

FNA Launches Inaugural Early Career Nurse Conference

The Florida Nurses Association proudly welcomed students and early career nurses from across the state to the **first annual Early Career Nurse Conference: Thriving in Your First Years** on June 6 in Gainesville. Created specifically for nurses beginning their careers, the conference focused on building confidence, developing leadership skills, and helping participants prepare for long-term success in nursing.

The event featured sessions on leadership, career development, organization and time management, professional digital identity, and creating a fulfilling nursing career. Attendees also had the opportunity to hear from experienced nurse leaders during an interactive panel discussion and connect with peers, mentors, and FNA leaders throughout the day.

One of the biggest highlights was the **Clinical Challenge Labs**. Participants rotated through four interactive stations—Patient Scenarios, Delegation Puzzle, Mock Code, and the Assessment Escape Challenge—where they practiced clinical decision-making in hands-on scenarios.

The labs quickly became a favorite among attendees, with many identifying them as the most valuable part of the conference. The Mock Code station received especially high praise for helping participants build confidence in responding to emergency situations.

Feedback from participants reflected just how meaningful the experience was. One attendee shared that the Clinical Challenge Labs "gave me practical, hands-on experience and helped me feel more confident using my nursing knowledge in real-life situations." Another wrote, "I was able to take practical tools with me to implement in practice. I felt eager to get involved and would love to keep attending these conferences." Others said they left the conference feeling energized, inspired, and excited about the future of their nursing careers. Faculty members also praised the event, noting that it provided "a wealth of knowledge and tools for success to new graduate and early career nurses."

FNA extends its sincere appreciation to the **Florida Center for Nursing** for serving

as the conference sponsor and helping make this inaugural event possible. We also thank the **Florida Nurses Foundation** for sponsoring scholarships that allowed nursing students and early career nurses to attend, making the conference accessible to even more future nurse leaders.

A special thank you goes to **MacKenzie Simmons, BSN, RN**, FNA's Early Career Director, who hosted the event and played a key role in bringing the conference to life. We also appreciate the dedication of the planning committee, volunteer speakers, panelists, and Clinical Challenge Lab facilitators whose time and expertise made the day such a success.

As FNA's first conference dedicated entirely to students and early career nurses, this event marks the beginning of something exciting. We're grateful to everyone who helped make the inaugural conference a success, and we look forward to growing this event in the years ahead as we continue supporting Florida's next generation of nurse leaders. ■

