



LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE



24th ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S LUNCHEON



Lake Area Technical College Foundation's 24th Annual Governor's Luncheon was held on May 5th. The annual event brought together community leaders, business partners, students, alumni, and legislative representatives in support of scholarships for Lake Area Tech students. The luncheon was underwritten by the Watertown Area Community Foundation, whose continued partnership helps make this important event possible each year. Approximately 275 individuals attended.

LATC was honored to welcome Governor Larry Rhoden and First Lady Sandy Rhoden to campus along with U.S. Senator Mike Rounds and Lt. Governor Tony Venhuizen.

What began in 2003 as a way to raise scholarship funds has grown into a meaningful community tradition that celebrates the impact of technical education and the opportunities it creates for students across the region.



SkillsUSA STATE CONFERENCE

On April 9th and 10th, 34 Lake Area Tech students participated in the SD SkillsUSA State Leadership & Skills Conference (SLSC) in Mitchell. The conference showcases participants' skills, leadership abilities, and professionalism across a variety of technical competitions.

Gold Winners:

Jake Jackson, Auto Refinishing
Devin Brisson, Diesel
Nolan Gleason, Aviation Maintenance
Jacob Hoffmeister, Criminal Justice

Silver Winners:

Taylor Merkel, Auto Collision
Tyler Schneider, Diesel
Johnathan Jostad, Welding Individual
Ryker Sawvel, Welding Sculpture
Owen Spieker, Aviation Maintenance
Seth Lassley, Criminal Justice

Bronze Winners:

James Larsen, Auto Refinishing
Landen Hartman, Diesel
Team of Nick Tollefson, Kevory Thompson, Ryker Sawvell,
Welding Fabrication Team
Charles Gross, Aviation Maintenance
Alec Minkel, Criminal Justice

The 2027 SD SkillsUSA SLSC will be held at Lake Area Tech on April 15-16th.



CHS FOUNDATION TRADING LAB



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This investment gives students real world experience in commodity trading and fosters the skills needed to advance their careers. We're eager to see the successes of this program and its impact on the larger agricultural industry.

- **Megan Wolle,**
CHS Foundation
President

The CHS Foundation, funded by charitable contributions from the nation's leading agribusiness cooperative, has awarded a grant to Lake Area Technical College (LATC) to support the launch of its Agriculture Commodity Risk Management Lab. The state-of-the-art learning space is designed to prepare the next generation of agricultural leaders to navigate complex agricultural markets.

The grant will help establish one of the Upper Midwest's first simulation-based commodity risk management labs at a two-year college. The lab will serve students in LATC's Ag Business, Ag Production and Livestock Production & Management programs, providing hands-on experience in commodity marketing, risk management and data-driven decision-making.

The lab will replicate a real-world trading environment with multiple live market data monitors and individual student trading stations. Students will participate in mock trading sessions, hedging simulations and real-time market analysis using industry-standard software and live data feeds. With advanced video conferencing capabilities, the space will also host guest lectures from industry professionals around the world. The lab is scheduled to open in Fall 2026.

LAB UPGRADES AT LAKE AREA TECH



Nursing Simulation Lab at Capital City Campus Dedicated

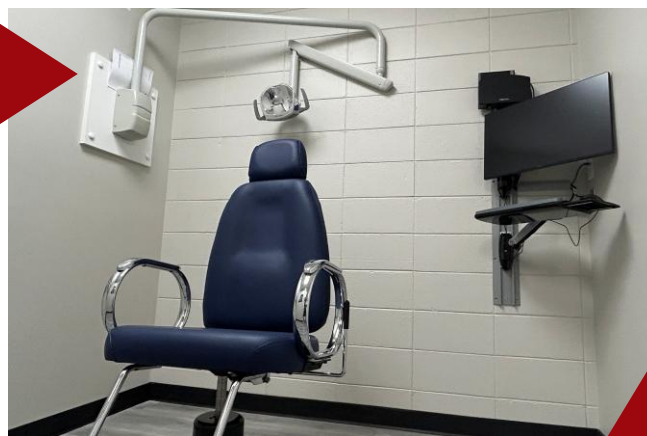
In April, LATC celebrated an advancement in Nursing education in Pierre with program partners Avera Health and Capital City Campus (CCC). Avera Health provided grant funds to update the Nursing classroom at Capital City Campus with a simulation center that has similar capabilities to the advanced simulation lab on LATC's main campus in Watertown. A dedication ceremony and open house was held to welcome the public to the updated lab.

