

...inside  
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AND *Shakers*



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## Dr. Cornelius Inducted into Legacy Society

**D**r. Catherine P. Cornelius was inducted into the Legacy Society on June 13, during the SFSC Foundation Gatsby's Getaway Legacy Showcase and Fundraiser.

This is the sixth year that this honor has been bestowed on individuals or couples who have made substantial contributions to the Foundation, the College, and the community. Past honorees include Drs. Vinod and Tarlika Thakkar, the late Dr. Ben Hill Griffin III, Bill and Lisa Jarrett, Joan Hartt, and Joe Jr. and Gloria Davis. The event brought in over \$13,000.

"A legacy is something that is passed on," said Jamie Bateman, vice president for institutional advancement and external affairs. "In many ways Dr. Cornelius has left her mark on SFSC and our community through her leadership as president of South Florida State College, her support of the SFSC Foundation, her service as an emeritus board member for the Foundation Board, and her continuing support through the many committees, events, and other social functions that ultimately benefit SFSC. Her legacy has impacted many lives and will do so for years to come."

In 1984, South Florida Junior College experienced not only a change of name, but a changing of the guard and philosophy. It became known as South Florida Community College, and a new president set the College's standard of service for the next 18 years. That president was Dr. Cornelius. "Dr. C," as she is affectionately known in the community, retired as president of the College in summer 2002.

"More than anything, I want to emphasize the 'community' in community college," Dr. Cornelius said, upon accepting the presidency. "The College belongs to



SFSC President Fred Hawkins (left) and Jamie Bateman (right) induct Dr. Catherine Cornelius into the Foundation's Legacy Society.

every citizen in SFSC's tri-county service district, as well as the students and staff. I want to make sure all of the facilities are used to the maximum. I want people to know that this is their community college."

Under her leadership, SFSC saw the addition of the DeSoto Campus, the Hardee Campus, and the Lake Placid Center. Eight buildings were added to the Highlands Campus, expanding classroom facilities and student learning spaces, and all campus facilities became available for public use. The Cultural Series, a seasonal program of professional performances, was launched.

The College witnessed a 170% increase in student enrollment in the first decade of her tenure and, in 1999, became one of the first community colleges in Florida to offer bachelor's degree programs through partnerships with six public and private universities.

"Citizens from across Florida and beyond have benefited from Dr. C's leadership, guidance, and friendship," Bateman said. "And for that, we owe Dr. C debt of gratitude."

■ **LEGACY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4**

## Community Support Drives Student Success

In the college world, the fall semester is always full of excitement, anticipation, a desire to grow, and an eagerness to succeed. This year, we saw this more than ever as we welcomed our students back to SFSC.

Through our partnerships with local leaders, we heard the requests and are meeting the needs of our community by filling critical positions like nurses and elementary school teachers with our graduates.

Our Nursing students are experiencing great achievements, and with partners like AdventHealth, we enroll Nursing students into our AdventHealth Nursing Scholars Program, which helps them gain the knowledge they need to succeed in the medical field with a promise of a job upon graduation.

The demand for teachers is ongoing and we're up to the challenge. Within our Bachelor of Science in Elementary Teacher Education, our students are certainly earning the respect of our local school districts with a 97% employment rate, ensuring most have jobs before they even graduate.

With the dedication and support of local friends like the Bates Family of Lake Placid, a scholarship was established for students with a longing to serve our community as EMTs and Paramedics. The Heidi Bates Arnold Scholarship was established in memory of their daughter, Heidi, who pursued training in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) that led her to become a paramedic. You can read more about Heidi and her legacy to serve on page 3.

If you want to get involved in a student's life and help them succeed, we have just the thing for you. The Take Stock in Children (TSIC) program is looking for mentors who can be paired with local eighth graders. As a mentor, you will assist in guiding them through their high school years and on to graduation. This beautiful relationship



between a student and a mentor is one that will last a lifetime, and the impact that you, as a mentor, can give to the student will leave a lasting impression on

their lives forever. You'll find more on TSIC in this edition and meet the team of advocates who are helping to make our students' dreams come true.

Do you want to win a million dollars? Then, we have the event for you. The Million Dollar Hole in One Golf Shootout is teeing up to be another great event. Mark your calendars and bring your best club to see if you can make it on the leaderboard to grant you the chance to take a swing for a million dollars.

From celebrating the start of the holiday season with the Jacaranda Jubilee, to honoring students at our Christmas Luncheon, and bringing back the Foundation Gala, this year promises to be an exciting one.

