



LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE



SENSORY ADVENTURES CAMPS HELD IN JUNE

The Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program hosted Sensory Adventures Camp at Joy Ranch north of Watertown June 8-10 and June 15-17. The camp is designed for children ages 4-16 who experience sensory challenges related to conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism, Down's Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder.

This year 22 children assisted LATC faculty and students with the service-learning clinical experience. The OTA students design a fun and educational day camp experience full of opportunities for the children to engage in a variety of activities designed to assist the children in improving their sensory processing, transitioning between activities, and enhancing gross and fine motor skills. The many experiences include horseback riding, hay ride, fishing, swimming, water games, canoeing, sensory crafts, outdoor play, movement-based exercises such as yoga and much more.



LATC FOUNDATION'S ALUMNI & FRIENDS

The Spring 2026 issue of *Alumni & Friends* celebrated Lake Area Technical College's 60th anniversary and highlighted campus events during the Fall 2025 semester. The issue features alumni success stories, campus news, scholarship and fundraising updates, and investments in hands-on learning that continue to strengthen Lake Area Tech's workforce training for students.

Check it out! https://www.lakeareatech.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/LATC_-_Online_Spring_2026-compressed.pdf



Save the Date:

**LATC
CAREER
SEARCH
EXPO**

10/15/26

Sign up to find future employees at
www.lakeareatech.edu/careerexpo2026

NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM FISH RELEASE



Lake Area Tech Natural Resources Management students raised 1,000 bluegill throughout the school year in a recirculating aquaculture system on campus. The work was done in partnership with South Dakota Game, Fish, & Parks. In May, 200 fish were tagged and released into the Bramble Community Fishing Pond in Watertown. Several LATC students worked as interns with GF&P over the summer.

EXCELLENCE RECOGNIZED

FACULTY & ALUMNI EARN ACCOLADES FOR WORK WELL DONE

2026 GREATER GOOD AWARDS

Lake Area Technical College recognized three academic programs for their contributions to the Greater Good as we closed out the year. These departments made noteworthy impacts on student outcomes during the 2025-26 school year and truly exemplified what it means to live our mission. Congratulations to the Law Enforcement, Professional Fixed-Wing Pilot and Welding Technology faculty and staff for their leadership and impact!



CORPRATE EDUCATION TRAINS PROFESSIONALS YEAR-ROUND

Over the summer the Corp Ed team has supported trainings for professionals working in a variety of industries, in addition to the routine Commercial Drivers License (CDL) training the team offers. In June, LATC hosted the SD State Fire School, bringing 575 fire fighters to campus for their annual meeting and training classes.

Terex has been on site over the entire summer, offering service training for their dealer network. There has been an average of 20 people per session, traveling from all over North America.

Other groups, like Coeur Mining, Caterpillar, and the SD Air National Guard have utilized trainings in hydraulics, electrical, and welding to ensure technicians and airmen have the necessary credentials for their positions.



EXCELLENCE RECOGNIZED

FACULTY & ALUMNI EARN ACCOLADES FOR WORK WELL DONE

Two Lake Area Tech Graduates Earn South Dakota's Highest Law Enforcement Honors

LATC's Law Enforcement program is celebrating an extraordinary achievement as two graduates have been recognized with South Dakota's highest honors in law enforcement. **Trooper Paige Zempel**, a 2018 graduate of Lake Area Technical College, was named the 2025 South Dakota Trooper of the Year, while **Officer Alexis Buysse**, a 2016 graduate, was named the 2025 South Dakota Police Officer of the Year.

The recognition of two Lake Area Tech graduates with the state's most prestigious law enforcement awards in the same year speaks to the strength of the college's Law Enforcement program and its long-standing commitment to preparing students for successful careers in public service.

Trooper Zempel, who serves with the South Dakota Highway Patrol's Glacial Lakes Squad, received the Trooper of the Year award during the 14th Annual Highway Patrol Awards Ceremony in Sioux Falls. The award was presented by the South Dakota Department of Public Safety and Colonel Casey Collins in recognition of her outstanding service, professionalism, and dedication to protecting the citizens of South Dakota.

Officer Buysse, a member of the Watertown Police Department, was named the South Dakota Police Officer of the Year by the South Dakota Police Chiefs' and Sheriffs' Associations. She earned the honor for her highly successful, community-centered approach as the department's dedicated Mental Health Officer, helping connect individuals and families with resources while building stronger relationships between law enforcement and the community.

