As the region’s first and largest public college, State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (SCF) has longstanding success in preparing students to enter the workforce or continue their education at colleges and universities. Throughout SCF’s 54-year history, nearly 38,000 students have achieved their dream of a college degree, overcoming challenges and seizing new opportunities to advance their future.

During the Spring 2011 commencement ceremonies, SCF celebrated the achievements of decorated graduates who plan to attend prestigious colleges and universities in the fall. SCF B.S.N. graduate Elizabeth Rigney, an Englewood resident, was the graduation speaker. Rigney earned her Associate in Science in Nursing degree from SCF and was a charge nurse in the intensive care unit at Englewood Community Hospital (ECH) before returning to enroll in SCF’s B.S.N. Program. As a result of earning her B.S.N., she started a new job this summer as a clinical documentation specialist at ECH and plans to apply to Florida State University’s Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program offered at SCF Lakewood Ranch.

Rigney expressed appreciation for expanded opportunities in Manatee and Sarasota counties offered by SCF’s new bachelor programs.

“SCF’s new baccalaureate degrees have provided a means to keep talented, motivated individuals within the community, contributing a strong knowledge, leadership, and a renewed sense of intensity within their spheres of influence,” she said.

Among them was Jodi Johnson, named SCF’s Outstanding Graduate for her superior leadership, academic achievement and community service. Johnson, 38, also was one of just 50 college students nationwide to be named a Coca-Cola Academic Team Gold Scholar and her name appeared in the April 11 special edition of USA TODAY.

Accepted to New College of Florida, Johnson will double major in anthropology and gender studies or international relations with an interest in combating human trafficking or working at a museum.

“SCF has offered me so many opportunities I never would have had. I am so grateful to have earned my degree from an institution that has guided me on my journey to fulfill my dream of a college education,” Johnson said.

Another SCF graduate, Leonardo Leal, from Mexico, faced many obstacles along the path to achieve his dreams, overcoming the challenge of learning a new language and facing homelessness throughout his high school years. His hard work, perseverance and success drew scholarship offers from Ivy League colleges. Leal has accepted a scholarship to Stanford University and plans to major in business or international relations and economics.

SCF’s continuum of success has expanded to include new workforce baccalaureate programs. This spring, the College celebrated a historic milestone when graduates of the first baccalaureate degree program, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.S.N.), walked the stage to receive their diplomas.

SCF’s new bachelor programs include:

- Associate in Arts Degree
- Associate in Science Degrees
- Bachelor Degrees
  - Nursing
  - Early Childhood Education
  - Health Services Administration
  - Homeland Security
  - Public Safety Administration
  - Energy Technology Management
- Online Degree
  - Associate & Bachelor Courses
  - Associate in Arts Degree

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