Through your participation at an event or by donating to our college, you, too, are providing a way to help a student succeed.

We welcome you to one of our campuses, so you can see firsthand all of the wonderful advancements in education our students have available to them, right in their own backyard. Just reach out and schedule a time to take a tour; we'll be happy to escort you around.

Thank YOU for all that you do in support of our students, our college, and our community. We look forward to seeing you on campus soon.

Go Panthers!

**Jamie Bateman**

Vice President, Institutional Advancement and External Affairs



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## 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.



# SFSC Foundation Establishes Heidi Bates Arnold Scholarship

The SFSC Foundation introduced a new scholarship that honors Heidi Bates Arnold, a local paramedic and SFSC alumna.

The Bates family established the Heidi Bates Arnold Scholarship to remember and celebrate the life of their daughter and sister who was a banker, but found her calling in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and through her training at SFSC, she became an EMT and then a paramedic.

Heidi's family reflected on her character by saying: "She had the physical and mental aptitude for lifesaving care. Her calm demeanor in crisis, compassion, and rapid decision-making skills made her an exceptional first responder. Heidi found her true calling in life through her service to others and we hope this fund enables others to follow in her footsteps."



The Heidi Bates Arnold Scholarship will provide a student who resides in DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Glades, or Hendry County with \$500 for tuition and non-tuition expenses. The student must be enrolled full-time in the EMS program at SFSC and demonstrate financial need. The number of student

scholarships awarded will be determined by the funds available each year.

"We are so blessed to partner with the Bates family and honor Heidi in such an influential way," said Jamie Bateman, vice president for institutional advancement and external affairs at SFSC. "Many people remember her and the impact she had on so many. Through this generous donation and the establishment of her scholarship, many more will benefit from her legacy. Heidi touched the lives through her servanthood as a paramedic, and now she continues to do so in her memory."

Students can apply for the Heidi Bates Arnold Scholarship through SFSC's online scholarship platform at [southflorida.awardspring.com](http://southflorida.awardspring.com). For more information about this or any scholarship at SFSC, email [foundation@southflorida.edu](mailto:foundation@southflorida.edu) or call 863-453-3133.



Judge Angela Cowden



Robert Duncan



Michael Kelly



Patricia Manderville



Robin Weeks

## Foundation Thanks Board Members for Service

Thank you to our Foundation Board members and their years of dedication to the SFSC Foundation.

The SFSC Foundation Board of Directors and staff would like to sincerely thank the members who served our Board for many years by providing their time, knowledge, expertise, and

more as volunteers on the Board: Robin Weeks, Patricia Manderville, Judge Angela Cowden, Robert Duncan, and Michael Kelly.

We are grateful to each of you for everything you did to support the Foundation, the College, and our students.

## Thank You, Annual Sponsors

### PLATINUM LEVEL



### GOLD LEVEL



### SILVER LEVEL



### BRONZE LEVEL



## Celebrate The Holidays

WITH THE SFSC FOUNDATION

### ANNUAL JACARANDA JUBILEE

Monday, Dec. 2 | 6:30 p.m.  
Veranda of the Hotel Jacaranda

Join us for a festive evening while watching the Avon Park Christmas Parade.

### ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Thursday, Dec. 5 | 11:30 a.m.  
Hotel Jacaranda Dining Rooms

Dine with us at the grand ol' Hotel Jacaranda for a festive holiday luncheon.

MORE INFORMATION  
863-453-3133  
[foundation@southflorida.edu](mailto:foundation@southflorida.edu)  
[southflorida.edu/support-sfsc/foundation-events](http://southflorida.edu/support-sfsc/foundation-events)



# Four Faculty Are Appointed As Endowed Teaching Chairs

Four South Florida State College (SFSC) faculty have been appointed as endowed chairs in their respective disciplines with funds donated through the SFSC Foundation.

The Norm and Laurie Stephens Endowed Teaching Chair was awarded to Dr. Kate Calvin, Chemistry instructor. Dr. Mintoo Patel, Biology instructor, was awarded the Bill and Lisa Jarrett Endowed Teaching Chair in Business. Therese (Terra) Tippie, Dental Assisting instructor, was appointed as the Highlands County Health Facilities Authority (HCHFA) Endowed Chair for Dental Education. Candra Polk, Nursing professor, was appointed as the Highlands County Health Facilities Authority (HCHFA) Endowed Chair for Nursing Education.