For Lake Area Technical College, the honors represent more than individual accomplishments. They reflect the program's mission of developing skilled professionals who lead with integrity, compassion, and a commitment to service.



GAINS ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

SkillsUSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Two Lake Area Tech students demonstrated their talent and technical skills on the national stage at the 2026 SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference (NLSC), held June 1–5 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Devin Brisson and Jacob Hoffmeister represented Lake Area Tech in their respective areas of competition. The students delivered an outstanding performance with Brisson placing 9th in the Diesel Equipment Technology contest and Hoffmeister placing 1st in the Criminal Justice (pictured) contest, bringing home a gold medal!

Their achievements reflect not only their individual talent and hard work but also the fantastic instruction and mentorship provided by the LATC faculty and advisors.



ESPORTS NATIONALS

Three LATC student-athletes from the 2025-26 Esports varsity team, Team Apex, qualified for the National Esports Collegiate Conference (NECC) in San Antonio, TX in May.

- Kaian Enockson, Computer Information Systems
- Garrison Steele, Agriculture Precision Technology
- Braydon Alford – Welding

Those representing LATC on the national stage represented three different academic programs, demonstrating Esports' ability to engage students across campus. LATC Esports competed against the top schools in the nation, finishing in an impressive 20th place.



STUDENT SERVICES LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCED

HANNAH ABEL



KRIS MUNGER



Lake Area Technical College (LATC) is pleased to announce the addition of two new leaders to its campus community, strengthening the college's commitment to student success. Hannah Abel has been named Dean of Student Services and started July 20. Kris Munger joined LATC as Director of Public Relations and Marketing, beginning July 13.

Hannah Abel brings a strong background in student involvement and alumni engagement to her new role. Most recently serving as the Director of Alumni Relations and Outreach at Southwest Minnesota State University, she has focused her career on student success and fostering meaningful campus connections.

"My career has always been rooted in supporting students, building community, and strengthening the ties between education and opportunity," said Abel. "Education changes lives, and I'm excited to support Lake Area Tech students as they gain the skills, confidence, and experiences that open doors to their future."

Originally from Montevideo, Minnesota, Abel earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Southwest Minnesota State University in Psychology and Education: Teaching, Learning and Leadership, respectively. In her role as Dean of Student Services, Abel will lead the team at Lake Area Tech that supports students in non-academic capacities including recruitment, admissions, enrollment services, financial aid, campus life activities, and career services.

