



# Annual Report

Prepared for :

**T. Denny Sanford  
and  
Governor Rhoden**

**April 2026**



**Cohort 11  
2025 - 2026**





# BUILD DAKOTA

## SCHOLARSHIP FUND



# COHORT 11 ANNUAL REPORT

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## 1. BUILD DAKOTA ADMINISTRATION BOARD

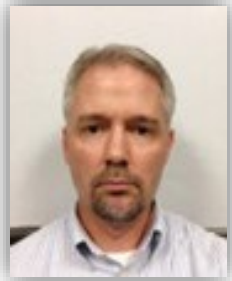
The Build Dakota Administration Board is Governor-appointed and consists of community leaders with diverse backgrounds in targeted, high-need industries:



**Dana Dykhouse, Chair**  
CEO  
First Premier Bank  
Sioux Falls, SD



**Derek DeGeest, Vice-Chair**  
President  
DeGeest Corporation & LestaUSA  
Tea, SD



**Scott Knuppe**  
Facility Manager  
Caterpillar, Inc.  
Rapid City, SD



**Greg Carmon**  
Owner  
Midwest Railcar Repair, Inc.  
Brandon, SD



**Jennifer Grennan**  
Executive Vice President/Chief Administrative Officer  
Sanford Health  
Sioux Falls, SD

## 2. BUILD DAKOTA SCHOLARSHIP STAFF



Deni Martin, M.S. ED  
Program Manager  
Deni@builddakotascholarships.com



Rita Nelson, SPHR, SHRM-SCP  
Workforce Relations Coordinator  
Rita@builddakotascholarships.com



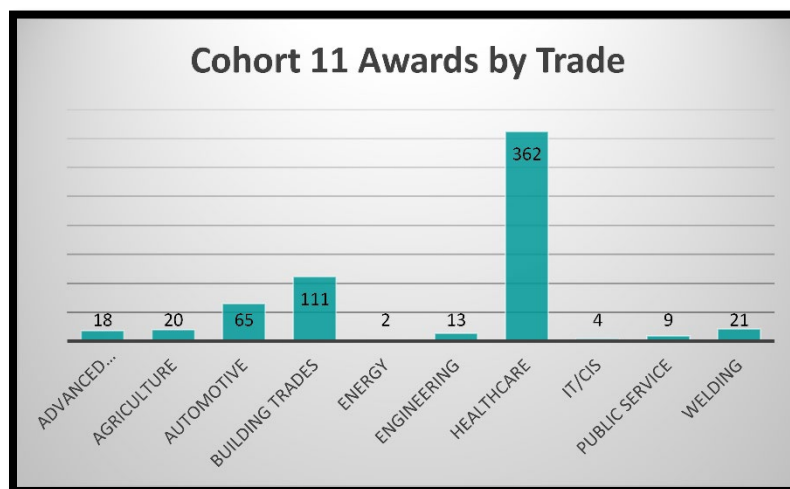
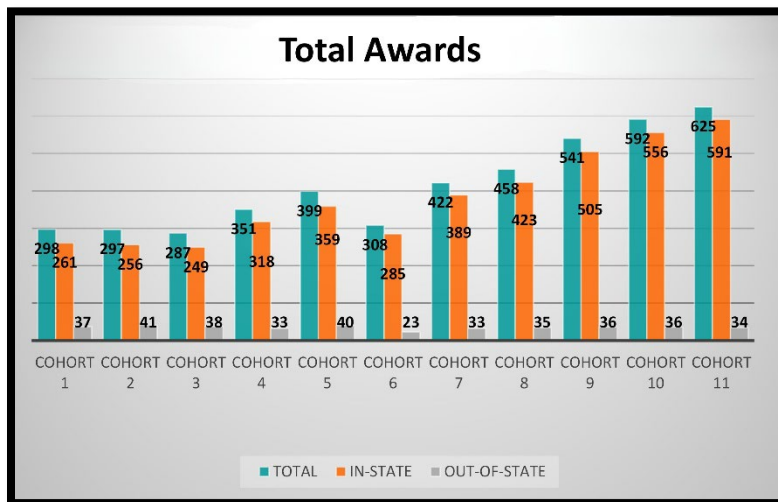
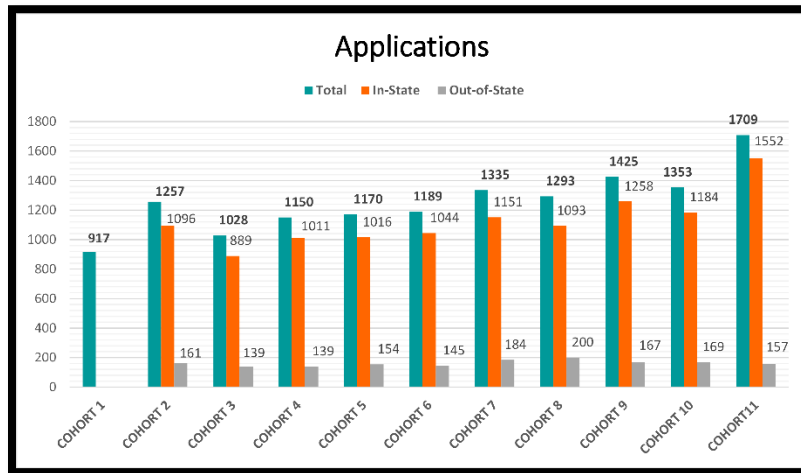
Brandy Drew  
Employment Verification Specialist  
Brandy@builddakotascholarships.com