Faculty members appointed as teaching chairs are awarded \$5,000 per year for two years, with half going toward equipment, professional development, or to attend a conference related to the faculty member's discipline of study. The other half is a salary stipend.

SFSC's Endowed Chair program rewards faculty who hold the belief that students come first. The award can be used to fund professional development activities that enhance student learning and incorporate classroom projects or activities beyond what is usually offered in a course. Recipients are chosen by a selection committee, with advice from College faculty. Selections are confirmed by Dr. Michele Heston, SFSC vice president of academic affairs and student services.



Dr. Kate Calvin (left) and Jamie Bateman



Dr. Mintoo Patel (left) and Jamie Bateman



Jamie Bateman (left) and Candra Polk



Terra Tippie I (left) and Jamie Bateman



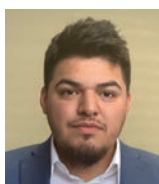
Kelly Dressel,  
Chair



Lena Phelps,  
Vice Chair



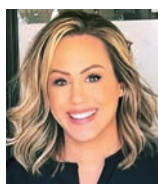
Heather Smith,  
Secretary



Eric Bautista



Christina  
Martin



Candra Polk



Joseph von  
Merveldt

## Alumni Council is Ready to Serve

Members of the 2024-26 Alumni Advisory Council are Eric Bautista, Kelly Dressel, Christina Martin, Lena Phelps, Candra Polk, Heather Smith, and Joseph von Merveldt.

Dressel is serving as council chair with Phelps as vice chair and Smith as secretary.

The council hopes to bring new ways for SFSC alumni to get together and support their alma mater with their time, talents, and donations.

## Save the Date LEARNING AND LEGACY GALA

Celebrating 60 Years for the College  
Friday, March 28, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.



■ LEGACY CONTINUES FROM PAGE 1

## Foundation Thanks Flapper Sponsors

The SFSC Foundation would like to thank the Flapper Sponsors of the Gatsby's Getaway at the Jac Legacy Showcase and Fundraiser on June 13. The support from friends of the Foundation make a difference as we build for the future. Thank you to the following sponsors: The Highlands Radio Group, The Jarrett Family, Just Like Home Pet Hotel, NuCor Florida, and Dr. and Mrs. Jeff Saunders. We are grateful for the support and for helping to make this event a success.

# College Receives \$1.9 Million to Upgrade Dental Clinic

South Florida State College (SFSC) is grateful to Governor Ron DeSantis for approving \$1,975,000 in legislative funds to upgrade the Dental Education facility and equipment on the Highlands Campus in Avon Park.

"We thank Governor DeSantis, Representative Tuck, Senator Grall, and the entire legislature for their dedication and focus on education in Florida," said Fred Hawkins, president of SFSC. "As a result of this funding, our students will be better prepared for careers in modern dentistry."

The state funding will support the purchase of equipment to outfit 13-15 operatories, focusing on ergonomic design, which increases the Dental Clinic capacity by 25%. An upgrade to technology will include up-to-date 3D technology and digital clinic and lab operations, such as printing, scanning, X-rays, and intra-oral cameras. The purchase will also incorporate patient simulators, student workspaces, debriefing spaces, student computers, and technological accessories.

"South Florida State College is a shining star in Central Florida's own backyard," said Dr. Steven M. Guelff, DMD, an orthodontist with offices in Lake Wales and Sebring, Fla. "The nearly \$2 million grant for the Dental program



is a game changer."

SFSC will expand and enhance the learning opportunities available to students in its Dental Education programs to prepare for the increasing complexities of the healthcare environment that they enter upon graduation. Dental training requires a setting that mirrors contemporary dental practice, and these funds will provide the resources needed to modernize and update the 20-year-old Dental Education clinic and lab spaces

to provide a holistic healthcare setting.

SFSC's Dental Clinic provides care to community members. It gives students opportunities to attain clinical competency through screenings, dental hygiene therapy, X-rays, fluoride treatments, sealants, and patient education.

For more information about SFSC's Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting programs, call 863-784-7225 or email [healthsciences@southflorida.edu](mailto:healthsciences@southflorida.edu).

EIGHTH ANNUAL

## Million Dollar HOLE-IN-ONE GOLF SHOOTOUT

**JANUARY 16-18, 2025**

Sun 'N Lake Golf Club  
Sebring, Fla.

