



**BECKER'S
HEALTHCARE**

2026 TIAA Institute Louise Whitfield Carnegie Award for Leadership Excellence in Healthcare

Honoring Stephanie D. Conners
President and CEO
BayCare Health System



“BayCare Health System is recognized as West Central Florida’s leading healthcare provider, and Stephanie Conners has been a driving force behind that distinction. A nurse by training and a visionary by nature, she has championed the well-being of both patients and team members, proving that the strongest healthcare systems are built on the strength of their people.”

Surya Kolluri
Head of the TIAA Institute





Honoring Stephanie D. Conners President and CEO BayCare Health System

2026 Inaugural Recipient of the TIAA Institute Louise Whitfield Carnegie Award for Leadership Excellence in Healthcare

As President and CEO, Stephanie D. Conners has solidified BayCare Health System's position as the largest academic health care provider in west central Florida, delivering the highest standards of clinical excellence, compassion, safety and service while driving sustainable growth.

With 16 hospitals, a 17th being built, and hundreds of outpatient facilities, BayCare provides one third of the region's health care services. The majority of its eligible hospitals hold Leapfrog "A" safety ratings.

Conners' goal: advancing care "from first breath to last breath," ensuring no patient needs to leave the community. To this end, Stephanie partnered with Northwestern Medicine to accelerate and deliver world-class care close to home, with the mission of building healthier communities. Under her leadership, BayCare has committed \$2.9 billion to close gaps in the continuum of care, supporting expanding services from quaternary care to out-patient and home-based medicine.

Putting people first

When Stephanie Conners stepped into the role of President and CEO of BayCare Health System, she arrived with a clear conviction: that the strength of any healthcare organization begins with the people who deliver the care. In a post-COVID-19 environment still marked by fatigue, uncertainty, and institutional strain, she made the healthcare worker experience her first and foremost priority.

Conners personally led dozens of town halls and candid listen-and-learn sessions, ensuring that physicians and team members throughout BayCare would be seen and heard directly by their new leader. Her approach was as much personal as institutional, a reflection of the empathy and respect that have defined her career since she first walked the floors as a bedside nurse.

“I am deeply honored and humbled to receive this award. Advancing health care and empowering our workforce has always been at the heart of my leadership. This recognition reflects our collective commitment to harnessing innovation, investing in our team and expanding to better serve our communities. It also belongs to the 34,000 team members who are the heart of BayCare, and our greatest asset.”

Stephanie D. Conners
President and CEO
BayCare Health System



Innovating for the frontline

Under Conners' leadership, BayCare invested in the region's first proton therapy accelerator, so patients with advanced cancer have access to advanced treatments.

BayCare opened the first behavioral health urgent care facility in Pasco County, serving patients where they live.

She created a virtual hospital model allowing patients to receive hospital-level care from the comfort of their home, supported with remote monitoring, advance analytics and virtual interactions.

Conners implemented a "Stress First Aid" program in partnership with the American Nurses Association Enterprise, an initiative designed to support the mental health and wellbeing of frontline caregivers.

She also championed an award-winning Virtual Nurse program, allowing nurses to spend more time with patients and less time managing patient records, reflecting Conners' deep understanding of what clinical staff need to thrive. Additionally, she announced a landmark partnership to develop artificial intelligence tools aimed at reducing the cognitive load on healthcare workers.

The breadth and impact of these initiatives speak to Conners' leadership philosophy in which innovation always serves a human purpose.

Great talent: extraordinary care

“Our patients come for our physicians. They stay for the extraordinary care,” Conners shares.

When Conners arrived at BayCare she focused first on its academic standing. She understood the importance of training physicians for the future and the need for talented individuals capable of delivering care for expanding and aging populations.

Under Conners’ leadership, BayCare has significantly expanded its graduate medical education and research programs, resulting in BayCare’s St. Joseph’s Hospital being designated a statutory teaching hospital in 2025. The system has a bold trajectory to grow its residents in training to 650 by 2029, exemplifying Conners’ commitment to shaping the future of medical education in the region.

Conners is a firm believer that the future of healthcare is not only brick and mortar, but also in-home care. She is shaping BayCare’s future with compassion, innovative technology and bold ideas.

Candy striper, floor nurse, the country’s youngest chief nurse, one of the first five Six Sigma Black Belts in healthcare, and an MBA, Conners now leads BayCare giving back an estimated \$500 million in community benefit, while delivering compassionate extraordinary care.



About the award

The Louise Whitfield Carnegie Award for Leadership Excellence in Healthcare is named in honor of the woman who played a pivotal role in shaping early twentieth century American philanthropy through her leadership of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and her contributions to institutions advancing health, education, and social progress. Her husband, Andrew Carnegie, founded TIAA in 1918, to help faculty retire with dignity.

This award recognizes a healthcare leader whose vision and service reflect an enduring commitment to excellence in healthcare leadership, employee value proposition, and community impact. It is bestowed annually by the TIAA Institute in collaboration with Becker's Healthcare, and recipients are chosen by an independent panel of judges.



**Louise Whitfield Carnegie
Philanthropist and Leader,
Carnegie Corporation of
New York**

About the TIAA Institute

Since 1998, the TIAA Institute has helped advance the ways individuals and institutions plan for financial security and organizational effectiveness. The Institute conducts in-depth research, provides access to a network of thought leaders, and enables those it serves to anticipate trends, plan future strategies, and maximize opportunities for success. To learn more, visit tiaainstitute.org.

About TIAA

TIAA helps provide secure retirements and outcome-focused investment solutions to millions of people and thousands of institutions.¹ It paid more than \$5.9 billion in lifetime income to retired clients in 2024² and has nearly \$1.5 trillion in assets under management (as of 09/30/2025).³

About Becker's Healthcare

Becker's Healthcare is the go-to source for healthcare decision makers and one of the fastest growing media platforms in the industry. Through print, digital, and live event platforms, Becker's Healthcare equips healthcare leaders with the information and forums they need to learn, exchange ideas and further conversations about the most critical issues in American healthcare.

About BayCare Health System

BayCare Health System is West Central Florida's leading not-for-profit healthcare provider, comprised of 16 hospitals and hundreds of ambulatory care locations throughout the Tampa Bay and central Florida regions. With 34,000 team members, BayCare delivers high-quality healthcare services to the communities it serves with compassion, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

1. Based on data in PLANSPONSOR's 2025 DC Recordkeeping Survey published June 25, 2025.
2. As of December 31, 2024, TIAA paid out \$5.9B in total annuity income. This figure represents all annuity income, including guaranteed and additional amounts, for all of TIAA's annuity products.
3. As of December 31, 2025, assets under management (AUM) across Nuveen Investments affiliates and TIAA investment management teams were \$1,506 billion.

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