LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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Scholarship Awards Grow at LATC







With the start of the school year, hundreds of Lake Area Tech students are finding their college pursuits even more affordable thanks to scholarship awards they've earned.

In September, the Lake Area Tech Foundation hosted its annual luncheons – one focused on scholarships awarded directly through the Foundation and the other for Build Dakota Scholars and their industry partners. Both events brought donors and students together to learn about one another and the impact of the awards.

Nick Wendell, SD Board of Technical Education Executive Director, keynoted the LATC Foundation Scholarship Luncheon and Derek DeGeest from DeGeest Corporation and Lesta USA in Tea, SD headlined the Build Dakota Scholarship Luncheon.

LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Fall 2026 LATC Student Body

Lake Area Tech's student body is the largest in the college's history at **2,387 students**. One of the most promising areas of growth is in the rise of recent high school graduates from South Dakota choosing LATC. In the last five years**, the number of recent SD high schoolers in the freshman class has risen by 27%**, to 498 in Fall 2026.

Through the growth of the college over the last two decades, LATC is proud to have simultaneously increased student outcomes, with both retention and graduation rates improving as more students enrolled.

WHO ARE WE SERVING?

2026-27 LATC Student Body
Degree Seekers

81.3% Full-Time

54/46 Male : Female

20.4% First Gen

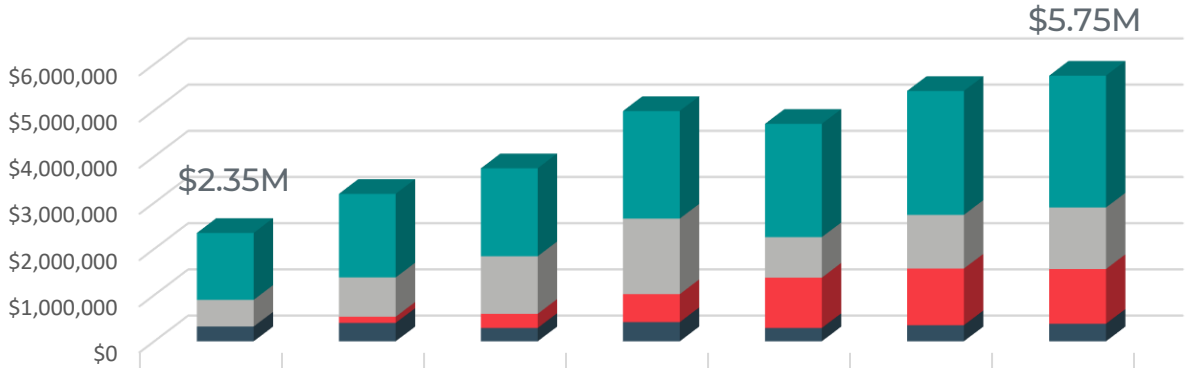
79.1% Hail from SD

70.5% Work while attending LATC

86.2% Traditionally Aged (18-24)

3.6%	2.1%	3.1%	0.3%	0.9%	0.1%	88.1%
Am. Ind.	Black	Hispanic	Hawaiian	Asian	2+ Races	White

