 1,217 students who qualify to participate in Polk State’s 125th Commencement Ceremony. Of those students:

- 82 percent are Polk County residents, with graduates also residing in Alabama, Arizona, California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.
- 274 will receive degrees from Polk State’s six baccalaureate degree programs.
 - 147 will receive the Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management
 - 19 will receive the Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Sciences
 - 63 will receive the Bachelor of Science in Nursing

- 36 will receive the Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice
- 8 will receive the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education
- 1 will receive the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education
- 564 will receive the Associate in Arts degree, which is fully transferable to any State University System institution.
- 241 will receive an Associate in Science or Associate in Applied Science degree, which prepare students to transition directly into the workforce in fields including health sciences and engineering technology.
- 138 will receive certificates, which provide a competitive edge in the workforce.
- 35 will graduate Summa Cum Laude with GPAs of 3.9 or greater; 70 will graduate Magna Cum Laude with GPAs between 3.75 and 3.89; and 155 will graduate Cum Laude with GPAs between 3.5 and 3.74.
- 12 will graduate with 4.0 GPAs.
- 5 will graduate with Honors Program distinction.
- The youngest graduate is 16 and the oldest is 62.

Miller, a 1994 graduate of Polk State, will be honored as the December 2021 Distinguished Alumnus. He is also a graduate of Lakeland High School and holds a bachelor's degree from Southeastern University. Although the Lakeland native was born with cerebral palsy and told he would never be able to walk without braces or write his own name, he overcome those challenges with the support of the United Cerebral Palsy Center in Lakeland, now the Achievement Academy in Winter Haven.

Miller has worked as a paralegal for Holland & Knight, LLP for more than 21 years with experience primarily in public finance law. He gives back to the community through numerous organizations including the Achievement Academy Advisory Council, George W. Harris Jr. Youth Crisis Shelter, Lighthouse Ministries, Polk County Sheriff's Office Advisory Council, and United Way of Central Florida. He is a graduate of Leadership Lakeland, Leadership Polk, and has received several awards including the Achievement Academy's 2011 John F. Schneider Volunteer Award and the Community Service All-Star Award from his company Holland & Knight.

About Polk State College

Located in Winter Haven, 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.