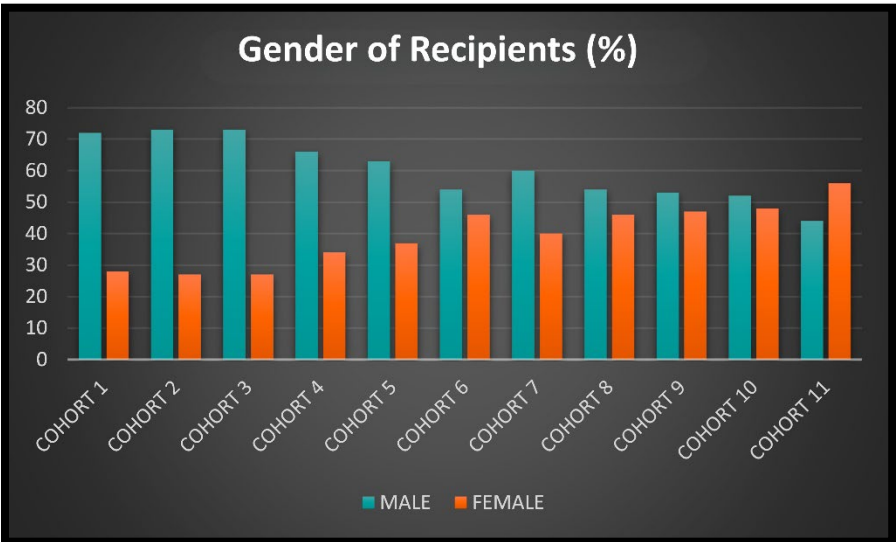
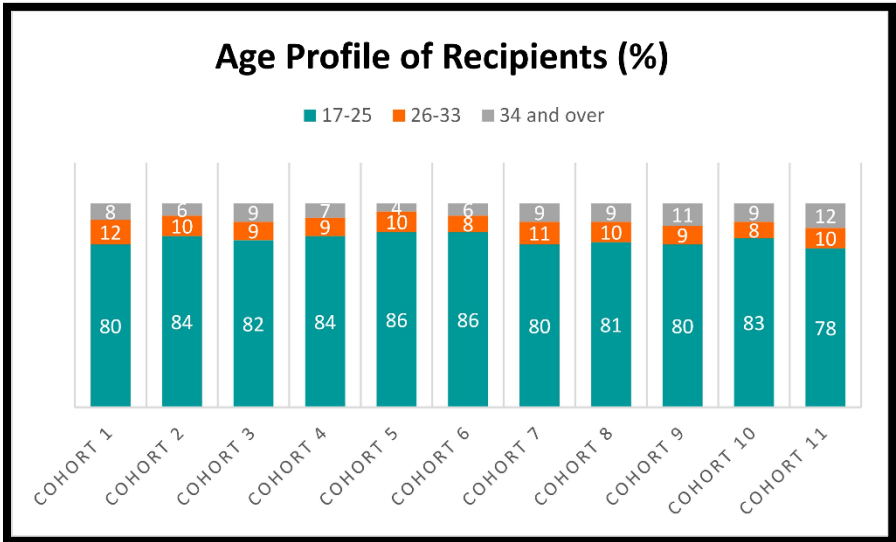
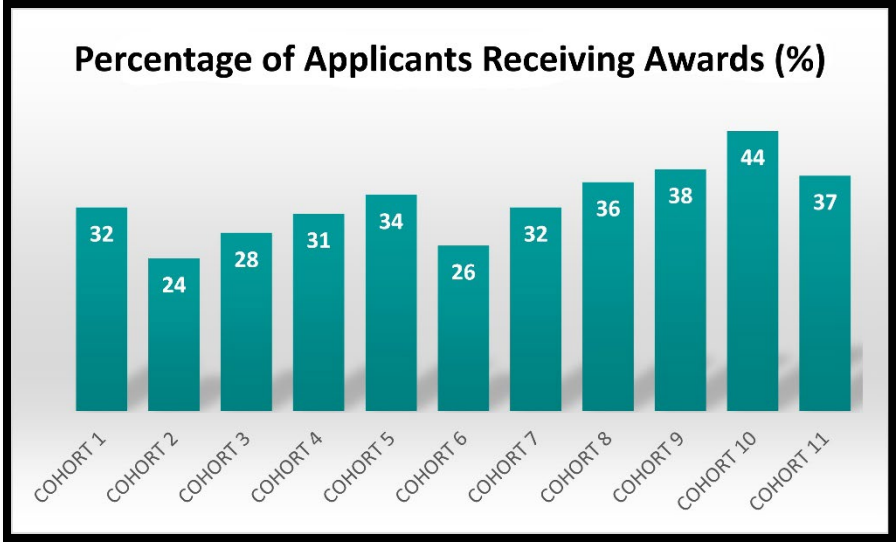
## 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