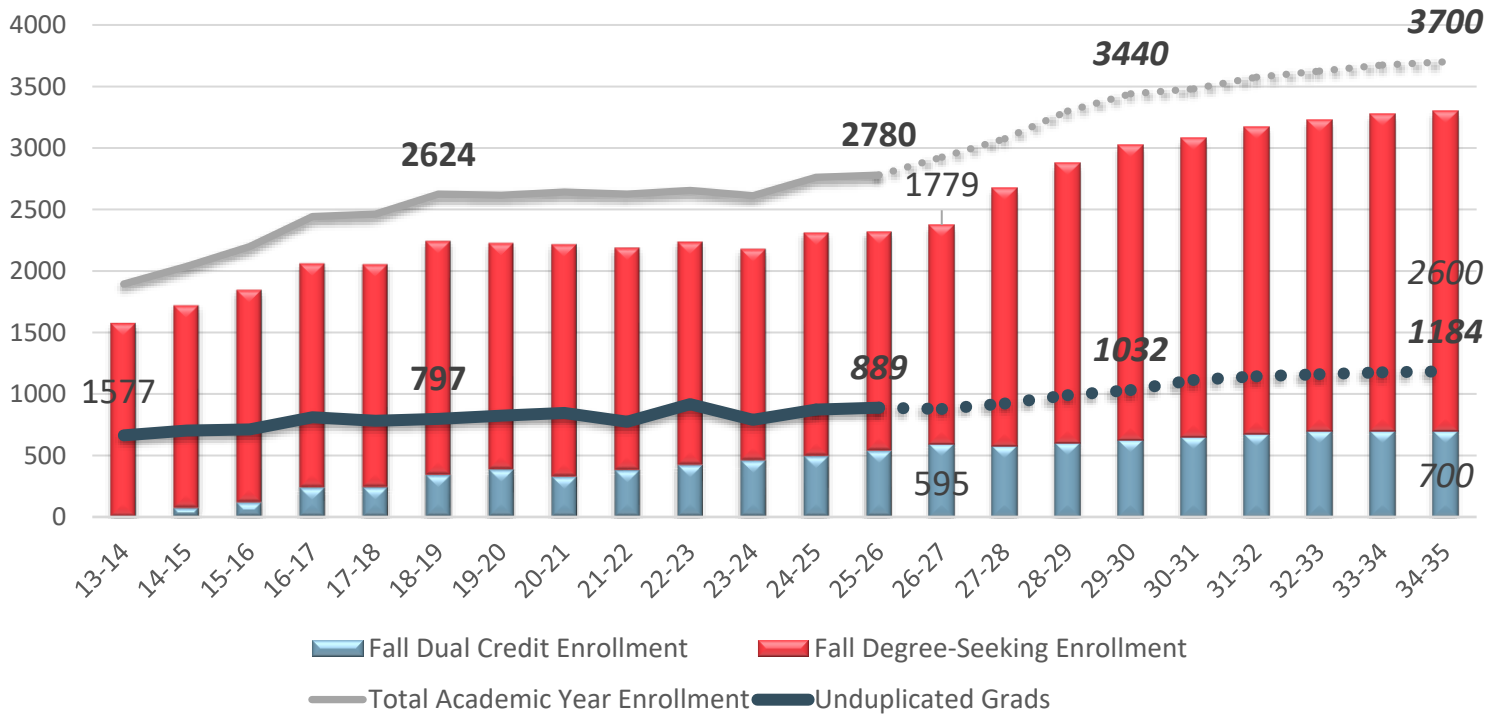
Lake Area Tech College Foundation Scholarship Growth



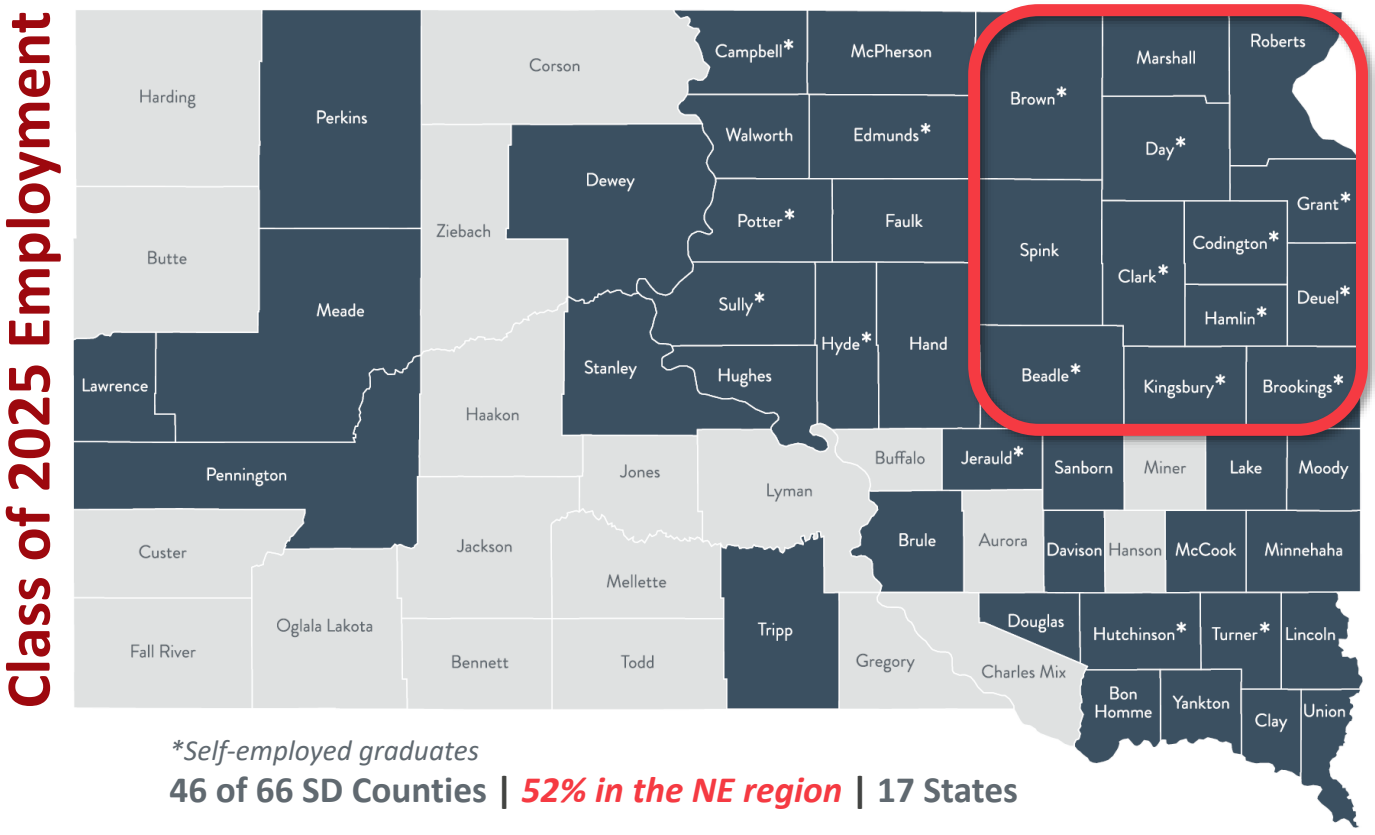
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Build Dakota	$1,448,948	$1,809,655	$1,904,097	$2,329,277	$2,453,161	$2,682,159	$2,854,645
Pass Through	$578,110	$851,475	$1,246,804	$1,636,063	$876,891	$1,162,337	$1,332,948
Workforce		$132,820	$305,301	$605,738	$1,090,083	$1,225,897	$1,183,894
Foundation	$319,070	$398,385	$289,732	$414,397	$287,559	$348,430	$380,047

LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Lake Area Tech Graduates & Enrollments



Class of 2025 Employment



**Self-employed graduates*

46 of 66 SD Counties | *52% in the NE region* | 17 States



LAKE AREA TECH \\\ est. 1965

From a GED to a College Degree

When Janessa Behnke started Lake Area Tech's Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program in July 2025, she had one goal: earn her GED and create new opportunities for herself and her family.

While working toward her GED, Janessa connected with the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation's WIOA program, which helped her gain employment as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at a local nursing home.

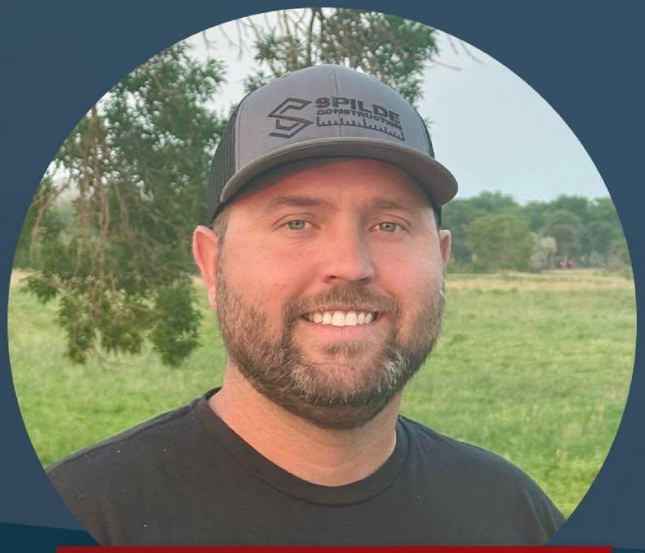
Balancing full-time work, family and classes wasn't always easy, but Janessa stayed committed. Just over six months after starting the program, she earned her GED.

And she didn't stop there.

Janessa enrolled at Lake Area Tech in the Business – Human Resource Management program and is now in her second semester, continuing to work toward new career opportunities.



LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Jordan Spilde

Building Trades Technology
Class of 2014

"LATC showed me the value of staying disciplined, taking pride in my work, and always looking for ways to get better."

20 Years of Hybrid Nursing Education

In 2005, Lake Area Tech launched something no one else in the country had tried before: a hybrid Practical Nursing program, made possible through a federal grant and the support of the Lutheran Good Samaritan Society. The mission was to make nursing education accessible to students who couldn't relocate to Watertown. Whether they lived in rural communities, worked full-time, or were raising families, this program opened a door that didn't exist before.

