

...inside  
**DONORS**  
AND *Shakers*



**4** Florida Blue scholarships are presented to 19 nursing, dental hygiene, and radiography students.



**6** Sixth annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout raises funds for SFSC's athletic programs.



**7** Jeffrey Roth is the first recipient of the SFSC Panther Alumni Society Hall of Fame Award.



Governor Ron DeSantis visited SFSC in October to deliver funding for the establishment of Critical Workforce Academies in SFSC's service district.

## Funding Helps SFSC Open Critical Workforce Academies in High Schools

On Oct. 25, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis presented a \$2.8 million check to South Florida State College toward the development of Critical Workforce Academies in the College's service district of Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto counties.

This initiative is funded by the Future Florida Critical Workforce Needs Grant through the federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) and is administered by St. Petersburg College. SFSC was one of three state colleges to receive a portion of a \$9 million allotment for programs that strengthen K-12 and college workforce education programs.

"We want to make sure that we're meeting the needs of critical areas of our workforce," said Gov. DeSantis.

"What this funding is going to do

COLLEGE RECEIVES \$2.8 MILLION TO PROVIDE JOB-READY TRAINING FOR IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS.

is help these colleges establish regional partnerships with area school districts to develop career academies for in-demand occupations," the governor said. "These academies will support workforce education programs for careers in emergency management, law enforcement, education, and more. These are important parts of our economy and our society. And we suspect that more than 2,000 students will graduate with credentials in these high-demand fields as a result of this effort."

■ **ACADEMIES CONTINUES ON PAGE 7**

## Community Support Drives Student Success

We all know how fortunate we are to live in the Heartland and know how beautiful our community is. At springtime, however, I think Mother Nature likes to show off as Central Florida bursts into color. All around us, new life is taking shape, trees are filling with bright green leaves, and the sweet scent of orange blossoms gently flows throughout our area.

The spring always offers up a fresh, new outlook on many great things to come. The same can be said for South Florida State College. With so much taking place this spring, it's hard to not get excited.

Our baseball and softball games are in full swing. Check out our website for the game schedules. Graduation will soon take place and like so many of our students, a great job is fresh on their minds. Based on current information, an SFSC Nursing graduate who becomes an RN currently earns a salary of \$80,388 and an LPN earns \$37,557. Our students are exceling in all areas and we are proud of their accomplishments.

Throughout this edition, you will see how successful our Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout event was benefitting our Panther Athletics, how



Florida Governor Ron DeSantis awarded state funds to SFSC, and the mentorship connections that are leading the industry in our Take Stock in

Children Program.

What we do here at SFSC could not happen without the sincere support of our local community. With so many ways to give, it is reassuring to know that your contribution really does make a difference in the lives of our students and in our community. I would like to encourage you to look at the "4 Ways to Support the SFSC Foundation." From donating stock to attending our events, you can help!

I invite you to contact our Foundation Office to learn more about our wonderful College or to schedule a tour. We are proud of SFSC and eager to show you why we believe we are #1.

Go Panthers!

**Jamie Bateman**

Vice President, Institutional Advancement and External Affairs



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Don Elwell, President  
Darrell Jensen, Vice President  
Michael Kelly, Secretary  
Robin Weeks, Treasurer

Corey Allain  
Sandee Braxton  
Cheryl Brown  
Judge Angela J. Cowden  
Christy Crews\*  
Robert Duncan  
Judge Peter F. Estrada  
Patricia Manderville\*  
Becky McIntyre  
Tres Stephenson\*  
Dr. Vinod C. Thakkar  
Dr. David E. Willey\*

### SFSC PRESIDENT

Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel

### SFSC PRESIDENT EMERITI

Dr. Catherine P. Cornelius  
Dr. Norman L. Stephens Jr.

