When the new women’s tennis team under the tutelage of coach Betsy Nagelsen McCormack, former Grand Slam and Wimbledon doubles champion, hits the courts this fall at State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (SCF), players will join a longstanding tradition of success.

SCF tapped McCormack, who lives in Bradenton, to build a strong women’s tennis team in an area ripe with young talented tennis players. “McCormack’s longstanding commitment to mentoring young athletes and her stellar professional tennis background equip her to lead our tennis program to national prominence,” said SCF President Dr. Lars A. Hafner.

SCF athletes are accustomed to playing before a national audience as evidenced by the Manatees baseball team, 2010 state champions and just back from playing in the JUCO World Series.

As SCF Manatees, the mascot name reflects a distinguished athletic lineage that began in 1959 when (then) Manatee Junior College Lancers fielded the college’s first baseball team.

For the past 30 years, SCF Head Baseball Coach Tim Hill has expanded the strong baseball program, adding more state titles and trips to play for the national title. Hill, the all-time career wins leader in Florida junior colleges, was a 2005 NJCAA Baseball Hall of Fame inductee and 2010 FCCAA/NJCAA Gulf District Coach of the Year.

Under Hill’s leadership, baseball players regularly advance to universities and Major League Baseball. Keeping up the tradition, this year’s standout pitchers, Alex Burgos and Josh Lucas, were drafted by Major League Baseball teams.

The SCF softball team also finished the season strong under the leadership of Head Coach Meredith Headings, claiming the 2010 Suncoast Conference Championship and placing second in the FCCAA/NJCAA Gulf District State Tournament. Softball players in the 2010 season earned four spots on the 2010 All-Gulf District Tournament team and two spots on the All-Tournament team.

Joining SCF’s coaching staff is new head women’s volleyball coach, Carmine Garofalo. A veteran coach, Garofalo will expand SCF’s pool of volleyball players to include national and international talent, building on SCF’s premiere volleyball program. SCF volleyball players, Aurora Newgard and Emily Strack, were named the winners of Siesta Key Collegiate Beach Volleyball Challenge this spring after defeating prestigious universities including University of Miami, Notre Dame and University of Central Florida.

SCF student-athletes are winners on and off the field, boasting stellar records in the classroom and community service including raising funds for March of Dimes and participating in the annual Jingle Bell Run to benefit the Arthritis Foundation.

While at SCF, athletes develop team work, self-discipline and skills necessary to succeed in sports and in life. SCF Head Basketball Coach Reggie Bellamy points to James Life, a 2005 alumnus, as an example. Life has recently played professionally in Great Britain, Macedonia and Puerto Rico. As a first-generation-in-college student, Life’s experience at SCF reaped benefits beyond the classroom and basketball court.

“The college was one of the best experiences in my life,” Life said. “The faculty and staff helped me focus on doing all the right things and being the person I knew I could be.”