What started as a pilot with just 6 students grew to 20 by fall 2006. Today, two decades later, we proudly serve 48 full-time and 32 part-time students through this flexible learning path.

Here's to 20 years of expanding access to nursing education and recognizing every graduate who found their way to this career because the classroom came to them.



LATC Nursing went through its program accreditation review in March 2026 by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). **In October, the college received word that the Nursing programs – both Practical and Registered Nursing – were granted continuing accreditation with no findings.**

In addition, the Simulation Center received provisional accreditation from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare (SSH) and the Council for Accreditation of Healthcare Simulation Programs in July.

Mitchell Technical College

Theresa Kriese, MTC President
S.D. Board of Technical Education Report

October 2026



Utilities Pipeline Technology Program to Launch in Fall 2027

Mitchell Technical College will introduce a new Utilities Pipeline Technology diploma program in Fall 2027, expanding its energy trades offerings and preparing students for careers in natural gas distribution and transmission. The one-year program will help meet industry demand for skilled technicians who construct, operate, and maintain essential utility infrastructure.

The program will emphasize hands-on learning, with approximately 80% of instruction taking place in lab settings. Students will gain practical experience in pipeline welding, plastic fusion, equipment operation, leak detection, pressure regulators, cathodic protection, and maintenance.

“Our goal is to give students practical experience with the tools, equipment, and processes they will use on the job,” said Jed Schoenfelder, program director. “By spending the majority of their time in the lab, students will build their skills and confidence as they prepare for careers helping maintain the utility systems our communities depend on.”

Training will address both the construction of pipeline systems and the ongoing work required to keep those systems operating safely and reliably. Students will learn how different components function together and develop skills to identify problems, perform maintenance, and support the delivery of natural gas to homes, businesses, and communities.

Students will also utilize Mitchell Tech’s new underground lab to practice working with buried utility systems in a hands-on training environment. The lab will provide opportunities to connect classroom concepts with practical applications in pipeline installation, equipment operation, and maintenance, helping students prepare for the conditions and tasks they will encounter in the field.

Mitchell Tech Sets Record Enrollment for the Second Consecutive Year



Mitchell Technical College achieved record enrollment for the second consecutive year, welcoming 1,392 students for the Fall 2026 semester. This exceeds the previous record of 1,344 students in Fall 2025, an increase of 48 students, or approximately 3.6%.

The college also welcomed its largest first-year class, with 696 students. These milestones reflect continued interest in Mitchell Tech's career-focused programs and hands-on approach to education.

"Reaching record enrollment for a second consecutive year reflects the confidence students and families place in Mitchell Tech and the value of a hands-on technical education," said President Theresa Kriese. "Our students come here because they want a clear path to a rewarding career. This milestone is also a testament to the dedication of our faculty and staff and the strong support we receive from industry and community partners."

Enrollment growth supports the college's role in preparing skilled professionals for regional employers. Continued collaboration among faculty, staff, and industry partners helps ensure students receive the training and support needed to move successfully from college into their careers.

BlackRock Foundation Grant to Expand Rural Energy Trades Training



Mitchell Technical College Foundation has received a grant from The BlackRock Foundation through its BlackRock Future Builders initiative. The Foundation is among 15 organizations selected for the initiative's inaugural national grant cohort, which supports pathways into skilled trades careers.

The grant will expand Mitchell Tech's Rural Grid Builders initiative, supporting training for 240 participants over two years across South Dakota and the surrounding region. Training will focus on utility pipeline technology, electrical, HVAC/R, automation and SCADA controls, drone operations, and plumbing.

Funding will also support a mobile outreach unit, virtual-reality simulations, and energy trades camps, with career exploration efforts targeting 3,000 students and 10 partner high schools. Together, these activities will expand access to technical training and help address skilled-worker shortages in rural communities.

Mitchell Tech Earns State & National Rankings

#4 Technical College in the Nation

WalletHub ranked Mitchell Technical College the fourth-best community college in the nation in its 2026 report. Among more than 610 colleges evaluated, Mitchell Tech earned the third-best graduation rate, second-best retention rate, and eighth-best student-to-faculty ratio, highlighting the college's strong student outcomes.

#1 LPN Program in South Dakota

Mitchell Tech's Licensed Practical Nursing program was recognized as the #1 LPN program in South Dakota for 2026 by Practical Nursing. The program combines classroom instruction, simulation, and clinical experiences to prepare students for practical nursing careers and help meet the region's workforce needs.