Jamie Bateman  
Vice President, Institutional Advancement and External Affairs

Anastasia Fuchser  
Institutional Advancement and Alumni Development Coordinator

Teresa Vorous  
Assistant Treasurer

\*Past Foundation Presidents

## 4 Ways to Support the SFSC Foundation

**1 Become a Friend of SFSC** by setting up an online recurring donation of \$25 or more per month using the QR code.



**2 Sponsor a fundraising event**, such as the Howl at the Moon Dueling Pianos Legacy Showcase, the Jacaranda Jubilee, the Christmas Luncheon, or the Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout.

**3 Give stock or securities.** For information, call 863-453-3133 or email [foundation@southflorida.edu](mailto:foundation@southflorida.edu).



**4 Join the SFSC Heritage Society** by including the SFSC Foundation in your will or trust, or name the SFSC Foundation as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy.

## DONORS AND Shakers

is produced semiannually by the South Florida State College Foundation, Inc., to inspire charitable contributions in support of South Florida State College. The SFSC Foundation raises awareness of the value of an SFSC education and promotes student success through scholarships, facilities development, and program support. By supporting SFSC, the SFSC Foundation endeavors to enhance the ability of residents in our district to obtain a college education.



# Two College Workforce Programs Expand with \$618,000 Award

THE FUNDING BENEFITS  
FUTURE TRUCK DRIVERS AND  
WELDERS AS THEY COMPLETE  
THEIR TRAINING AT SFSC.

In November, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis awarded \$618,000 to SFSC's Commercial Vehicle Driver and Welding programs.

"We have to make sure we have people with the right training to be able to fill key positions in our workforce and our economy, in particular, things like skilled labor that are really at a premium," said Gov. DeSantis.

SFSC is using these funds to expand the Commercial Vehicle Driver program by enhancing student scholarships, adding a full-time instructor, and purchasing a tractor-trailer. For the Welding program, simulators, and positioners are being purchased to train students and allow for daytime instruction.

"Once again our governor came through to support workforce development efforts in the Florida College System," said SFSC President Dr. Tom Leitzel. "The funds allocated to SFSC will immediately assist students seeking career placement in high-paying, high-demand jobs."



Jamie Bateman and Dr. Tom Leitzel accept a check for \$618,000 which is funding enhancements to SFSC's truck driving and welding programs.

Earlier this year, SFSC received funding from Gov. DeSantis to purchase truck-driving simulators that aid students in the Commercial Vehicle Driver program. This four-week course offers hands-on truck driving experience and connects students with future employers. Joe Burke, the program coordinator and instructor, was a truck driver for 36 years. The College accepts approximately 260 students into the program annually.

The Welding program provides students with a simulated work

environment where they gain experience in construction, manufacturing, and fabrication. They are introduced to SMAW (stick), inert gas-shielded welding methods (MIG and TIG), air carbon arc gouging, and oxyfuel and plasma arc cutting.

The program is 25 weeks long and includes an OSHA safety course. This spring, a forklift safety training course was added to the curriculum.

For information about these programs, visit [southflorida.edu/corporatetraining](https://southflorida.edu/corporatetraining) or email [corporatetraining@southflorida.edu](mailto:corporatetraining@southflorida.edu).

## Florida College System Awards \$27,783 for Three Student Scholarships

The SFSC Foundation recently received \$27,783 in funding from the Florida College System Foundation. These funds will be allocated among three student-focused scholarships: The Helios Education Foundation First Generation Scholars Program, Bank of America Dream Makers Scholars Program, and Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship.

The Helios and Dream Makers endowments fund scholarships for first-generation-in-college students. The Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship is meant to attract students from under-represented populations into the nursing and allied health care workforce. Both are directed at students

attending colleges within the Florida College System.

"We are extremely grateful to the Florida College System Foundation for all that they do in support of our students here at SFSC," said Jamie Bateman, vice president for institutional advancement and external affairs. "Through their efforts, we are able to connect with donors like the Helios Foundation, Bank of America, and Florida Blue, who graciously donate to our programs, ensuring that our students receive the funds they need to aid in their educational goals. These donations, along with matching funds from our community, are paving the way for the future leaders of our region."



