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Osceola High School Students Experience College Life at Rollins

WINTER PARK, FL (September 29, 2026) – Approximately 100 students from Osceola High School visited Rollins College today for College Readiness Day, gaining firsthand insight into higher education through an immersive campus experience. Rollins College is a higher education partner of Heart of Florida United Way.

Sophomores, juniors, and seniors explored the campus through guided tours and met with representatives from key campus departments, including admissions and financial aid. Current Rollins students held an interactive panel discussion, sharing their college experiences and answering questions about academic and campus life.

The program is part of the Osceola High School Community School, a collaborative partnership between Heart of Florida United Way and the School District of Osceola County. The goal is simple: empower students to succeed in both school and life. The concept centralizes community resources and services by creating a "one-stop shop" where students and their families can get support to overcome challenges that interfere with learning and overall well-being.

"For many high school students, higher education can feel out of reach or something to think about far down the line. It's important for students to know that going to college is possible and thinking about their future starts today," said Kelly Astro, senior vice president of Community Impact at Heart of Florida United Way. "By giving these high schoolers a hands-on look at campus life, financial aid opportunities, and a look at real student experiences, we hope to spark their confidence and help them see a successful future."

College Readiness Day is one example of the community school's focus on expanded learning, which provides enriching educational opportunities. The Community School Model also focuses on three other core areas:

- **Wellness Support**: Providing students and families access to on-campus medical, dental, and vision care, mental health counseling, and assistance with food, clothing, and school supplies
- **Family and Community Engagement:** Offering parents and families connections to tax assistance, resources to learn English as a second language and support for GED completion.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Working closely to provide necessary program support and technology for data tracking and outcome reporting

Beyond this event, Rollins College and UCF plan to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to develop targeted strategies for providing even more long-term support and resources to Osceola High School students and the broader community.

About Heart of Florida United Way

Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW) helps individuals and families in Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties overcome life's challenges by providing the support they need to meet basic needs, achieve financial stability, and reach education goals. Since 1939, HFUW has united donors, volunteers, businesses, government, and nonprofit partners—helping light the way to a strong foundation for resilience, dignity, and a brighter future across Central Florida. During our 2025–2026 fiscal year, HFUW served more than 470,000 individuals across Central Florida through signature initiatives including 211 and 988, providing 24/7 information, referrals, and crisis support; VITA and Bank On, helping households build financial stability; and Community Schools, Help Me Grow, Destination Graduation, upliftED, Take Stock in Children, and Digital Horizons, expanding educational achievement and workforce readiness. HFUW also brings the community together through beloved annual initiatives such as the Thanksgiving Project, which helps provide holiday meals to families in need, and the Community Baby Shower, which equips expectant and new parents with essential resources and support. In 2026, HFUW introduced the United Learning Lab, which delivers technology, education, and essential support services directly into Central Florida neighborhoods. Together with community partners, HFUW is creating pathways to opportunity and ensuring every person has the resources to thrive. For more information, visit www.HFUW.org, call (407) 835-0900, or follow Heart of Florida United Way on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

About Rollins College

Founded in 1885, Rollins is Florida's oldest college. Located in Winter Park, near Orlando, U.S. News & World Report has ranked Rollins in the top 100 among national liberal arts colleges and the No. 1 liberal arts college in Florida. Through its College of Liberal Arts, Hamilton Holt School, and Crummer Graduate School of Business, Rollins serves approximately 3,200 students and prepares graduates to lead and serve in a global society.

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