Radiology Lab Added to LATC Dental Programs

Lake Area Technical College has completed a new Dental Radiography Lab in its 100 Building to expand hands-on training opportunities for students in its dental programs. The new space was created to support the upcoming Dental Hygiene program while continuing to serve Dental Assisting students. The dedicated lab allows Dental Assisting students to complete radiography training while Dental Hygiene students use the dental clinic for clinical hours and competencies required for graduation.

The lab includes six radiography operatories equipped with radiography units, dental chairs, cabinetry and computers with dental software. It also houses one of LATC's two panoramic X-ray machines, giving students experience with advanced imaging technology used in modern dental practices.

LATC offers a hybrid option for Practical Nursing and Registered Nursing students at Capital City Campus. Students take theory courses online and then complete most skill checks, clinicals, and preceptorship requirements at the Pierre location. The new lab space cuts down on time away from home and costs associated with travel. In addition to use by LATC's 24 LPN students and 8 RN students based at the Pierre location, Avera Health will also be able to utilize the space for employee training.



MEGA SIM, MEGA EXPERIENCE

Lake Area Technical College conducted a large-scale emergency response training exercise on Thursday, April 23rd. The event was a hands-on simulation designed to prepare students for real-world emergency situations. Participating LATC programs included Law Enforcement, Med/Fire Rescue, Nursing, Surgical Technology, Medical Laboratory Technician, Medical Assisting, Associate of Social Work, Photography/Media, and Computer Information Systems.

The simulation gave students experiences that can't be created in a traditional classroom. It placed them in the middle of a real-world scenario where decisions matter, communication is critical, and teamwork crosses every discipline involved. Students not only applied the technical skills they've learned, but did so alongside professionals and peers in related fields, just like they will in their careers.



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The primary focus of this exercise is student learning. This kind of high-pressure, collaborative experience builds confidence, sharpens judgement, and ultimately prepares students to respond well when real lives are on the line.

- **Tiffany Sanderson,**
LATC President

LAKE AREA TECH:

SUPERIOR, COMPREHENSIVE TECHNICAL EDUCATION THAT CHANGES LIVES & LAUNCHES CAREERS.

2026-27 MILITARY FRIENDLY DESIGNATION



Lake Area Technical College has earned the 2026-2027 Military Friendly® School gold-level designation. This is the 16th year Lake Area Tech has received the Military Friendly® School award. The designation recognizes Lake Area Tech as a top tier institution among similar-sized two-year colleges nationwide for serving student veterans, active-duty service members, and their families.

The college is currently serving 228 students who are military-connected. 18 Lake Area Technical College employees are veterans or actively serving in the guard or reserves. Institutions earning the Military Friendly® School designation were evaluated on data related to student success in categories such as retention, graduation, career placement, loan repayment, and degree advancement or transfer.

GRAD FEST & COMMENCEMENT

The LATC community hosted its annual Grad Fest on Thursday, May 14, 2026 beginning with a student-led parade through downtown Watertown and ending at Lake Area Tech with festivities around campus, including a variety of games, music, activities, and food. Also on the 14th, 17 Native American graduates were recognized at the annual honoring ceremony.

On Friday, May 15th, LATC's 59th Commencement Ceremony was held in the Watertown Civic Arena. Approximately 610 of the 883 eligible graduates walked in this year's ceremony. Matt Michels, South Dakota's 38th Lt. Governor, gave the commencement address to the graduates who joined a proud network of more than 26,000 alumni.

GRAD FEST

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Our graduates are walking into high-demand careers and making an immediate impact. This event is a chance to celebrate everything they've accomplished and everything that's ahead of them.”

**-Cam Corey,
LATC Vice President**





Student Spotlight: Nathan's Journey to Opportunity

When Nathan Slay left California for South Dakota, he carried little more than a backpack, a suitcase, and a leap of faith. Today, he is preparing to graduate from Mitchell Tech with a secured career path and a future that once felt out of reach.