Tina Stetson, SFSC's director, financial aid, and Jamie Bateman accept a \$27,783 contribution from the Florida College System Foundation for student-focused scholarships.



# Allied Health Students Receive Florida Blue Scholarships

THE MONEY IS HELPING RECIPIENTS PAY FOR TUITION AND OTHER EXPENSES RELATED TO ATTENDING COLLEGE CLASSES FULL-TIME.

In December, 19 SFSC students studying for careers in nursing, dental education, and radiography received approximately \$31,000 in Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health scholarships. The students are using the scholarships for tuition, textbooks, lab fees, and childcare.

Students receiving the scholarships are studying within three health science disciplines:

■ **Nursing:** Lucy Garcia, Christine Nguyen, Johnny Saldivar Jr., Naseana Sullivan, Daniel Tello, Roseline Virgile, Laura Holda, Crystal Valadez, Melissa Hernandez, and Cadee Richardson

■ **Dental Education:** Yaritsi Palacios Vargas, Rumana Rahman, Chenoa Bond, Kendra Gonzalez, and Alicia Lennon

■ **Radiography:** Gabriela Sarmiento Egea, Katherine Oyola, Verkosha Alexander, and Adrian Sanchez

The scholarships are the result of a partnership between the Florida College System (FCS) Foundation and Florida Blue. The Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship was created to sustain a source of funding for student scholarships at Florida colleges to meet the growing need for skilled nurses and allied health professionals who serve the state's diverse population. The SFSC Foundation, Inc. provided a 50% match of the original award from the FCS Foundation and Florida Blue, as the funds must be matched dollar for dollar by private donors at the local level.

"Students participating in intensive healthcare programs are often unable to take on work outside of their studies due to the dedication needed to pursue these critical career fields," said Jamie Bateman, SFSC's vice president of



Tami Cullens (second from left), a member of the SFSC District Board of Trustees, and Jamie Bateman (far right) deliver Florida Blue Nursing and Allied Health Scholarships to SFSC nursing students.



Dental hygiene students accept Florida Blue scholarships.



Radiography students accept Florida Blue scholarships.

institutional advancement and external affairs. "Because of its commitment to education and patient care, Florida Blue has provided scholarships to remove financial boundaries for students who will soon begin careers in nursing, dental care, and radiography – all fields that focus on keeping our community safe and healthy."

Based in Tallahassee, the FCS Foundation is a nonprofit organization that solicits gifts and donations from corporations and individuals for distribution to Florida's 28 community and state colleges. SFSC has received scholarships for health sciences students since 2006. Florida Blue, previously known as Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, provides individual and group health insurance to millions of Floridians.

## Giving Tuesday Nets \$5,000 for Scholarships

The SFSC Foundation is grateful for the donors who helped Pave the Path to Success by giving a total of \$5,000 toward student scholarships on Giving Tuesday last November.

Scholarships are a vital source of funding for many students pursuing a higher education. SFSC has created a PATH to help students succeed by Preparing + Advising + Teaching + and Helping them reach their educational goals.

To make a donation or learn more about establishing and supporting scholarships, visit [southflorida.edu/foundation](https://southflorida.edu/foundation) or call 863-453-3133.

# SFSC President Dr. Tom Leitzel to Retire in June

Dr. Thomas Leitzel plans to retire on June 1. He has served as SFSC's president since July 1, 2013. At the time of his retirement, Dr. Leitzel will have served the higher education profession in seven institutions within six states over 45 years.

Under his tenure, he promoted the growth of the College and community partnerships. Several new programs were developed including the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, mechatronics and advanced manufacturing, construction technologies, and a complete restructure of the College's commercial vehicle training and welding programs. SFSC's newest degree program, surgical services technology, began last fall.

