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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Polk State District Board of Trustees elects leadership for 2020-2021

Tuesday, August 25, 2020 — Polk State College’s District Board of Trustees elected Cindy Hartley Ross as Chair and Ashley Bell Barnett as Vice Chair of the 2020-2021 Academic Year on Monday during the DBOT’s annual reorganization meeting.

The role of Chair was previously filled by Teresa V. Martinez and the role of Vice Chair was previously filled by Ross in 2019-2020. The Board also includes members Dan Dorrell, Greg Littleton, and Mark Turner.

Polk State President Angela Garcia Falconetti thanked Martinez for her service as Chair and congratulated Ross and Barnett on their new positions.

“Our District Board of Trustees is comprised of dedicated leaders who genuinely care about the success of our students, faculty, and staff,” Falconetti said. “The Trustees are committed to supporting our College and greater community by upholding the Polk State mission of providing access to affordable, quality higher education to the residents of Polk County, and I am grateful for their exceptional leadership.”

Ross, a Polk State Distinguished Alumna, has served on the DBOT for 17 years, from 1999 to 2011 and since 2015. She has served as both Chair and Vice Chair in previous terms. She has also served on the Polk State College Foundation Board and as President of the Polk State College Alumni Association and continues to serve on the Foundation Board as liaison for the DBOT.

Ross is the owner of Social Graces, a company specializing in etiquette and protocol training. The Lakeland native currently serves as Vice Chair of the Florida College Association and is also a member of the Board of Trustees for the Florida House in Washington, D.C., and has served on the organization’s Lakeland Council for more than two decades. She also serves the Former Members of Congress Spouse Advisory Committee in Washington, D.C., Girls Inc. of Lakeland Board of Trustees, Polk Arts Alliance Advisory Council, and Habitat for Humanity Advisory Council. Ross has served as a Commissioner of the Florida Commission on the Status of Women. Additionally, she is a former Board and Board of Governors member of the Polk Museum of Art and former President of the Polk Arts Alliance.

“Polk State is a pathway to success for Polk County’s residents, and I know this from personal experience,” said Ross, whose family boasts 21 proud Polk State alumni. “I am

honored to serve the District Board of Trustees and, most importantly, our students and employees who continue to soar through unprecedented times and reach new heights despite challenges. I am truly grateful that Governor Jeb Bush, Governor Charlie Crist, and Governor Rick Scott entrusted me with the oversight of an academic institution that provides the opportunity for so many individuals to enhance their lives as they reach for their highest potential.”

Barnett has served on the DBOT since February 2018. Additionally, she has served on the Polk State College Foundation Board since 2014 in leadership roles including Development Chair, Treasurer, and Vice Chair, and concluded her service on the Foundation Board in June 2020. She is a fifth-generation Floridian who has worked tirelessly as a public educator, workforce development analyst, and nonprofit leader.

In addition to her leadership and advocacy at Polk State, Barnett serves as Vice Chair and Community Impact Chair for the United Way of Central Florida Board of Directors. She also serves the Lakeland Regional Hospital Foundation Board, GiveVisual Board, Talbot House Fundraising Committee, Polk Academies Board, and as Central Florida Speech and Hearing Fundraiser and Letter Campaign Chair. Barnett has participated in Leadership Florida and Leadership programs beyond state lines and is a graduate of Leadership Polk Class XII.

“It is an honor and a privilege to serve the students, faculty, and staff of Polk State College and I will continue to advocate that Polk State’s mission is in the best interests of our community,” Barnett said. “Together, we will continue to achieve success and propel Polk County forward into a bright future.”

Members of Polk State’s District Board of Trustees, like those of Florida’s other state colleges, are governor-appointed and vested with oversight of College policies, facilities, budget, and personnel.

Board members serve four-year terms without compensation and meet on the fourth Monday of each month.

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 12,000 students in the Polk State Corporate College with 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. Visit www.polk.edu for more.