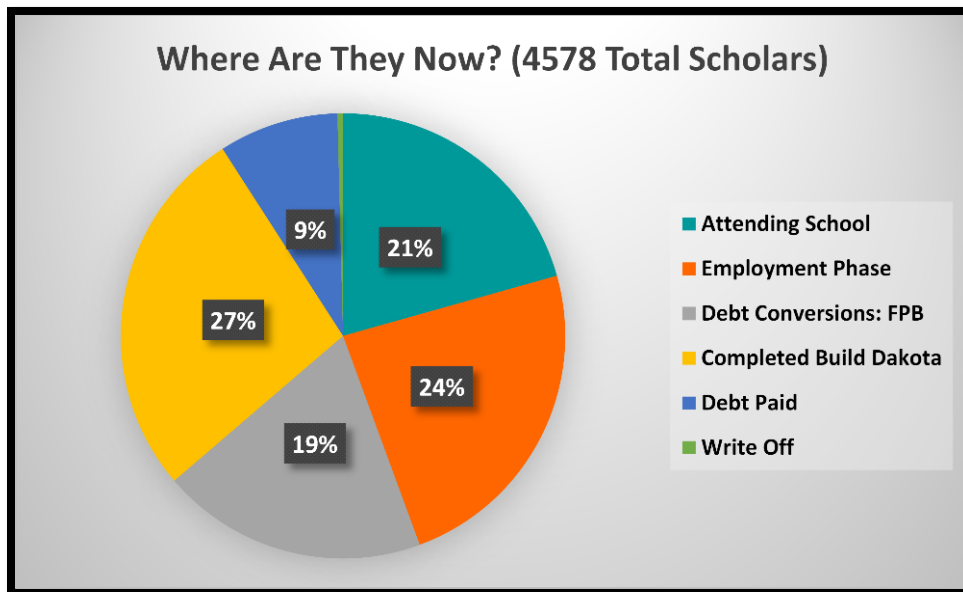
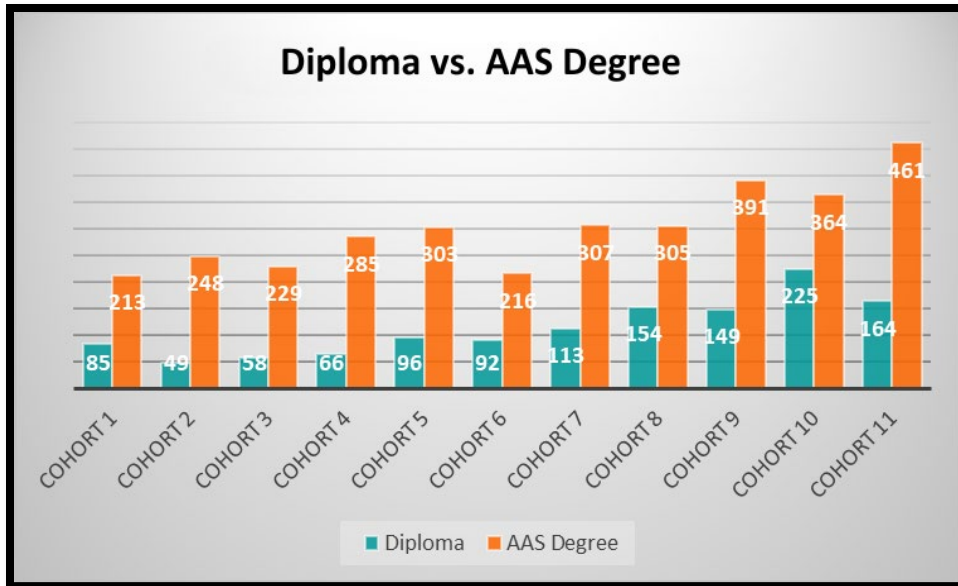
Cohort 11 marks a record-setting year for growth, industry engagement, and student success, reinforcing the strength of the Build Dakota Scholarship model and its impact on South Dakota's workforce.

