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Polk State inaugurates Dr. Angela Garcia Falconetti as College's 5th President

Winter Haven, Fla., November 15, 2018 — Polk State College inaugurated Dr. Angela Garcia Falconetti as the institution's fifth president Thursday, culminating a week-long celebration, Falconetti's first year of service, and raising \$155,830 for student scholarships.

More than 400 students, faculty, staff, alumni, community members, and representatives from colleges and universities across Florida and the U.S. convened for the investiture ceremony in the Polk State Winter Haven Campus Health Center, where Falconetti was formally sworn into office.

"It is with incredible gratitude and honor that I stand before you today as the fifth president of Polk State College, where student success is our success, and everyone plays an integral role in the transformative power Polk State has on students and the greater community," Falconetti said.

Falconetti's investiture address highlighted Polk State's rich history, commitment to the community, and focus on pervasive excellence. She emphasized the importance of serving students from all walks of life and continuing to enhance services to ensure they persevere on the path to their degrees. At the core of her message was the College's mission to provide access to affordable, quality higher education and dedication to filling local workforce needs.

"With 70 percent of Polk State students staying right here in our community after graduation, their success is truly ours, Polk County," she said. "We will continue to work diligently to ensure a successful future for our students, our institution, and our community."

The Polk County Board of County Commissioners and many municipalities declared Nov. 15, 2018, as Dr. Angela Garcia Falconetti Inauguration Day leading up to the investiture ceremony.

Falconetti was named President in May 2017, bringing nearly two decades of service in higher education administration at the state and national levels to Polk County's state

college. She had most recently served as Vice President of Institutional Advancement at Virginia Western Community College and as Executive Director of the Foundation.

In her first year at Polk State, Falconetti focused on building relationships both internally and externally, communicating with community members and hosting forums with students, faculty, and staff to learn what they most value about the College. From this collective input, she developed a vision to strengthen student success and has worked to expand partnerships that provide opportunities and support services for students. Additionally, she advocated successfully at the state level to secure recurring operational funds for the College.

Several distinguished speakers Thursday reaffirmed the selection of Falconetti as Polk State's fifth president.

"The search for a new college president is no easy task. Not only does the individual have to possess significant academic credentials and an impressive track record of experience, the individual must also be the right fit for both the institution and the community. I believe Dr. Falconetti has all of that and more," said Polk State District Board of Trustees Chair Dan Dorrell before bestowing upon Falconetti the College's medallion. "She must also have a doctorate in energy because since her tenure as President began, Dr. Falconetti has worked tirelessly to establish her place within the community and the College."

She serves on several boards including CareerSource Polk, the Central Florida Development Council, Club Hispano de Lakeland, the Greater Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce, the Lakeland Area Chamber of Commerce, the Lakeland Economic Development Council's High-Skill High-Wage Initiative, Polk Vision, The Vanguard School Foundation, the Winter Haven Economic Development Council, and Winter Haven Hospital.

She is also an active leader in national and statewide organizations, serving on the American Association of Community College's Commission on Institutional Infrastructure and Transformation as well as the Steering Committee for the Florida College System Council of Presidents.

Also, at the national level, she served as Special Assistant to the first Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges in Washington, D.C. She ultimately decided, however, that she wanted to serve on a college campus closest to students, faculty, staff, and the community.

Kieran Sequin, an Associate in Arts student and President of the Student Government Association on the Winter Haven Campus, illustrated Falconetti's caring and personable approach to serving Polk State's students.

"Dr. Falconetti takes a personal interest in students," he said. "She values every student and wants all of us to succeed."

Whether Falconetti is shooting hoops with the basketball team, engaging student leaders in important College discussions, or connecting a student in need to a scholarship opportunity, she is always putting students first, Sequin explained.

Through the Polk State College Foundation's *Dr. Angela Garcia Falconetti Scholarship*, she can further support students she encounters on the College's campuses and centers. Donations to the scholarship can be made online at foundation.polk.edu/inauguration.

Falconetti, whose parents are Cuban exiles, has a personal commitment to affording students the opportunities that were granted to her and her family through higher education.

"The collective synergy here continues to motivate and inspire as we work together toward our goals of success for Polk State's students and the positive growth of Polk County," Falconetti said. "We will take Polk State College to the next level, together, because student success is our success."

About Polk State College

Located in Winter Haven, Florida, and established in 1964, Polk State College is a multi-campus institution serving more than 16,000 students with Bachelor of Applied Science, Bachelor of Science, Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees, as well as a wide range of certificate and workforce training options. 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.