



South Dakota Board of Technical Education

To: Board of Technical Education

From: Nick Wendell, Executive Director

Re: Strategic Priorities Campus Visits Follow-up

Date: 11/30/23

During the summer planning retreat in late June, the Board of Technical Education began the work of developing system-level strategic priorities. Throughout the summer, staff engaged the presidents to ensure we were moving in the right direction. In September and October, we facilitated half-day workshops during visits to each campus. During the workshops, I had an opportunity to share relevant data and gather feedback from key administrators, faculty, and staff. Presidents were asked to identify local participants, representing a cross-section of the institution, to attend the workshops.

The campus visits produced consistent themes and unique perspectives from each institution. In many cases, those themes and perspectives affirmed our direction and clarified the scale of our goals. The conversation also helped identify the potential metrics which will be used to track the system's progress.

Visits were held on the dates listed below:

- Lake Area Technical College—September 18
- Mitchell Technical College—September 26
- Southeast Technical College—September 27
- Western Dakota Technical College—October 3

During the visits, I outlined the three strategic priorities and a draft measurable goal statement for each. The priorities and goal statements are listed below. Each of the goals is intended to serve as a milestone to be achieved by 2030.

- **Attainment**—Produce **3,000** credential completers per year.
- **Affordability**—Maintain a **5.0 or lower** cost to earnings premium for every AAS program in the system.
- **Alignment**—Increase the year five in-state placement rate to **75%**.

What We Learned

Throughout the visits, participants discussed opportunities related to each of the priorities and challenges that could serve as barriers to our ability to achieve the intended goals. I have outlined key opportunities and challenges for each priority below.

Attainment

Opportunities

Consistent opportunities related to attainment included the potential expansion of existing programs and the introduction of new programs. Multiple campuses identified more flexible options for students, including more short-term credentials, online opportunities, and creative scheduling.

Institutions identified target populations currently being served and where there are growth opportunities. Some of those populations included first-generation students, students of color, rural students, and non-traditional students. Campus leaders throughout the system discussed using data to better predict student outcomes, understand demographic patterns, and inform student success strategies.

(**Attainment** continued on page two)

Challenges

A variety of challenges related to attainment included declining population in rural areas of the state which limits the viability of certain programs in certain regions, workforce pressure which encourages prospective students to pursue employment rather than education, and the resources necessary to help at-risk students persist to completion. While it is improving, the public perception of the value of technical education, particularly among key influencers, continues to be a challenge.

Affordability

Opportunities

Multiple campuses identified targeted state funding, including support for equipment and the FY23 and FY24 tuition freezes, as an opportunity related to affordability. Other opportunities included transitioning to lower-cost digital learning materials and pursuing additional industry support for equipment, facilities, and scholarships. The state's dual credit program was also identified as an opportunity to provide affordability for students and families.

Challenges

The rising cost of equipment, facilities, and personnel were consistently noted as challenges. The need for scholarship opportunities beyond the Build Dakota Scholarship Program was also shared by multiple campuses. The need to prepare a workforce for lower-wage, but high-demand industries is an ongoing challenge.

Alignment

Opportunities

The conversation around alignment focused on opportunities to retain credential completers in South Dakota. Institutions voiced the value of continued guidance from industry advisory councils and economic development agencies. They also identified opportunities to strengthen pathways to employment and continued education in the state, including partnering with employers to create work-based learning programs and enhancing articulation and transferability where appropriate.

Challenges

Challenges identified related to our alignment priority and goal included competition from employers in other states and external factors related to housing and childcare that impact employment decisions.

Summary

In addition to affirming the value of focusing on attainment, affordability, and alignment, the campus visits gave us an opportunity to share important data and to gauge campus-level support for the measurable goals associated with each priority. While the mission of this work is to develop system-level strategic priorities, we will only be able to achieve our end-of-the-decade goals if each campus is prepared to contribute and is supported by the resources necessary to be successful.

cc: President Ann Bolman, Western Dakota Technical College
President Bob Griggs, Southeast Technical College
President Tiffany Sanderson, Lake Area Technical College
President Mark Wilson, Mitchell Technical College