- Strong program demand continues, with increased applications, participation, and technical college enrollment.
- Industry partnerships remain a defining strength, with 92% of Cohort 11 scholarships supported by industry partners. This connection provides students with direct career pathways while helping businesses meet critical workforce needs.
- Student outcomes remain strong, with high retention and successful transitions into employment, supporting workforce retention across the state.
- Significant economic impact continues, with more than \$235 million in economic output, 3,200+ jobs supported, and over 4,000 scholarships awarded over the past decade.
- Looking ahead, Build Dakota will continue to expand strategic partnerships, prioritize high-demand fields, and strengthen connections with rural communities to drive sustainable workforce and economic growth.

## 4. TARGETED AREAS OF STUDY: APPLICATIONS, AWARDS & STATISTICS



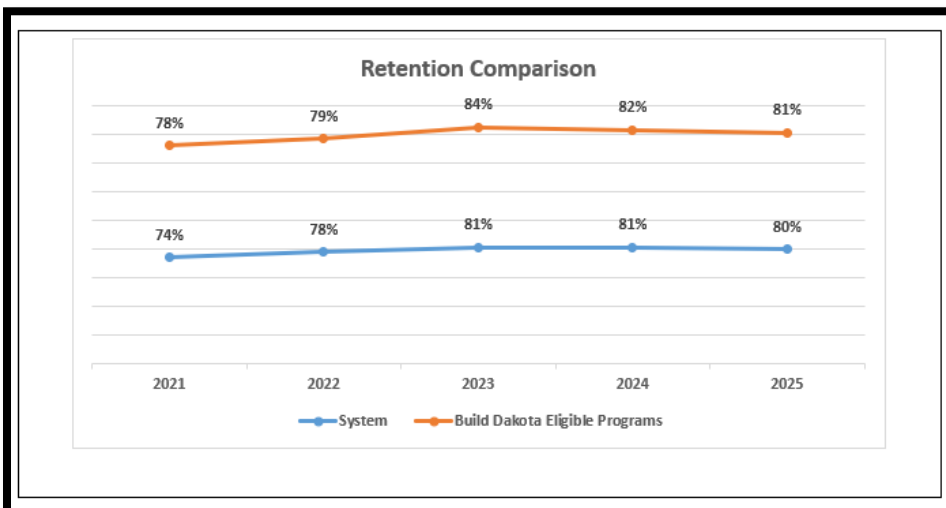
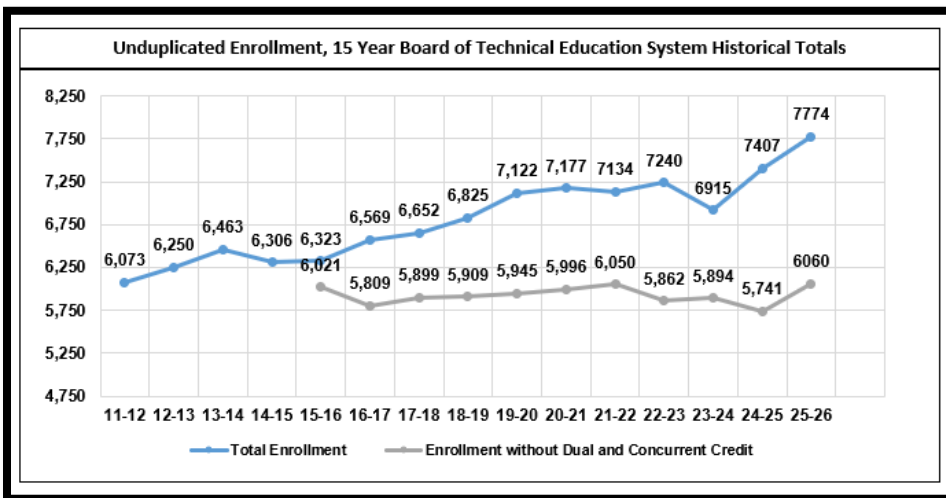
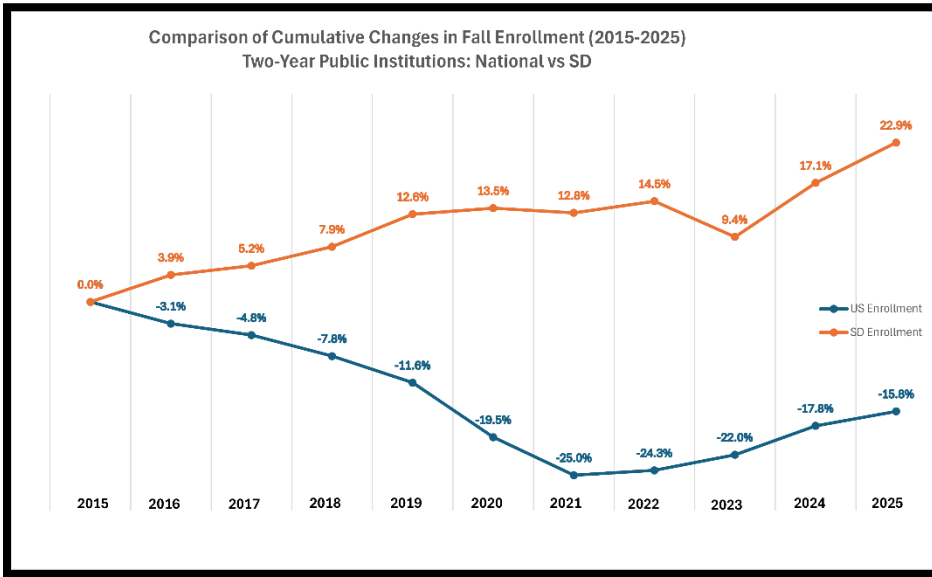




Looking Ahead- New Programs Approved for Cohort 12:

- **STC: Diagnostic Medical Sonography**
- **STC: Cardiovascular Sonography**
- **WDT: Dental Hygiene**

