



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Baptist Health Care Sponsors Nursing Program at the University of West Florida

PENSACOLA, FLA. (May 7, 2024) – Baptist Health Care has partnered with the University of West Florida’s School of Nursing program to provide scholarships and preceptorship opportunities to nursing students. Baptist committed more than \$190,000 in funding as part of a matching grant opportunity with the State of Florida.

UWF nursing students have the opportunity to apply for scholarships, nursing preceptorships or both. This partnership is the first of its kind for our community, and one that both teams look forward to continuing in the future. In 2022, Baptist stood as the exclusive health care partner for the inaugural group of UWF students engaged in the scholarship and preceptorship program, slated to conclude in the Spring of 2024.

“We consider it an honor to partner with UWF to assist students pursuing their dream of becoming a nurse,” said Baptist Health Care Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer Joyce Nichols, APRN, FNP-BC, CWON. “I have personally enjoyed interacting with the 12 UWF nursing students who participated in a preceptorship at Baptist. The future of health care in our community is bright when we have passionate nurses ready to make a difference.”

“We are so proud to partner with UWF to create a pipeline into health care careers for students in our community through this innovative partnership between the state of Florida, our state universities, and health care organizations,” said Baptist President and CEO Mark Faulkner. “Nursing continuously earns the top spot as the most honest and ethical profession in the country according to Gallup Poll and is such an essential role in health care and at Baptist Health Care.”

Baptist leadership celebrated the partnership and first cohort of 12 nursing students at an event on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. The students are expected to complete their nursing program and graduate this month, and of the 12 students, three have accepted jobs at Baptist.

“Baptist Hospital's investment in UWF's School of Nursing is pivotal in meeting the community's needs. We value their partnership and assistance in preparing the next generation of nurses,” said Dr. David Bellar, UWF Usha Kundu, MD College of Health dean.

Senate Bill 2524 (2022) established a competitive grant opportunity for districts, Florida College System (FCS) institutions and independent nonprofit colleges and universities in Florida. The LINE Program was created to incentivize collaboration between nursing education programs and health care partners to combat the growing nursing shortage in the state.

The Live Healthy Bill, which was the largest, most comprehensive health care package in Florida’s legislative history included provisions to LINE. The bill amended the LINE Fund to include independent schools, colleges or

universities with an accredited nursing program located in Florida and is licensed by the Commission for Independent Education.

Additionally, the bill increased the passage rate for the Nursing License Examination, from 70 percent to 75 percent, that is required for LPN, associate of science in nursing and Bachelor of Science in nursing programs to participate in the LINE Fund. A \$5 million expansion for The LINE Fund was also included.

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About Baptist Health Care

Baptist Health Care is a not-for-profit health care organization based in Northwest Florida that is committed to helping people throughout life's journey. Baptist continuously strives to be a national leader in quality and service. Baptist Health Care includes three hospitals, four medical parks, Andrews Institute for Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine and a large network of primary care and specialty physicians. Baptist Health Care is one of the largest non-governmental employers in Northwest Florida.

- Baptist Health Care • Baptist Hospital • Gulf Breeze Hospital • Jay Hospital*
- Baptist Medical Parks Airport, Nine Mile, Navarre and Pace • Andrews Institute • Baptist Medical Group*
- Baptist Heart & Vascular Institute • Baptist Health Care Foundation*