



Media contact:
Audrey Holtzman
aholtzman@usf.edu

[Link to b-roll: https://usf.box.com/s/y9xrkrk6408lzk2ljmfm8d929w749ogv](https://usf.box.com/s/y9xrkrk6408lzk2ljmfm8d929w749ogv)

Efforts under way to assist the critical local nursing shortage through USF Health College of Nursing and Sarasota Memorial Hospital Collaboration

TAMPA Fla (October 27, 2021) – The [USF Health College of Nursing](#), in collaboration with [Sarasota Memorial Hospital](#) (SMH), will soon launch a program to address the critical workforce shortage due to nurses leaving the profession in record numbers.

The Excellence in Nursing During COVID-19 and Beyond program seeks to improve the working environment for nurses facing burnout and stress as the pandemic persists. The program, which is set to begin in Spring 2022, will provide small group coaching and resources to help clinical nurses and nursing students handle the increased demands of their daily work and encourage them to stay in the profession.

The program also includes a clinical preceptorship-to-hire program for USF nursing students committed to working at SMH or its new Venice facility after graduation.

Sarasota Memorial Hospital has not been immune to staffing challenges, as it worked the past year to retain its core nursing staff while hiring hundreds of additional nurses for a new inpatient and surgical oncology tower and new hospital in Venice, both opening in November 2021. SMH will collaborate with the USF Health College of Nursing to improve the overall wellness of its nurses and nursing students, which will ultimately enhance patient care.

“We believe this collaboration with USF will provide meaningful support for all of our nurses, especially bedside caregivers working tirelessly on the front lines,” said SMH Chief Nursing Officer Connie Andersen.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a significant toll on nurses, who spend so much time caring for others,” said Usha Menon, dean of the USF Health College of Nursing and senior associate vice president of USF Health. “This program will empower the nurses of Sarasota, while also increasing opportunities for our students to work in the region.”

Philanthropic support was provided by lead donors David Kotok and Christine Schlesinger, whose \$115,000 gift completed funding for the pilot project following a match challenge. Additionally, a \$25,000 grant from Gulf Coast Community Foundation, as well as private gifts and grants from the USF Foundation, helped fund this pilot program.

Following the conclusion of the six-month Excellence in Nursing During COVID-19 and Beyond pilot, USF faculty will continue to collaborate with SMH by delivering the program to all front-line nurses at SMH over the next two years.

Sarasota Memorial Healthcare Foundation is currently fundraising for this two-year program at SMH and received a generous \$400,000 matching grant from the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation to rally community support.

“COVID has exacerbated a nationwide shortage of nurses. Government can’t fix it, but community and philanthropy must do so or our collective healthcare is in jeopardy,” Kotok said. He and Schlesinger are longtime supporters of USF’s Sarasota-Manatee campus and most recently helped establish the successful Frontline Nursing During COVID-19: A New Paradigm program at the USF Health College of Nursing that provided free and vital COVID-19 safety information and continuing education credits for nurses.

###

-USF Health-

USF Health's mission is to envision and implement the future of health. It is the partnership of the USF Health Morsani College of Medicine, the College of Nursing, the College of Public Health, the Taneja College of Pharmacy, the School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Sciences, the Biomedical Sciences Graduate and Postdoctoral Programs, and USF Health's multispecialty physicians group. The University of South Florida is a high-impact global research university dedicated to student success. Over the past 10 years, no other public university in the country has risen faster in U.S. News and World Report's national university rankings than USF. For more information, visit health.usf.edu