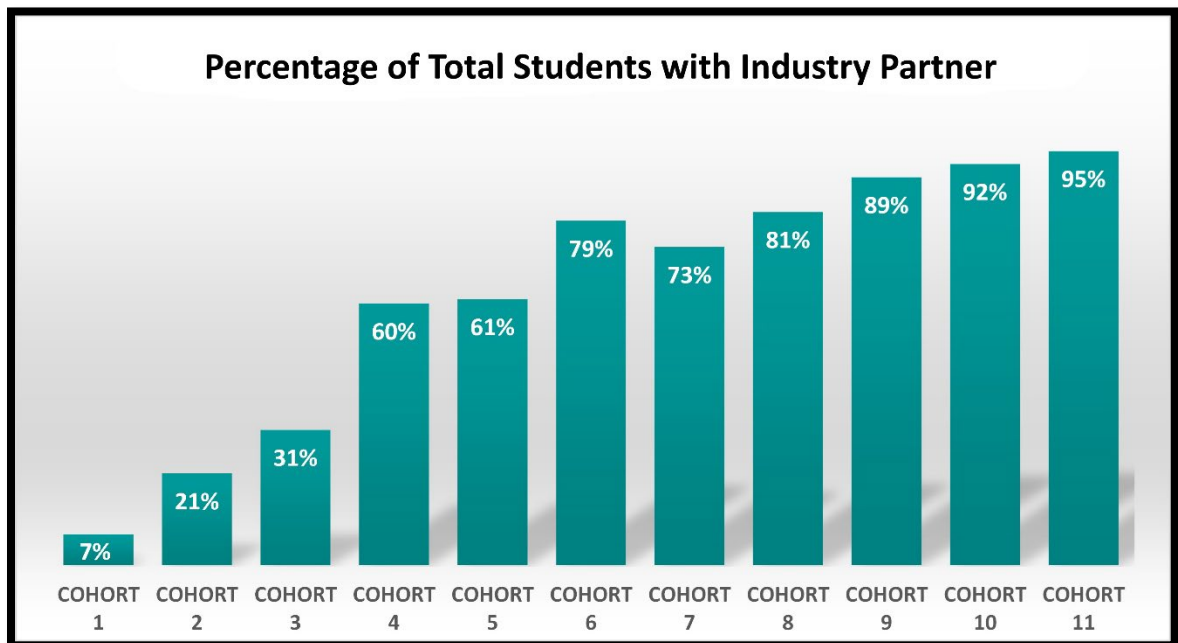
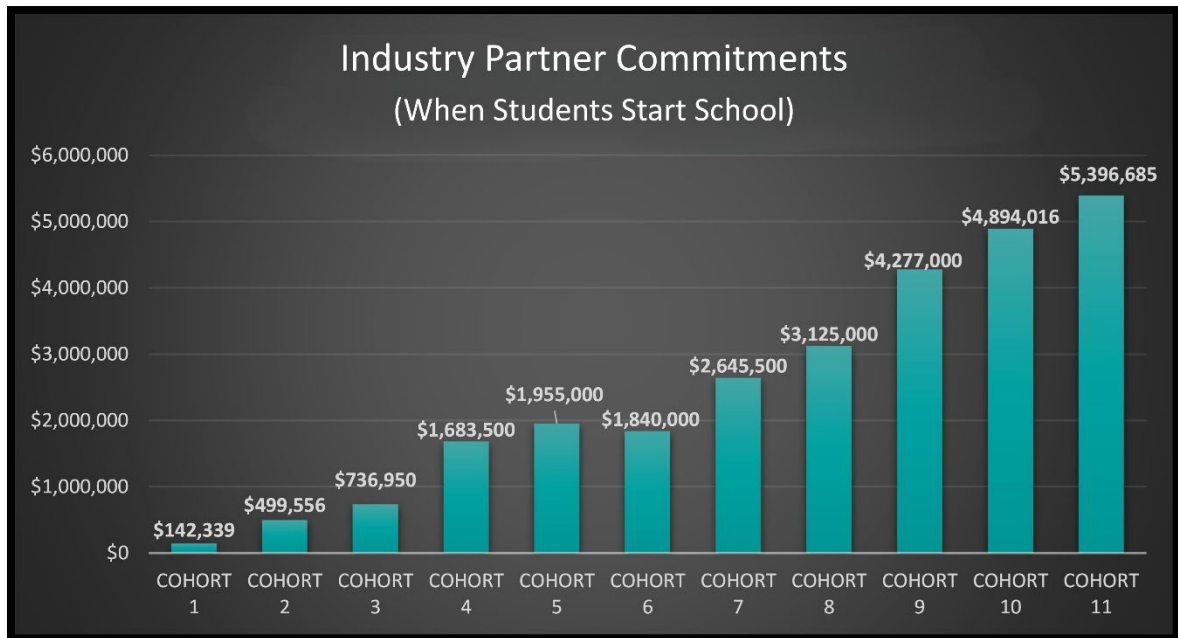
## 5. BOARD OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION: ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION



## 6. RECRUITMENT OF INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Technical colleges have developed industry partnership programs to strategically leverage Build Dakota Scholarship funding and expand the number of awards beyond base program resources. Through these partnerships, employers contribute to the cost of a full-ride scholarship while securing a highly trained, committed employee who fulfills a three-year workforce commitment following graduation, creating a sustainable pipeline of talent aligned with industry needs.