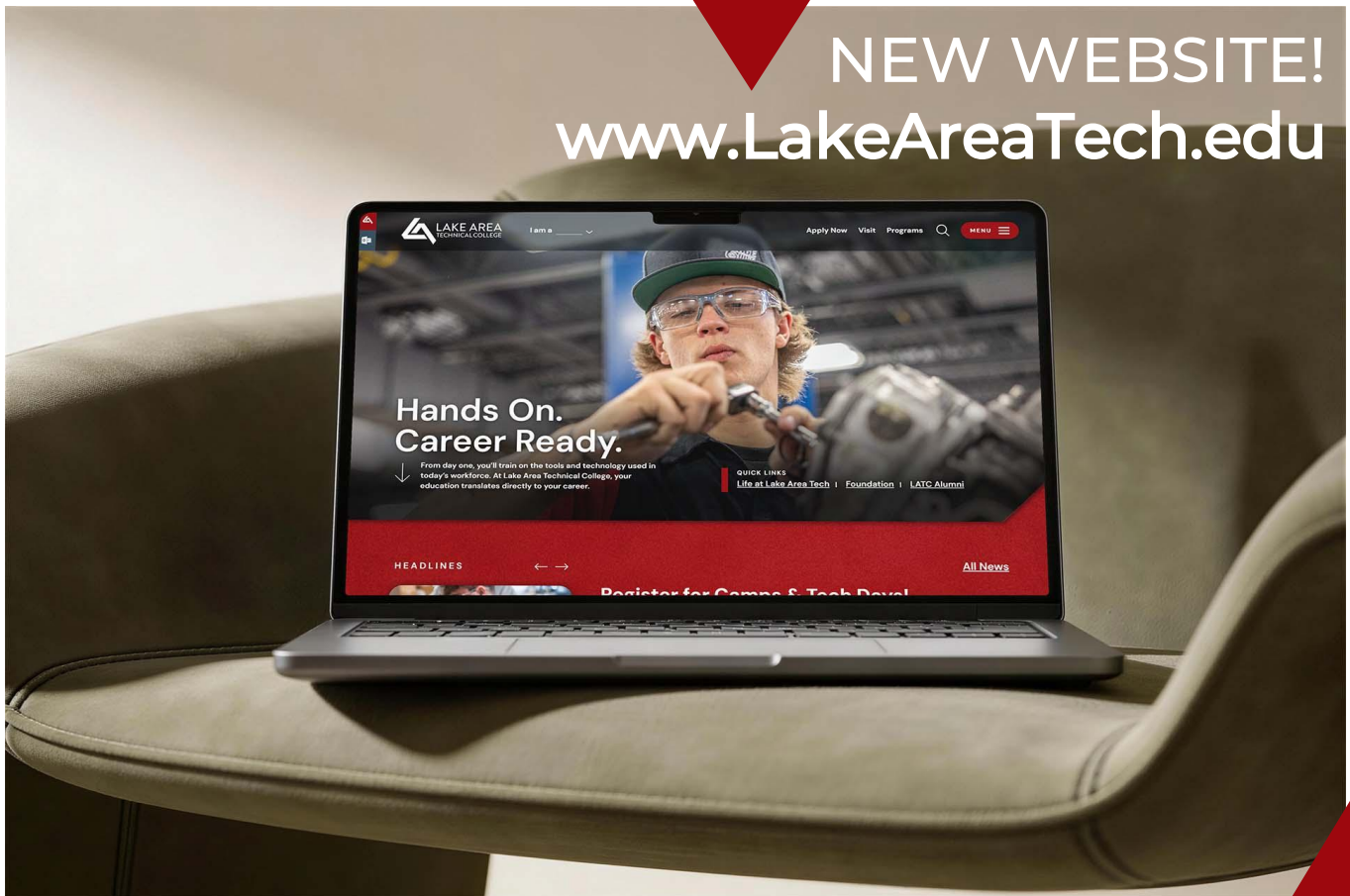
Kris Munger joins LATC with more than 20 years of professional experience in the Watertown community across industries including banking, healthcare, insurance, and real estate. Her career has centered on marketing, public relations, business development, and relationship building.

"I'm honored to join a college known for excellence and look forward to helping elevate the Lake Area Tech brand while continuing its positive impact," said Munger. "I look forward to supporting the mission to change lives and launch careers."

Munger has longstanding ties to LATC, having served as an LATC Foundation Board Member, Financial Services Program Advisory Board Member, scholarship reviewer, and adjunct instructor. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business and Economics from South Dakota State University and a Master of Business Administration from the University of South Dakota. In her new role, Munger will lead the college's public relations, marketing strategy, and brand development efforts, working to enhance LATC's visibility and engagement across the region and state.



NEW WEBSITE!
www.LakeAreaTech.edu



Mitchell Technical College

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



July 2026



Touchstone Energy Utilities Lab Expands Workforce Training Opportunities

Construction continues to make significant progress on Mitchell Tech's new Touchstone Energy Utilities Lab, with the 34,000-square-foot training facility on track to open this fall. The college will officially celebrate the completion of the project with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 3, marking an exciting milestone for both Mitchell Tech and the utility industry across South Dakota.

The new facility demonstrates a long-term commitment to strengthening the workforce pipeline and preparing the next generation of skilled professionals for careers in the energy sector. Designed specifically to meet the growing demand for skilled utility professionals, the Utilities Lab will provide year-round, hands-on training in a controlled indoor environment, allowing students to maximize learning opportunities regardless of South Dakota's weather conditions.

The facility will serve students in Power Line Construction & Maintenance, Electrical Utilities & Substation Technology, Utilities Technology, and

other utility-related programs. Expanded lab space, modern equipment, and industry-specific training environments will allow students to gain more practical experience before entering the workforce.

Demand for skilled utility workers continues to grow as existing employees retire and infrastructure investments expand across the region. The new facility strengthens Mitchell Tech's ability to prepare graduates who can immediately meet workforce needs while helping utility companies recruit highly trained employees.

The project has been made possible through the support of Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, industry partners, donors, and state and local leaders who recognize the critical importance of technical education in strengthening South Dakota's workforce. The September 3 ribbon cutting will celebrate not only a new building, but also a long-term investment in the students, employers, and communities that depend on reliable utility services.

Mother and Daughter Pursue Nursing Degrees Together

For Paula and Taryn Guinn, nursing school became much more than an educational journey—it became a shared family experience. The mother-daughter duo enrolled in Mitchell Tech’s Licensed Practical Nursing program together, encouraging one another through coursework, clinicals, exams, and the many challenges that come with preparing for a career in healthcare.