**New Saturday  
Night \$10K Putt  
Challenge:  
4:45 p.m.**



**\$10**

to Participate.  
All Golfers  
Welcome

**Saturday Night Shootout: 5 p.m.**

**CLOSEST-TO-THE-PIN PRIZES**

First: **\$750** Second: **\$500** Third: **\$250**  
Fourth: **Pro Shop Gift Card**

**Details for qualifying, putt challenge, and shootout:**  
[southflorida.edu/golfshootout](https://southflorida.edu/golfshootout)

*Benefits South Florida State College Athletics*



# Alumnus Takes His Nursing Skills to South Pole

Daniel Duque, an SFSC alumnus, worked 90 degrees south of everywhere on earth when he spent four months at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, just 150 feet from the geographical South Pole.

Duque earned his Associate in Science in Nursing from SFSC in 2016. His interest in traveling as a working nurse brought him to the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), which is considered a gateway to working in Antarctica.

Duque, who came to the United States from Havana, Cuba when he was 7 years old, was raised in Thonotosassa, Fla. He served with the U.S. Army from 2008 to 2013, taking the most difficult job it had to offer – Army Special Forces, the Green Berets. It not only challenged him but gave him the resources to pay for college.

Duque's interest in nursing began when he was introduced to a mobile trauma unit while serving in the Army in Afghanistan. "That experience made a profound impact on my life," he said. "In war, almost anyone is capable of taking a human life. But here was a small group of men and women who could save a human life."

After being honorably discharged from the Army, Duque and his wife moved to Lakeland, Fla., but he chose to attend SFSC for nursing school because it was known for producing graduates who passed the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) at very high rates. "I can't recall how much my Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) cost me — something like \$9,800," he said. "But it was one of the best returns on investment of my life."

Duque joined the Florida National Guard in 2013. Shortly after earning his Nursing degree and becoming a registered nurse, he was deployed to the Democratic Republic of Congo for nine months. In 2018, he earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at the University of South Florida (USF). In 2020, he received his Master

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



**SFSC alumnus Daniel Duque poses in front of the South Pole, where he spent four months working as a nurse practitioner.**

of Science in Nursing (MSN) from USEF and became a family nurse practitioner. In 2023, UTMB offered him a nursing position in the South Pole.

"What interested me about the job was the remote location," Duque said. "The South Pole station is often compared to the International Space Station in that it is one of the most remote and austere environments on earth. NASA, often, performs experiments there which directly apply to astronauts and space travel."

Duque and a single physician worked in a clinic six days a week from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The clinic has three sections: an urgent care/emergency trauma bay, a dental suite, and in-patient care/long-term care. The two were the sole medical providers within 800 miles for the approximately 42 people who were serving at the station during the same period.

"Our responsibilities included dental procedures, taking X-rays, running our own labs, physical therapy, pharmacy, and so forth," Duque said.

"But we had plenty of time to provide good evidence-based practice and build lasting relationships with our patients."

The most common visits on the station are related to the climate. The high altitude and dry climate lead to acute mountain sickness, frost nip, dehydration, sleep deprivation, and other work-related injuries.

The environment at the South Pole is harsh. According to Duque, a relatively warm temperature at the South Pole is minus 30.7 C (minus 23 F) with a wind chill factor of minus 41.1 C (minus 42 F). Although the majority of Antarctica is at sea level, the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station is at the top of a polar plateau, at an elevation of 9,306 feet above sea level.

"Due to this environment, all personnel are given preventive care prior to arrival at the South Pole Station," Duque said. "The first five days on the station are the most dangerous. During this time, we're most likely to see acute mountain sickness (AMS), high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE), or high-altitude cerebral edema (HACE). The last two are potentially deadly illnesses if not treated. Ironically, a person's age, sex, body habitus, and even previous visits to high altitude locations told us little of who would be at risk."

"The most rewarding part about the job was being able to provide care for world-class scientists and support staff and learn about airborne geophysics, glaciology, astronomy, neutrino and dark matter physics, weather, astrophysics, and drilling through ice to depths of 1,450 to 2,450 meters below the surface."

Duque returned to the United States at the end of February. He and his wife purchased a 5-acre farm in Lakeland and have other business ventures, along with his medical practice.

"Becoming a family nurse practitioner was always my goal," he said. "It's a great option for any nurse who is looking for work-life balance and the ability to travel."

# TSIC Introduces New Student Success Coach

Decquon Cowell became a full-time Take Stock in Children (TSIC) college success coach for DeSoto County as of Aug. 1. He comes familiar with the program, having mentored a freshman high school student since August 2021.