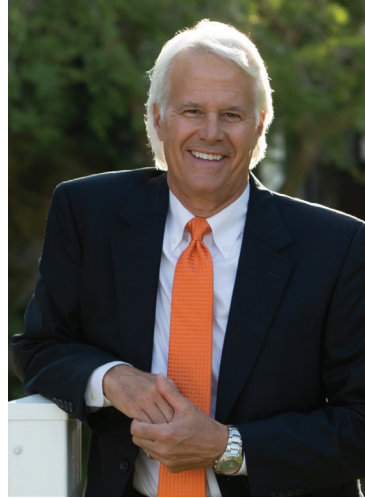
Dr. Leitzel led the development of the College's new Vision Statement in 2015. That year, the remodeled SFSC auditorium was named the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts following the College's largest donation.

The SFSC Foundation endowment doubled in size during his tenure.

Several student success initiatives were begun, including enhanced student success tracking software systems, a food bank, and mental health and wellness partnerships.

In addition, the College received over \$16 million in grants to assist with special initiatives and support growth opportunities amounting. The College advanced its efforts to provide faculty-directed applied research initiatives where students and faculty collaborate on research projects aimed at solving major issues impacting our region and our society.

During 2022, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reaffirmed the College's institutional accreditation for 10 years. Also in 2022, the Aspen Institute recognized SFSC as one of the Top 25 colleges in the nation, a



prestigious recognition that places SFSC in the top 2% of all colleges in its sector. In addition, SFSC has consistently been a top performer in the Florida College System in student completion and retention. Enrollment during Dr. Leitzel's tenure has remained strong, even during the pandemic.

Dr. Leitzel began his career as a faculty member in business administration.

He earned his Ph.D. in higher education from Virginia Tech. He earned a master's degree from Temple University and a bachelor's degree from Lycoming College. He participated in advanced graduate studies at the Pennsylvania State University and at the University of Maryland College Park.

Upon retirement and after several planned trips, Leitzel plans to remain in Florida and stay active in the higher education community by researching, writing, and publishing.

## *Hurricane Ian Donations Help Students with Money and Supplies*

Hurricane Ian relief funds and supplies flood in from our sister colleges around the state and the Florida College System, and many other donors locally and across the state. We want to thank each and every one of the donors who assisted SFSC and our students through this hardship.

On Sept. 13, SFSC's administrators and its Leader Team spent time with Florida College System Chancellor Kathy Hebda and Alex Jordan, deputy director for facilities planning and budgeting, from the Florida Department of Education. They came to check on the College's post-Hurricane Ian condition and dropped off a \$2,000 check, \$500 from the FCRD board to restock Pete's Pantry and to buy gas cards and laptops for our students. We appreciate the



SFSC students who suffered losses from Hurricane Ian received help from Florida College System Chancellor Kathy Hebda (left) and Florida State College at Jacksonville.

time and generosity offered to us as our students, staff, and faculty rebuild their lives after the storm. Our hearts are full from your kindness.

On Nov. 17, we received a very generous donation full of water, cleaning supplies, food, laptop



computers, and more from Florida State College at Jacksonville for our students who were affected by Hurricane Ian.

Thank you so much for your kind, caring hearts. It is wonderful to have a family of sister colleges that support one another in need!



# Million Dollar Golf Shootout Raises Funds for Athletics

SFSC'S BASEBALL, SOFTBALL, VOLLEYBALL, AND CROSS COUNTRY TEAMS BENEFIT FROM THE SUPPORT OF GOLFERS.

At the conclusion of the SFSC Foundation's sixth annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout sponsored by Century 21 Advanced All Service Realty, Inc. on Jan. 14, no one claimed the big prize. However, three qualifiers came closest to the 18th hole at the Sun 'N Lake Golf & Country Club's Deer Run course. Scott Hitt came in first place when his ball came within 20'5" of the hole. Michael Ewing, in second place, came in at 21'2" from the hole, and Steve Sortore's golf ball fell 27'3" from the hole. Hitt won \$750, Ewing won \$500, and Sortore came away with \$250.