Growing up in a single-parent household and facing the high cost of living, Nathan didn't see college as a realistic option. That changed when he discovered the Build Dakota Scholarship, which made it possible for him to pursue an education without the financial burden.

Starting with no vehicle, limited resources, and no local connections, Nathan walked miles each day to work and class while building a new life in an unfamiliar place. Along the way, support from the Mitchell community, from small acts of kindness like a bike donation to life-changing opportunities like tuition assistance, helped him stay on track.

Enrolled in the Electrical Construction & Maintenance program, Nathan excelled both academically and personally. He became a tutor, a student leader, and a mentor to others navigating similar challenges. Through the Build Dakota Scholarship, he also secured a partnership with Muth Electric, providing a direct pathway into the workforce after graduation.

"It's not just about cost," he explained. "It's about opportunity."

Now nearing graduation, Nathan plans to remain in South Dakota, continue building his career, and give back to others in the same way the community supported him.

Read his full story: <https://www.mitchelltech.edu/news/slay-finds-future-at-mitchell-tech/>

Power Line Night Climb

Mitchell Tech’s Power Line Construction & Maintenance program had 115 student linemen participate in their annual Night Climb, a hands-on training designed to simulate real-world working conditions in the powerline industry.

Conducted in low-light environments, the Night Climb challenges students to safely and effectively complete tasks while adapting to limited visibility—conditions commonly experienced during outage response and emergency situations.

“The students truly have a strong understanding of the work and demonstrate a high level of respect for their instructors,” said Tom Osborne, Power Line Construction & Maintenance Program Coordinator at Mitchell Tech. “The night climb typically runs smoothly because they follow ground-to-ground safety rules—gloves go on before they go up in the bucket and don’t come off until they’re safely back on the ground.”

The exercise emphasizes critical skills such as communication, situational awareness, and adherence to safety protocols. As one of the program’s key experiential learning opportunities, the Night Climb ensures students are prepared for the realities of the field.



Mahoney Named State Teacher of the Year

Mitchell Tech instructor Jim Mahoney has been named Teacher of the Year by the South Dakota Technical Education Association.

Mahoney, who teaches in the Architectural Design & Building Construction program, was honored for his dedication to hands-on learning, student success, and preparing graduates for careers in skilled trades. His commitment to craftsmanship and real-world application has made a lasting impact on students both in the classroom and throughout their careers.

Eagle Feather Ceremony

Mitchell Tech hosted its eleventh annual Eagle Feather Ceremony on Thursday, May 7, to honor six graduating students from the Yankton Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and Oglala Sioux Tribe. Eagle feathers are given to MTC students to wear during commencement.

Receiving an eagle feather is a significant honor in many Native American cultures, symbolizing the achievement of this important educational journey and the honor the graduate brings to his or her family, community, and tribal nation.



Scholarship Luncheons Celebrate Student & Donor Impact

The Mitchell Tech Scholarship Luncheons are special events organized by the Mitchell Tech Foundation to facilitate connections between scholarship donors and recipients. The events recognized more than 40 scholarship recipients and their associated donors, providing a meaningful opportunity for connection, appreciation, and shared stories. Students were able to personally thank those who have invested in their futures, while donors gained insight into the impact of their support.

Held in the Oak Room, the luncheons also showcased the talents of Mitchell Tech's culinary students, who prepared and served meals as part of their hands-on training. The events help strengthen the bond between the institution, its students, and its benefactors, promoting a culture of giving and investment in education.



Power Line Students Earn Top Finishes at the College Lineman Rodeo

Mitchell Tech recently hosted the College Lineman Rodeo, an event that brought together 60 students from five states to test their technical abilities in a competitive setting. Twelve Mitchell Tech Power Line Construction & Maintenance students participated in the event, utilizing the knowledge and skills learned in their nine-month program.

Each contestant strapped on climbing spikes, safety belts, and hard hats to complete in events based on traditional lineman tasks, such as cross-arm changeout, obstacle climb, and framing a C-1 structure. All three are timed events and were judged for accuracy, speed, knowledge, following proper procedures, and incorporating safety requirements. The students also tested their classroom skills with a written Lineman Knowledge Exam.