“I wasn’t sure what it would be like going back to school,” Paula said. “Doing it with Taryn made the experience even more special. We motivated each other every step of the way.”

Their story reflects the diverse student population Mitchell Tech serves. Students arrive with different backgrounds, life experiences, and career goals, but all are united by a desire to build rewarding careers through hands-on education.

The Guinns graduated from Mitchell Tech’s LPN program in May, marking the beginning of the next chapter in their healthcare careers.



Students Build Skills Through Habitat for Humanity Partnership

Mitchell Tech’s Architectural Design & Building Construction program continues to provide students with meaningful real-world experience through its partnership with Mitchell Regional Habitat for Humanity.

Throughout the year, students have volunteered on Habitat home construction projects, working alongside community volunteers

while applying the carpentry, framing, and construction techniques they learn in the classroom. The partnership allows students to gain valuable field experience while helping provide affordable housing for local families.

Summer Scholars Explore Careers at Mitchell Tech

Mitchell Tech welcomed 75 elementary students from the Mitchell School District’s Summer Scholars program for a day of hands-on learning and career exploration.

Students experienced several programs across campus, including making cotton candy in Culinary, flying drones and using a crop sprayer simulator in Precision Agriculture, exploring tractors in Diesel Power – Ag Power Technology, and learning about careers in Power Line Construction & Maintenance.





Mitchell Tech Students Earn National Recognition at SkillsUSA Championships

Mitchell Tech students represented South Dakota with distinction at the 2026 SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference in Atlanta, competing against the nation's best technical college students.

Nine Mitchell Tech students qualified for the national competition after earning state championships. National medalists included:

- + Blaine Simantel — 2nd Place, Marine Service Technology
- + Trevor Boesel — 3rd Place, HVACR
- + Sully Shippy & Brenden Wantoch — 3rd Place, Mechatronics

Additional national competitors included: Caden Waltner, Nathan Hoekman, and River Niewenhuis (Welding Fabrication), Josiah Wollman (Welding Sculpture), and Jaxon Ladner (Electrical Construction Wiring).



The students' success reflects Mitchell Tech's commitment to hands-on education and strong partnerships with industry sponsors who help prepare students for careers and national competition.

Mitchell Tech and SDAHO Expand Healthcare Workforce Through Medical Office Professional Apprenticeship Partnership

Mitchell Tech continues to strengthen South Dakota's healthcare workforce through its partnership with the South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations (SDAHO), providing Medical Office Professional (MOP) apprenticeship opportunities for healthcare employees across the state.

The innovative apprenticeship pathway allows hospitals and healthcare organizations to invest in their current workforce by enabling employees to earn a Medical Office Professional diploma while remaining employed. Participants gain advanced knowledge in medical billing and coding, healthcare documentation, patient records management, insurance processing, healthcare technology, customer service, and medical office operations.

This "upskilling" model helps healthcare employers address workforce shortages by developing skilled employees from within their organizations while offering participants a clear pathway for career advancement. These partnerships provide a unique opportunity for individuals to receive training, gain practical experience, and establish long-term careers with trusted hometown employers, strengthening workforce retention in rural communities.





Build Dakota Scholarships Power Workforce Growth with \$3.5M Awarded to Incoming Students

The Build Dakota Scholarship Fund is continuing its mission to strengthen South Dakota's workforce by awarding \$3.5 million in scholarships to incoming Mitchell Technical College students for the 2026 academic year. With an additional \$1.4 million in matching funds provided by industry partners, this initiative is creating powerful pathways into high-demand careers across the state.

Among this year's standout statistics:

- ✦ Electrical Construction and Maintenance saw the highest number of recipients, with 25 students receiving full-ride scholarships.
- ✦ Radiologic Technology had the highest percentage of recipients, with 18 of 28 incoming students earning a Build Dakota scholarship. LPN had the second highest percentage, with 21 of 40 students earning a Build Dakota scholarship.
- ✦ Industry partners with the largest number of participating students include Muth Electric, Avera Health, and Sanford Health.
- ✦ The Mitchell Tech program welcomed 35 new industry partners this year, expanding opportunities and strengthening community engagement.



Build Dakota continues to bridge the gap between students and employers, empowering scholars to pursue debt-free education while helping meet critical workforce needs in South Dakota.

