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USFSP Receives \$10 Million Gift From Entrepreneur Kate Tiedemann

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Largest Gift in University's History Will Name the College of Business



— Kate Tiedemann

The University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USFSP) announced today it has received a \$10 million gift, the largest single gift in its history, to name the USFSP College of Business. Effective immediately, and with formal approval from the USF System Board of Trustees, the College becomes the Kate Tiedemann College of Business.

“We are thrilled and honored by Kate Tiedemann’s generous gift in support of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg’s College of Business,” said USF System President

Judy Genshaft. “Ms. Tiedemann’s personal story of overcoming challenges to fulfill her dreams and to give back to the community is a true inspiration for all. As a university system with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and deep commitment to student achievement, we are grateful to have forged this new partnership and to work with such an extraordinary individual in supporting the future of business research and education for generations to come. This gift ensures that others’ dreams will become a reality.”

“This is truly a momentous day for USF St. Petersburg,” said Regional Chancellor Sophia Wisniewska, Ph.D. “When Kate and I met, we connected immediately. Given our backgrounds and immigrant families, we share deep appreciation for the opportunities America afforded us in education and business. Most of all, we share a desire to give back.”

Tiedemann, a resident of Pinellas County, is the founder and former CEO of Katena Products, Inc., in Denville, N.J., one of the most successful eye instruments companies in the country. Katena was sold to the Cortec Group in 2009.

The story of Tiedemann’s entrepreneurial success, a tale of hard work, passion and fortune, is nothing short of extraordinary. Hers is a genuine American dream story. An immigrant from Hamburg, Germany, Tiedemann endured an arduous steamship crossing from Europe to

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arrive in New York in 1955 – at the age of 18 – to live with an aunt. With limited English, she worked for two and a half years as a maid and a cook for former New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey.

Eager to acquire administrative skills, Tiedemann worked multiple jobs before landing her first job in the surgical instrument business as an assistant in the New York sales office of Storz Instrument Company, now part of Bausch and Lomb. “I loved the work and was fascinated by the instruments,” she said. She decided this highly precise, tool-intensive industry was for her.

Following the sale of Storz, Tiedemann and her boss launched an eye, ear, nose and throat division at Edward Weck & Company. Later she co-founded Sparta Instrument Corporation, which was eventually sold to Cooper Laboratories. After 15 years in the surgical instrument field, she felt ready to start her own business.

In 1975, Katena Products (short for Kate North America) was born in the basement of her New Jersey home. Tiedemann worked with ophthalmic surgeons worldwide to design and develop instruments for eye surgery. Today, Katena markets 1,400 products to more than 7,000 surgeons, outpatient surgery centers and hospitals in the United States, and, through a global network of distributors, to customers in more than 110 countries around the world.

“I loved the eye instrument business and there was never a day I did not look forward to going to work,” said Tiedemann. “When you love your work, it isn’t really work, it’s fun. Anyone who can say that is blessed.”

Tiedemann says she has always had an emotional attachment to learning and education. While she did not attend high school or college, she says she has often wondered what more she might have achieved had she had a formal education. “My highest level of education is grammar school, but I spent my whole life learning and still continue to do that,” she said. “Most of what I know I have learned from others.”

When she visited USFSP, she established a rapport with Regional Chancellor Wisniewska and members of her leadership team. “Faculty and students are doing their part. This gift allows me to affirm and accelerate their good work,” Tiedemann said. “I was fortunate enough to create a successful business in the U.S. and I feel strongly about creating a long-lasting legacy.”

In addition to this first major gift to support higher education, Tiedemann has contributed generously to hospitals, including the Saint Clare’s hospital system in New Jersey and Clearwater-based Morton Plant Mease.

The USFSP College of Business is one of few worldwide to have earned AACSB accreditation in both business and accounting. Its online MBA program is ranked among the nation’s top 100 online programs by US News & World Report. The Tiedemann gift will support the education, research and service mission of the college, to include a faculty endowment fund and academic research, technology and training, among other initiatives.

“Dreams can come true,” said Regional Chancellor Wisniewska. “Kate’s gift will allow us to enhance our programs and the student experience overall. It is a dream come true not only for our students, but for the faculty and community as well.”

About USF St. Petersburg

The University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USFSP) is a separately accredited, research-active institution within the USF System. USFSP offers 24 undergraduate and 12 graduate programs in three colleges: Arts and Sciences, Business, and Education. USFSP is recognized for its significant commitment to community involvement and civic engagement by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For more information, visit www.usfsp.edu.

About the USF Foundation

The USF: Unstoppable Campaign is a comprehensive fundraising effort by the University of South Florida System to celebrate the energy, vision, and future of one of the country's most exciting and engaged university systems. Representing the University of South Florida, USF St. Petersburg and USF Sarasota-Manatee, the campaign is part of an ambitious plan to enhance healthcare, science, technology, education, business, the arts, and global partnerships.

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