“It brings together everything the students have learned throughout the year and gives them the opportunity to apply those skills in a real-world setting. Adding the competitive element makes it even more engaging, especially for these students,” said Chandler Baumgart, Power Line Construction & Maintenance Instructor at Mitchell Tech.

Mitchell Tech students earned eight top finishes across multiple events, further demonstrating the strength of the program and the level of preparation students receive.



Mitchell Tech had 20 students represent our Power Line program at the Lineman Rodeo. Five of those students earned a total of eight top finishes across multiple events.





Mitchell Tech Awards 20,000th Degree at 2026 Commencement

Five hundred sixty-three graduates received diplomas and degrees from Mitchell Technical College this spring, launching them into careers in fields ranging from diesel technology to healthcare and beyond. Thanks to nationally recognized programs and a reputation for producing highly skilled graduates, many students entered the workforce with job offers already secured—reflecting Mitchell Tech’s 99% job placement rate.

A special milestone was also celebrated during this year’s commencement, as Mitchell Tech awarded its 20,000th degree. The honor was presented to Tanayia Pacheco of Gayville, South Dakota, a graduate of the Medical Assistant program, marking a significant moment in the college’s history and its continued impact on workforce development across the region.

The ceremony marked the fifty-eighth commencement since the college was established in 1968. Over the years, Mitchell Tech has grown from a single building into a modern campus on the south side of Mitchell, featuring state-of-the-art learning facilities, advanced technology, and hands-on training environments that prepare students for real-world success.

The Class of 2026 included 117 Build Dakota Scholarship recipients, who received full-ride support in exchange for their commitment to live and work in South Dakota after graduation. The program continues to play a critical role in strengthening the state’s workforce by connecting students with high-demand career opportunities and industry partners.



“Commencement is a celebration of the hard work, determination, and growth of every Mitchell Tech graduate,” said Theresa Kriese, President of Mitchell Technical College. “Our students leave here prepared—not just with technical skills, but with confidence and experience to succeed in their careers and make an impact in their communities. We are proud of each and every graduate and excited to see what’s next for them.”

Mitchell Tech hosted three commencement ceremonies, dividing graduates by division and program to accommodate family and friends. Ceremonies included student speakers, presentation of the Spirit of MTC Awards, honoring one graduate from each program selected by their program instructor, and the conferring of diplomas and degrees.

May 2026

Board of Technical Education
Dr. Cory Clasemann, STC President



Southeast Technical College Named Semifinalist for \$1 Million 2027 Aspen Prize

The Aspen Institute named Southeast Technical College as a semifinalist for the 2027 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. The 25 semifinalists from 20 states were selected from nearly 1,000 institutions based on outcomes data and collegewide practices that support strong and improving student success. “This recognition reflects our focus on outcomes that matter—students completing programs that lead directly to good jobs and long-term careers,” said Dr. Cory Clasemann, president, STC.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/stc-named-semifinalist-for-aspen-prize.php>

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**Dr. Cory Clasemann
President, STC**

STC Breaks Ground on Homebuilding Lab

Officials at Southeast Tech broke ground on the Wells Fargo Homebuilding Lab earlier this month. The new facility, set to open in spring 2027, will provide students with hands-on construction experience while supporting affordable housing efforts in the Sioux Falls region. The facility is made possible through a \$2 million grant from Wells Fargo.



Plant Sale

Horticulture Technology students at Southeast Tech held their annual Plant Sale in April. Students spend the year preparing for the sale, and this year, focused on a large variety of plants. KELO TV was on campus highlighting their efforts.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/horticulture-students-work-hard-to-get-your-garden-started.php>

Spring 2026 Service to Community Days Sets New Records for Participants and Hours

Southeast Technical College students and employees came together for the college's spring Service to Community (STC) Days April 13-17, achieving another year of record-breaking participation with 383 participants contributing 496 hours of service.