LPN Program Earns Top State Ranking

Mitchell Tech's Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program has been recognized as the No. 1 LPN program in South Dakota for 2026 by PracticalNursing.org, a trusted national resource for nursing education, licensure, and career information.

Mitchell Tech was recognized for its affordable one-year program, high-fidelity simulation labs, and strong graduate outcomes that provide students with a clear pathway into the nursing profession.

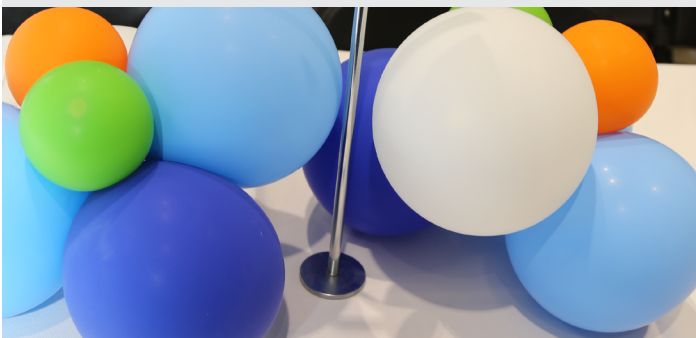
"This recognition reflects the dedication of our entire nursing team to providing a program that meets the highest standards of quality," said Carena Jarding, Mitchell Tech's LPN and RN Program Director. "Graduating successful nursing students is truly a team effort, and Mitchell Tech is fortunate to have an exceptional support system that helps our students succeed every step of the way."



SOUTHEAST Technical College

July 2026

Board of Technical Education
Dr. Cory Clasemann, STC President



Southeast Tech Awards 176 Full-Ride Build Dakota Scholarships for 2026

Southeast Technical College celebrated another record-breaking year in Build Dakota Scholarship awards at its signing day on June 5. The milestone marked the fifth consecutive year that STC has awarded more scholarships than the previous year, and the fourth consecutive year in which all scholars had an industry sponsor.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/stc-awards-176-full-ride-scholarships.php>



Student Spotlight: Nursing Student finds Connections, Scholarship at STC

Ben Amundson, an LPN graduate and RN student from Wall, S.D., shares how Southeast Technical College, hands-on training and a full-ride Build Dakota Scholarship launched his healthcare career in Sioux Falls.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/student-spotlight-ben-amundson.php>



Newest Graduate Outcomes Report Highlights Strong Career Success for Students

According to STC's 2025 Graduate Outcomes Report released this spring, graduates responding to the survey achieved a reported 100% job placement rate in their major or chosen field within six months of graduation. Additionally, STC has 40 programs where every graduate secured employment.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/career-outcomes-2026.php>



STC Featured as 2026 'Face of Technical Education'

Southeast Technical College is experiencing strong momentum driven by rising student demand, industry partnerships and significant investment in workforce-focused education, which landed STC a spot in the 2026 "Faces of Sioux Falls" publication as the Face of Technical Education.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/26-faces-of-sf.php>

I.T. Programs Undergo Updates

This fall, STC is updating two information technology programs to better align with changing technology and provide students with more flexible pathways to completion. The Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Computer Programming will become Software Development, while the Software Support Specialist diploma program will become App Development. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to begin both programs in the spring, which is especially helpful for students who are changing majors, transferring from another college or returning to coursework after stepping away.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/software-app-development-program-updates.php>

