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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Polk State College to unveil Steelcase Education Active Learning Classroom

**Lakeland, Fla., November 27, 2018** — Polk State College will unveil its Steelcase Education Active Learning Classroom on Friday, Dec. 7, at 10 a.m. on the Lakeland Campus, offering tours of the transformed makerspace that uses design and technology to boost student engagement.

Polk State is one of only 16 institutions in North America to receive a Steelcase Education Active Learning Center Grant in 2018 to create an active learning classroom. The classroom is utilized by Polk State's Education baccalaureate program, further enhancing the College's ability to produce highly-skilled teacher candidates to fill Polk County's workforce needs.

"As colleges are charged with producing teachers equipped to handle the demands of the 21st century classroom, it is critical to maintain a hands-on, collaborative learning environment that promotes exploration, critical thinking, and scientific, quantitative reasoning," Polk State President Angela Garcia Falconetti said. "This grant recognizes that Polk State's Education baccalaureate program fosters this type of atmosphere, and the creation of the Steelcase Education Active Learning Classroom will allow us to further enhance our best practices."

The grant is a two-year partnership between Steelcase Education and Polk State, who are working together to conduct assessments and research on the impact of the newly designed space, which received approximately \$67,000 in upgrades.

"We are excited to learn from these innovative and enthusiastic teachers and faculty members," Steelcase Education Training and Professional Development Leader Marisa Sergnese said. "As we share with instructors best practices for incorporating the active learning environment into their curriculum, their insights will also inform our research, future products, and strategic development to better the educational experience."

The "360-degree classroom" uses surrounding white boards, flat-screen monitors, and work spaces that allow instructors and students to utilize all areas of the room creatively and interactively. Forgoing desks and straight rows, swiveling seats and easy-to-move tables give students the ability to reposition themselves for various activities and lesson types in the classroom.

“There is no ‘sage on the stage,’” Polk State Director of Education Patricia Linder explained. “The classroom is strategically designed to engage students in the learning process, requiring them to make connections between theory and practice, and ensuring that they acquire the skills they need to be successful future leaders of our classrooms.”

The Steelcase Education Active Learning Center Grant Program has invested approximately \$1 million to improve classrooms across North America. Polk State was chosen out of more than 1,000 applications for its unique approach to active learning. Students enrolled in a dozen Education courses will benefit from the upgraded space.

Polk State launched its Education baccalaureate degree program in August 2016 in response to the community’s need for access to local, affordable Education degree options after the University of South Florida exited Polk County. The College’s Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education and Bachelor of Science in Elementary in Education were developed in collaboration with Polk County Public Schools, putting in place built-in measurements for state-mandated standards.

The program will graduate its first class in December 2018 and has already seen great success with students excelling in their courses and field experiences. The program’s first class has maintained an average grade-point average of 3.94, and each student has passed all certification exams for Florida Professional Educator Certificates. Additionally, all six students who have participated in Polk County Public Schools internships have accepted jobs and have started teaching in elementary classrooms.

The College boasts a 96.93 percent job placement and continuing education rate, and with 70 percent of Polk State graduates staying in Polk County after graduation, the Education baccalaureate program is confident that it will see success in placing teachers in Polk County Public Schools classrooms.

“Polk State is dedicated to working closely and collaboratively with local employers to create a pipeline of quality graduates to fill the workforce needs of Polk County,” Falconetti said. “The creation of the Steelcase Active Learning Classroom allows the College to take student engagement to the next level, ensuring that Polk State’s teacher candidates are well prepared for our local classrooms.”

### **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.