#1 Welding Program in the Nation

Mitchell Technical College has been selected as the 2026 WEMCO Excellence in Welding Award recipient in the Educational Facility category. The national honor recognizes contributions that advance welding's reputation and the industry. Mitchell Tech will be recognized at the awards ceremony during FABTECH on October 22 in Las Vegas.

Top 50 Best Places to Work

Mitchell Technical College was named one of Prairie Business magazine's 50 Best Places to Work for 2026. The recognition highlights the college's positive, family-friendly work environment and the faculty and staff whose dedication supports students, colleagues, and Mitchell Tech's mission.

Avera Academy Connects High School Students with Healthcare Careers

Mitchell Tech is partnering with Mitchell High School and Avera Queen of Peace on the Avera Academy to help high school seniors explore careers in health care. The partnership connects secondary education, technical education, and a local health care employer, giving students an opportunity to consider career options before graduating from high school.

The curriculum combines college coursework at Mitchell Tech with rotations through departments at Avera Queen of Peace. This approach connects classroom learning with opportunities to observe health care professionals and explore the variety of roles within a hospital. Students gain a broader understanding of health care career pathways while considering which areas align with their interests and goals.

"The Avera Academy turns abstract career ideas into tangible reality for the students. By rotating through dozens of hospital departments at Avera Queen of Peace while earning college credit at Mitchell Tech, high school seniors aren't just reading about healthcare careers, they are shadowing professionals and experiencing the workplace culture firsthand," said Scott Fossum, Vice President of Academic Affairs at Mitchell Tech. "This program gives students a cost-free jumpstart on their degree, the confidence that they belong in higher education, and a clear, supported pathway straight into MTC's Health Sciences programs and our local healthcare workforce."



SOUTHEAST Technical College

October 2026

Board of Technical Education
Dr. Cory Clasemann, STC President

Southeast Technical College Breaks Ground on James Abdnor Center for Advanced Manufacturing

















Shovels hit the dirt this August as STC administrators, faculty and staff celebrated the groundbreaking of the James Abdnor Center for Advanced Manufacturing with elected officials, industry partners, community supporters and members of the Abdnor family. The Abdnor Center is one of two new construction projects on campus.

https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/stc-breaks-ground-on-abdnor-center.php

SOUTHEAST Technical College



STC Seminar Series on Mental Health Begins Second Year

"Breakthrough: A Convergence on Mental Health," Southeast Tech's mental health seminar series, resumed this fall with Dr. Nadine Burke Harris delivering the keynote at the Washington Pavilion in September. Dr. Burke Harris discussed childhood adversity, trauma-informed care, resilience and community well-being to a sold-out crowd. The sessions are hosted by STC with support from the Seed for Success Foundation and in partnership with Avera Behavioral Health.

https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/breakthrough-with-dr-nadine-burke-harris-reaches-capacity.php

STC Workforce Development Grows Partnership with SD Department of Health

When the South Dakota Department of Health identified a need for staff to strengthen clinical skills, Southeast Technical College helped turn it into a statewide education opportunity. This summer, Southeast Tech partnered with the department to provide a four-week phlebotomy course designed for Disease Intervention Specialists, giving participants foundational knowledge and hands-on practice in blood collection, specimen handling and related skills they could immediately apply in the field.

https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/customized-training-workforce-needs.php





Instructors with disease intervention specialists that completed training at STC as part of the partnership between STC and the SD Department of Health.

SOUTHEAST Technical College



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

From Service to Sonography:

Kyle Endsley's Journey at Southeast Tech

For Marine Corps veteran Kyle Endsley, the core values learned in uniform became the compass pointing toward a new mission in healthcare. Although he didn't initially see himself as the college type, his desire to make a difference and work with people from all walks of life drew him to Southeast Tech's Cardiovascular Sonography program. Today, Endsley is already giving back to the community through his volunteer work at Avera, and he hopes to land a hospital role in Sioux Falls when he graduates.

https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/from-service-to-sonography.php







Sports Turf Management Students Prepare Course for Sanford International

Sports Turf Management students at STC joined the Minnehaha Country Club grounds crew to prepare the course for the Sanford International golf tournament. Students have volunteered their time for the past several years, gaining real-world, industry experience along the way.

https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/sports-turf-management-sanford-international.php



STC Hosts Unified Academy for Law Enforcement Training

Members of the Special Olympics and LifeScape, armed with Nerf guns and virtual reality headsets, gained firsthand experience handling high-stress situations alongside the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office during the inaugural Unified Academy recently at Southeast Technical College.

https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/unified-academy-southeast-tech.php



WESTERN DAKOTA TECHNICAL COLLEGE



Western Dakota Technical College

October 2026

Dr. Kendra Ericson, WDTC President

S.D. Board of Technical Education Report

Fall Enrollment

Western Dakota Technical College is growing! Fall 2026 degree-seeking enrollment is up, with major gains in programs that keep our region strong. Healthcare enrollment is up 7% and Trades enrollment is up 15%.