Volunteers constructed materials for YMCA Camp Leif Ericson, which provides children with "a safe, meaningful, and life-changing outdoor camping experience" along the banks of the Big Sioux River. From wheelchair ramps to activity kits, volunteers contributed items to help the camp's dedicated staff run memorable activities for campers this summer.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/stc-days-spring-26.php>



‘Campaign Next’ Concludes, Surpassing two Fundraising Targets

Southeast Technical College has concluded Campaign NEXT, a five-year comprehensive fundraising campaign that raised \$38.5 million to expand opportunities for students, strengthen academic programs and support workforce development across the Sioux Falls region.



Originally launched with a goal of \$25 million, the campaign’s success prompted leaders to raise the goal to \$30 million midway through the effort. Campaign NEXT, co-chaired by Mark and Cynthia Mickelson and Tony Nour, ultimately surpassed both targets, finishing \$8.5 million beyond the revised goal when the campaign closed on Dec. 31, 2025.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/foundation/next-campaign/index.php>

USD and STC Open Doors for Future Business Leaders

The University of South Dakota and Southeast Tech have expanded their articulation agreement to broaden program offerings and strengthen transfer opportunities, making it easier for STC Business graduates to transfer to USD’s Beacom School of Business while advancing toward their degree.



<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/usd-stc-articulation-agreements.php>

STC Students Compete in State Skills USA, Advance to National Competition

Sixteen STC students traveled to Mitchell in April for the annual State Skills USA conference. STC students participated in seven categories, placed in six categories, and placed first in three categories—Architectural Drafting, Autobody Collision and Automotive. First-place winners now have the chance to compete at nationals in June in Atlanta, Ga.



Marmen Energy Invests \$1 Million in Southeast Technical College Welding Labs

Southeast Technical College and the STC Foundation have received a \$1 million commitment from Marmen Energy to support upgrades to welding labs in the to-be-constructed James Abdnor Center for Advanced Manufacturing and in the Ed Wood Trade and Industry Center.

The investment comes after a recent visit from Marmen Energy's leadership team, who traveled from Quebec and spent time at the company's Brandon facility and with STC faculty and staff.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/marmen-energy-invests-in-southeast-tech-welding-labs.php>



STC Receives \$6 Million in State Funding for James Abdnor Center for Advanced Manufacturing

Southeast Technical College has received a \$6 million state appropriation to

support construction of the James Abdnor Center for Advanced Manufacturing, a major step forward in expanding hands-on training opportunities for students preparing for high-demand careers in South Dakota's manufacturing sector.

The funding, recommended in the state budget as one-time general funds, will help advance the approximately \$24 million project alongside federal, private and local contributions. Governor Larry Rhoden signed the bill, SB79, at STC in March.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/stc-receives-state-funding.php>





May 2026

S.D. Board of Technical
Education Report

Dr. Kendra Ericson
WDTC President

WESTERN
DAKOTA
TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Gov. Rhoden & WDTC President Ericson Announce Gunsmithing Program



S.D. Gov. Larry Rhoden came to Western Dakota Technical College (WDTC) to announce the addition of a Gunsmithing program, slated to start at WDTC in Fall 2027. Gov. Rhoden is awarding \$4 million from the State's Future Fund to WDTC support the purchase of equipment and related assets and ultimately acquire an accredited gunsmithing school. The program will expand

hands-on training and help meet workforce needs across South Dakota's defense and firearms industries.



Graduates Celebrated During WDTC's 58th Commencement Ceremony



Western Dakota Technical College's (WDTC) 58th Commencement Ceremony took place, at The Monument Summit Arena, on May 16. The celebration was attended by a large audience of enthusiastic family and friends, honoring the achievements of the Class of 2026. The Commencement Address was provided by Gov. Larry Rhoden. WDTC takes immense pride in this year's 345 graduates and eagerly anticipates their promising futures ahead.

Top Students Recognized at Outstanding Graduates Banquet



On May 8, WDTC hosted its annual Outstanding Graduates Banquet to honor at least one exceptional student from each participating academic program. (Larger programs can select two students.) The annual event has taken place since 2002, bringing together students, faculty, families and loved ones to celebrate academic excellence. This year, 21 students were recognized for their achievements. Christina Zweber, WDTC's Practical Nursing Offsite Coordinator and Instructor, delivered the keynote address.