“As a college success coach, Mr. Cowell provides support to the current Take Stock in Children students attending DeSoto High School,” said Dr. Ben Carter, TSIC coordinator. “This includes student visits once a semester for freshmen and sophomores and twice a year for juniors and seniors. In addition, he has recruiting responsibilities for new students through liaisons with community partners and supports mentoring activities.”

Cowell is a native Arcadian and graduate of DeSoto High School. He holds a degree in Communication with a minor in Humanities from Florida A&M University. He served as an interim substitute teacher within the DeSoto County School District and, since September 2018, has been a coach for track and basketball at DeSoto High.

Having a love for cooking, Cowell is the owner of a home-based business, Decadent Encounters. He is noted for his red velvet and pound cakes.

Cowell brings skills to SFSC from his activities as a coach. “I feel as if the kids see how I work and how committed I am to coaching and academics. I hope that they feel the same way in athletics and academics. Track is one of those sports where it’s solely you in most cases, so you have to be self-motivated. Life can be hard. If they can come out to the track and train every day, they can carry that training, hard work, and discipline forward into adulthood and flourish.”



EDUCATION + BRIGHT FUTURES ...  
**IT'S POSSIBLE**  
WITH **YOUR**  
SUPPORT.

The SFSC Foundation  
and our students  
appreciate your support  
on Giving Tuesday.

**GIVING**  
**TUESDAY**  
Dec. 3, 2024

## SFSC Secures Significant Funding for FY25 Initiatives

Spring 2024 was a successful season for SFSC’s grant efforts with several awards secured for the current year. Notable funders include the National Science Foundation (NSF), Duke Energy, Walmart Spark Good, and the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), which has backed three Adult Education initiatives and two Perkins V grants for career and technical equipment. Additionally, the FLDOE matched a generous donation from AdventHealth Wauchula and Sebring

for the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) initiative. The Highlands County Hospital District granted funds for preventative dental care outreach and the Florida Academy of Sciences provided support for undergraduate research in biology courses. SFSC is grateful to all of our funders and looks forward to long-lasting relationships.

The National Science Foundation



Hispanic-Serving Institution (NSF HSI) grant is immense and it focuses on strengthening courses for online science labs with the help of our partner institution, the University of Florida (UF), and its curriculum design teams. As an HSI, SFSC will work with UF to broaden science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) participation, teaching, research, and attainment.

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

## On the Calendar

### Foundation Events .....

#### **The Jacaranda Jubilee**

MONDAY, DEC. 2, 2024 | 6:30 P.M.

The Hotel Jacaranda Veranda

RSVP required

#### **Giving Tuesday**

TUESDAY, DEC. 3, 2024 | ALL DAY ONLINE

[southflorida.edu/support-sfsc/](https://southflorida.edu/support-sfsc/givingtuesday)

[givingtuesday](https://southflorida.edu/support-sfsc/givingtuesday)

#### **The Christmas Luncheon**

THURSDAY, DEC. 5, 2024 | 11:30 A.M.

The Hotel Jacaranda

RSVP required

#### **8th Annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout**

THURSDAY-SATURDAY, JAN. 16-18, 2025

Sun 'N Lake Golf Club, Sebring, Fla.

Reservations and tee times are not required.

#### **2025 SFSC Foundation**

#### **Learning and Legacy Gala**

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2025 | 5:30 P.M.

Highlands Campus

RSVP required

### Board Meetings .....

#### **Executive Committee Meeting**

TUESDAY, OCT. 8, 2024 | NOON

Zoom

#### **Foundation Board Meeting**

TUESDAY, NOV. 12, 2024 | 5:30 P.M.

SFSC Board Room

#### **Foundation Board Meeting**

TUESDAY, JAN. 14, 2025 | NOON

SFSC Board Room

#### **Executive Committee Meeting**

TUESDAY, FEB. 11, 2025 | NOON

Zoom

### SFSC Events .....

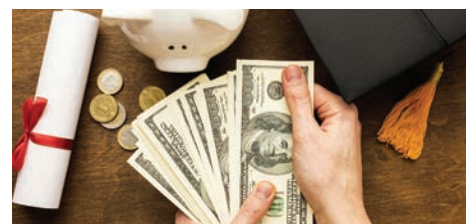
#### **2024 Fall Commencement**

THURSDAY, DEC. 12, 2024

Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the

Performing Arts

Highlands Campus



## 4 Ways to Support the 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 Learning and Legacy Gala, 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.