Welcome Back Fall Picnic

Students, faculty and staff enjoyed an afternoon of food and fun at our Welcome Back Fall Picnic! Thank you to our community partners for joining us and sharing their messages with students, and to the South Dakota National Guard for helping prepare and serve the meal. We appreciate everyone who helped make the event a great start to the fall semester.













Community Connections

Western Dakota Technical College is proud to be part of the communities we serve. Over the past few months, WDTC faculty and staff volunteered their time and represented the college at several community events across the Rapid City area.

From celebrating the opening of the new Caterpillar facility in Rapid City, to connecting with the community at Summer Nights Downtown, and showing our support for educators during Educator Appreciation Night at the Hart Ranch Wild West Rodeo, our team enjoyed getting out, making connections and celebrating the people and organizations that make our community strong.

Celebrating Excellence:

Fawn Wilde Honored as Postsecondary Professional of the Year



Congratulations to Fawn Wilde, Director of Community & Educational Partnerships, on being recognized with two Postsecondary Professional of the Year honors!

Fawn was named the Postsecondary Professional of the Year by the Technology & Industry division of Career and Technical Education (CTE), recognizing her excellence in postsecondary Technology & Industry education and her commitment to student achievement and program development.

She was also honored as the South Dakota ACTE Postsecondary Professional of the Year, an award recognizing career and technical education professionals who demonstrate innovation, provide meaningful guidance to students, and show dedication to strengthening CTE within their institutions and communities.

These honors recognize Fawn's dedication to building strong partnerships, creating opportunities for students, and advancing career and technical education. We are proud to celebrate her well-deserved recognition!

South Dakota ACTE®

WDTC Career Expo

High School Juniors and Seniors participated in the WDTC Career Expo at the Monument where they explored hands on career demos, met community employers, and discovered programs that will match their future goals.



> We're proud to partner with WDTC to give students the opportunity to explore careers in health care through hands-on experiences and real-world connections. We hope to spark curiosity, build confidence, and help students see the possibilities that are available to them as they begin exploring their future.
>
> ***- Colleen Bsharah, SHRM-SCP***
> Senior Career Development Consultant, Leadership, Education, and Development (LEAD), Sanford Health | Black Hills Market



Associated General Contractors (AGC) of America Construction Camp

WDTC partnered with AGC to provide a two-day hands-on camp at the Central States Fairgrounds to connect with over 200 area high school students. Students explored careers in the trades through hands-on activities.











Welding & Fabrication Earns ATEA Outstanding Technical Program Award

Western Dakota Tech's Welding & Fabrication program was recognized with the ATEA Outstanding Technical Program Award, honoring the program's commitment to developing highly skilled, confident graduates.

The award reflects the dedication of instructors who challenge students to grow while providing individualized support along the way. One student shared that instructors pushed them beyond their comfort zone, helping turn early struggles with measurements and blueprint reading into confidence and proficiency that ultimately contributed to success in SkillsUSA.

As the student put it, "Every student in our class was given individual support in any area they may have struggled in." The combination of industry expertise, hands-on training, and personalized instruction prepares students with both the technical skills and confidence needed to launch careers across the welding industry.

Muth Electric Wins ATEA Silver Star of Excellence Award

Congratulations to Muth Electric, winner of the ATEA Silver Star of Excellence Award! Muth Electric has demonstrated an exceptional and sustained commitment to advancing postsecondary technical education through meaningful partnerships, workforce development, and direct investment in student success.

Their ongoing support has made a significant and lasting impact on Western Dakota Technical College's Electrical Trades program and the broader WDTC community. Through student support, instructional and program investment, faculty collaboration, industry engagement, and community partnership, Muth Electric has strengthened educational opportunities and enhanced the student learning experience.

Muth Electric's dedication to technical education exemplifies the power of industry partnership in developing a highly skilled workforce for our region. We are proud to celebrate this well-deserved recognition!