This year, 76 golfers struggled against cold and windy weather throughout the three-day golf shootout that began on Jan. 12, and presented the opportunity to win \$1 million in prize money. The 12 qualifiers were Tom Kestler, David Schmidt, Steve Sortore, Donald Bressette, John Zdonek, Shawn Bray, Jeff Taylor, Michael Ewing, David Boersma, Scott Hitt, Ty Van Bulck, and Doug West. Kestler hit a hole-in-one during his qualifying round.

"We're extremely grateful for the opportunity to host this event with the support of the SFSC Foundation, our Foundation board members, our administration, our student-athletes, and our tremendously supportive surrounding community," said Rick Hitt, SFSC athletic director. "The golf shootout gets bigger every year, and the continuous turnout of our competitors has been outstanding.

"A special thank you to Century 21 Advanced All Service Realty, Inc. and Ronnie Carter as our event sponsor. We are extremely grateful for their sponsorship over the last several



Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel (left), SFSC president; Scott Hitt, first place; Jamie Bateman, SFSC vice president of institutional advancement and external affairs; Ronnie Carter of Century 21 Advanced All Service Realty, Inc.; Michael Ewing, second place; and Steve Sortore, third place.

years. To Bill and Lisa Jarrett of Bill Jarrett Ford, this year's awards sponsor, and to all of our many sponsors for this event, we appreciate your support. We look to continue to advance this event year after year."

Proceeds from the golf shootout benefit SFSC Panther athletic teams in women's volleyball, women's cross country, men's baseball, and women's softball. SFSC's student-athletes assisted with the event.

In 2024, the seventh annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout will return to Sun 'N Lake with qualifying days on Thursday, Jan. 11 through Saturday, Jan. 13. For information about the event and sponsorship opportunities, call the Foundation at 863-453-3133.

## Take Stock Mentor and Scholar Bond Through a Shared Interest

A shared interest in sewing is connecting Estrellita DeJesus-Martinez and her Take Stock in Children mentor, Sandie Perreault.

Last December, Perreault presented DeJesus-Martinez with the gift of a sewing machine, fabric, and sewing accessories, much of which had been donated by members of the Adelaide Shores RV Resort quilting club in Avon Park. The gift, along with Perreault's instruction, is now forging a bond between them.

Take Stock in Children is constantly recruiting mentors willing to provide guidance to at-risk students in the program. Take Stock scholars receive a two-year scholarship to a Florida state college when they graduate from high school while maintaining good grades and remaining crime- and drug-free. For information about mentoring opportunities, call 863-784-7343 or 863-784-7440 or email [tsic@southflorida.edu](mailto:tsic@southflorida.edu).



Sandie Perreault (right) presented her Take Stock in Children scholar Estrellita DeJesus-Martinez with the gift of a sewing machine and other materials.





Jeff Roth receives the first SFSC Panther Alumni Society Hall of Fame Award.

## Jeffrey Roth is Inducted into Alumni Society Hall of Fame

In December, the SFSC Alumni Association presented its inaugural SFSC Panther Alumni Society Hall of Fame Award to Jeffrey Roth, a financial advisor with Edward Jones who received his Associate in Arts degree from SFSC in 1990.

The award recognizes outstanding Panther alumni who are making a difference in their communities. “We look forward to showcasing many more of our esteemed alumni in the coming years,” said Anastasia Fuchser, coordinator, institutional advancement and alumni development.

Roth received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in 1994 from Webber International University and a Master of Arts in Management and Leadership from Webster University’s George Herbert Walker School of Business and Technology. Roth taught project management at SFSC from 2012 to 2014.

For 15 years, Roth was the director of the Children’s Advocacy Center in Sebring. His son Noah Roth, who nominated him for the award, wrote of his father’s dedication to protecting children. “The sole purpose for him waking up each morning was to minimize the trauma of child abuse victims and provide prevention support to families needing assistance.”