Practical Nursing & Registered Nursing Grads Honored During Pinning Ceremonies

Western Dakota Technical College continues to help meet the growing demand for healthcare professionals by preparing the next generation of nurses. During special pinning ceremonies on May 14, the college celebrated the achievements of 34 Practical Nursing (PN) graduates and 22 Registered Nursing (RN) graduates as they received their



nursing pins

and marked the completion of their programs. At the PN ceremony, Gwyn Salamun addressed graduates alongside student speakers representing Rapid City, Whitewood, and Hot Springs. During the RN ceremony, Patricia Wiles spoke to graduates along with an RN student Representative. Outstanding graduate awards were also presented to select PN and RN students in recognition of their academic achievement, leadership, and commitment to patient care.



Law Enforcement Technology Students Celebrated in Special Ceremony

On May 15, WDTC hosted the Law Enforcement Technology Graduate Recognition Ceremony to recognize eight graduates and present awards to three students. SSA Matthew Glenn, Law Enforcement Training Administrator, provided remarks and the Honorable Heidi Linngren, 7th Judicial Circuit Judge, was the keynote speaker.



Honoring Ceremony Recognizes Graduating Students



WDTC hosted an Honoring Ceremony on May 15 to recognize graduating students and to honor their cultural heritage. This annual event has been a tradition at the college for nearly 30 years. Pastor Jonathan Old Horse was the guest speaker. Seventeen students participated in this year's ceremony.



Grant Received for Catapult Stakeholders Group Initiative

The Catapult Stakeholders Group Initiative, led by Fawn Wilde, WDC Director of the Western Statewide CTE Consortium, is a three-year project uniting 65 leaders from education, industry, workforce development, and community organizations in a shared effort to build a stronger,

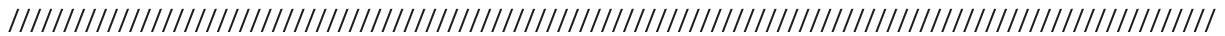


CATAPULT
stakeholders group

Strengthening the connection between education, career pathways, & workforce development in western South Dakota.

more sustainable workforce pipeline for western South Dakota. We are honored to have received \$120,000 in

grant funds from the John T. Vucurevich Foundation to support this important initiative.



Annual Earth Day Expo Attracts 1,000 Visitors to the WDC Campus



On April 25, WDC hosted the annual Rapid City Earth Day Expo, where more than 40 organizations and vendors from around Rapid City came together to educate and engage with the public on various sustainability programs through hands-on projects, presentations, and electronics recycling. There was an estimated 1,000 visitors that attended the event.



WDTC Students Excel at Statewide Skills USA Competition

Western Dakota Technical College (WDTC) students showcased their outstanding career and technical skills at the SkillsUSA South Dakota Skills Championships, April 9-10, in Mitchell. Competing against peers from Lake Area Technical College, Mitchell Technical College, and Southeast Technical College, WDTC students earned top honors—placing in nine different events and earning an impressive 18 event medals. The WDTC SkillsUSA SD medal recipients were honored during a recognition event at the college on April 14.



WDTC SkillsUSA SD Skills Championship

Post-Secondary medal winners, unless otherwise noted, are as follows:

- **Architectural Drafting** - 3rd place, Gracie Smith.
- **Cybersecurity (Team)** - 1st place, Anthony Kost and Caitlin Katen; 2nd place, Christian Madsen and Scott Valentine.
- **HVAC-R** - 3rd place, Ian Wilcken.
- **Industrial Motor Control** - 1st place, Karson Amos; 2nd place, Rebecca Jones; 3rd place, Mogan Vroman.
- **Information Technology Services (Secondary Dual Enrollment)** - 1st Place, Gavin Eiss.
- **Information Technology Services** - 1st Place, Brayden Moran; 2nd Place, Jaydn Collins; 3rd Place, Arayla Ludeman.
- **Internetworking** - 1st Place, Camden Dieball.
- **Plumbing** - 1st Place, Anton Allen; 2nd Place, Owen Henry; 3rd Place, Jaden Brimhall.
- **Welding Individual** - 1st Place, Khi Jackson.