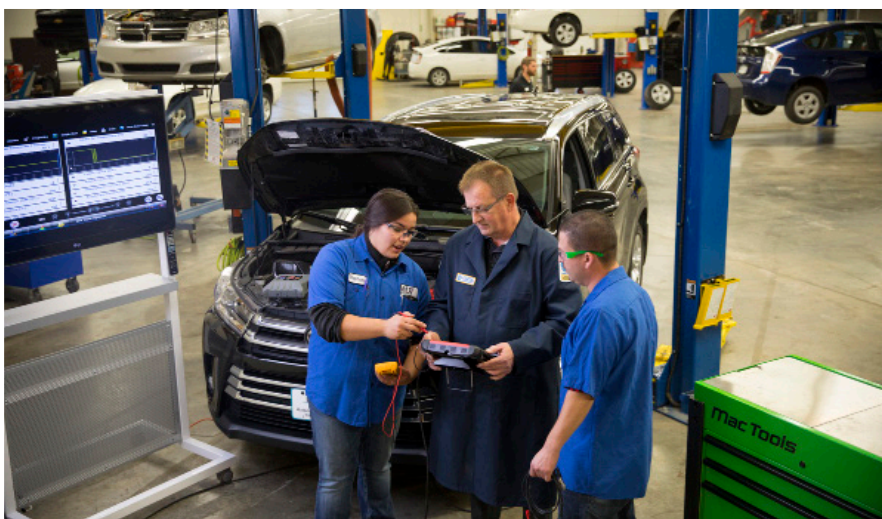
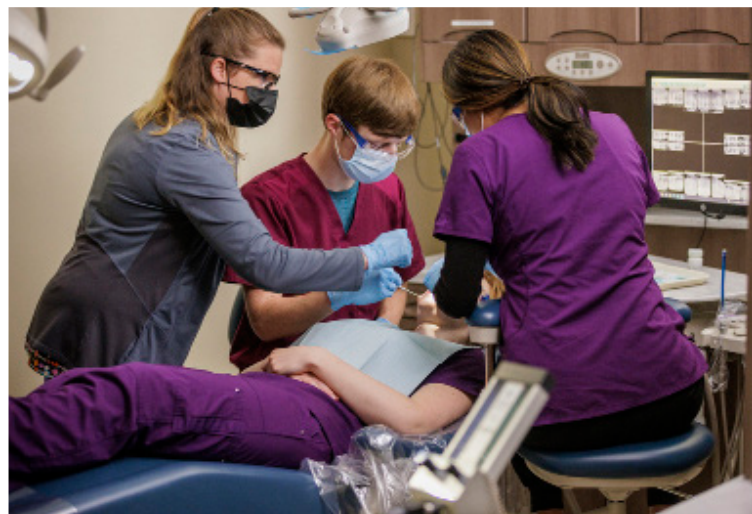




Graduate Spotlight: Land Surveying Science shows Cole Nelson a Clear Path

After changing academic paths, Southeast Tech graduate Cole Nelson found clarity and career momentum through the Land Surveying Science program, leading to a full-time role with the South Dakota Department of Transportation.

<https://www.southeasttech.edu/news/2026/graduate-spotlight-cole-nelson.php>



July 2026

S.D. Board of Technical
Education Report

Dr. Kendra Ericson
WDTC President

WESTERN
DAKOTA
TECHNICAL COLLEGE

WDTC Board of Trustees Welcomes New Member & Reappoints Two



During the July 8th Board Meeting, Board of Trustees were sworn in by Judge Heidi Linngren. Tenise Chapman was sworn in as the newest member of the Board of Trustees and will serve a term from 2026 to 2029. Chapman is a Western Dakota Technical College alumna and local business owner. Dr. Steve Willard was reappointed to the board and will serve a new term from 2026 to 2029. Dr. Willard is the retired superintendent of the Belle Fourche School District. Andrea Powers (not pictured), will be sworn in at the August board meeting following her reappointment to serve a term from 2026–2029. Powers currently serves as the Executive Director of Southern Hills Economic Development in Hot Springs, South Dakota.

Build Dakota Signing Day Celebrates Full-Ride Scholarship Recipients



On June 25th, WDTC hosted a Build Dakota Signing Day Event. During the special ceremony, 127 students received full-ride Build Dakota Scholarships. Students, along with their Build Dakota sponsors, were recognized during the event. Scholarship recipients were called to stage to sign their Build Dakota Scholarship certificates and receive WDTC pennants.



Students Excel at SkillsUSA National Competition

In June, a select group of WDTC students and faculty traveled to Atlanta, Georgia for the annual SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference. During the competition, WDTC students delivered strong performances on the national stage, with six students earning top finishes. Recent WDTC graduate, Anton Allen, earned a national championship with a gold medal in Plumbing. WDTC is grateful to the industry sponsors that made it possible for our students to travel and compete in this prestigious event.



Annual Employee Awards Banquet



In May, Western Dakota Technical College employees were celebrated for their dedication and passion for technical education at the Annual Awards Banquet. Board Vice Chair, Mike Roesler, and President Ericson expressed their appreciation to WDTC employees. During the ceremony, eleven awards were presented and employees were thanked for their years of service.



WDTC Celebrated America's 250th in the Black Hills

Western Dakota Technical College celebrated America's 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th weekend. Employees participated in community parades and events around the Black Hills. Staff attended the Star-Spangled Independence Celebration and Parade in Hill City, Black Hills Roundup Parade in Belle Fourche, and America's 250th Birthday Bash Parade in Rapid City.