Through Roth’s application for grants and various private donations, the Children’s Advocacy Center was awarded \$160,000 annually. He oversaw a \$1.5 million construction project that allowed the Children’s Advocacy Center to assist 400-450 families annually.

As a member of the Rotary Club of Sebring, Roth has helped raise funds to eradicate polio around the world, clean trash from roadsides during the club’s Adopt a Highway program, and support other club projects.

After graduating from SFSC, Roth, an Eagle Scout, became the senior district executive/camp director for the Gulf Ridge Council of the Boy Scouts of America. In 2004, he was recognized for creating a culture where young men could learn leadership skills and was awarded the Citizen of the Year award by the Calusa District Boy Scouts.

### ■ ACADEMIES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The Florida Department of Education identified critical workforce needs within Florida’s Heartland. The funding is enabling SFSC to establish Critical Workforce Academies at all high schools in its service district and focus on these specific career pathways: Automotive and Supply Chain Management in DeSoto County, Education and Healthcare in Highlands and Hardee counties, and Emergency/911 Telecommunications in Hardee County.

The academies are providing dual-enrolled high school students with individual support, including academic and career advising, tutoring, and transitioning from high school to college.

The \$2.8 million is being divided equally among the three school districts in SFSC’s service area with each receiving approximately \$667,000. The money is providing classroom technology, equipment, instructional resources, tutoring services, and transportation.

“Workforce matters,” Dr. Leitzel said. “I’m glad I live and work in a state where the governor supports workforce education. The governor has an ambitious goal in mind: he wants Florida to be the No. 1 workforce state by 2030. The Florida College System is going to help get us there. By 2030, our state will be the No. 10 economy in the world. Not in the nation, but in the world.”

**Howl at the Moon**

# DUELING PIANOS

**Performing at the SFSC Foundation's Legacy Showcase and Fundraiser**

**SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2023**  
South Florida State College University Center

**5:30 PM SOCIAL**  
Hors d'ouvres catered by SFSC Culinary Arts students  
Beer and wine provided by 18 East

**7 PM CONCERT**  
Howl at the Moon's Dueling Pianos

**SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE**  
863-453-3133  
foundation@southflorida.edu  
southflorida.edu/foundation

**Individual Tickets**

**\$65**

[sfscARTS.org/show/pianos](https://sfscARTS.org/show/pianos)



South Florida State College  
600 West College Drive  
Avon Park, FL 33825

## On the Calendar

### Foundation Events .....

#### **Howl at the Moon Dueling Pianos Performing at the SFSC Foundation Legacy Showcase and Fundraiser**

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2023

5:30 P.M. Social | 7 P.M. Concert

SFSC University Center Lobby and Auditorium

Tickets required; on sale in April at [sfscARTS.org](http://sfscARTS.org)

#### **Scholarship Reception**

THURSDAY, OCT. 5, 2023

SFSC University Center Lobby and Auditorium

Invitation only

### Board Meetings .....

#### **Executive Committee Meeting**

TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2023 | NOON

The Hotel Jacaranda

#### **Foundation Board Meeting**

TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2023 | 5:30 P.M.

The Hotel Jacaranda

### SFSC Events .....

#### **2023 Spring Commencement**

TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2023

Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts

Highlands Campus



## ANNUAL STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP RECEPTION

**Thursday, October 5, 2023**

### PRESENTATION

South Florida State College  
University Center Auditorium  
600 West College Drive  
Avon Park, Florida

**5:30 p.m.**

followed by a reception

The program is for all 2023-2024 South Florida State College scholarship recipients and South Florida State College Foundation scholarship donors.

**Invitation only.**

For more information, please contact the SFSC Foundation Office at 863-453-3133 or [foundation@southflorida.edu](mailto:foundation@southflorida.edu).