### COMBINED TECHNICAL COLLEGE EFFORTS



## 7. MARKETING BUILD DAKOTA SCHOLARSHIP AND TECHNICAL CAREERS

Lawrence & Schiller leads the strategic development and execution of the Build Dakota marketing campaign, leveraging strong collaboration with statewide partners to maximize reach and impact while maintaining cost efficiency.

Through an integrated, partnership-driven approach, key stakeholders play an active role in amplifying the Build Dakota message:

- **South Dakota Department of Education:** All of the Division of Career and Technical Education career development specialists and directors share the Build Dakota message and promotional materials with high school administrators, counselors and teachers. They also regularly invite the Build Dakota program manager to conventions, workshops and webinars to make sure Build Dakota remains on the forefront of discussion.
- **South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation:** Each of the Department of Labor offices across the state have provided education on Build Dakota as well as promotional flyers to distribute to job seekers. Dual website cross promotion has also been very effective.
- **South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development:** Representatives from this office and local communities have been instrumental in promoting the program.
- **Build Dakota Staff:** Our staff continued high school roadshows and community outreach as well as training presentations for the SD Department of Labor staff. We also started reaching out to all newspapers, radio and television outlets to inquire if they would like to feature Build Dakota in any of their outlets. We've received great response from these efforts.
- **South Dakota Technical Colleges:** Each technical college promotes Build Dakota in many capacities. Their admissions representatives deliver flyers and talk to interested parties as they travel across South Dakota and the surrounding states. Campus visitors are also provided with an overview of the scholarship. The technical colleges have added Build Dakota to their own marketing campaigns, flyers, websites, commercials and billboards. Large marketing pieces were designed by Lawrence & Schiller and delivered to each campus to increase awareness for visitors.

## 2025 BUILD DAKOTA LAWRENCE & SCHILLER MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

2025 marked another year of strong momentum for Build Dakota, building on the strategic planning initiatives launched in 2024. Through a combination of targeted paid media, statewide awareness efforts, and ongoing brand support, marketing initiatives continued to drive measurable growth in scholarship applications, increase program awareness, and expand overall impact across South Dakota.

### Build Dakota Scholarship Paid Media Campaign

At the start of the year, the annual Build Dakota Scholarship paid media campaign ran during the application period (January 1–March 31, 2025), with the goal of driving applications among both traditional and non-traditional students, as well as key influencers such as parents and educators. The campaign focused on South Dakota and a 100-mile radius surrounding each of the state’s four technical colleges.

The strategy centered on two key priorities: reaching each audience on the platforms they use daily and capturing prospective students and influencers when they were actively seeking information. To accomplish this, the campaign utilized a balanced mix of traditional and digital channels, including out-of-home, digital audio, display, paid social (Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat), sponsored content, and paid search (a year-round channel).

The campaign exceeded performance goals set at the outset, delivering:

- **9,479,331** total impressions
- **32,808** interactions
- **3,038** conversions or key actions (such as clicks to technical college or program pages)
- **1,709** final scholarship applications

Cohort 11 applications increased **26% year over year** compared to Cohort 10, reflecting continued growth in Build Dakota brand awareness and the broader marketing efforts supporting South Dakota’s technical colleges.

### Economic Impact Study

To better understand the long-term value of the Build Dakota Scholarship, Lawrence & Schiller partnered with the Dakota Institute in summer and fall 2025 to conduct a statewide economic impact study. The full report can be found [here](#); key findings include:

- **\$235.28 million** in total economic output generated over the past ten years
- **3,218 jobs supported**, contributing **\$145.7 million** to South Dakota’s GDP
- **3,955 scholarships awarded** since 2015, with scholarship totals increasing in eight of the program’s ten years

## Technical Education Awareness Campaign

The statewide Technical Education Awareness paid media campaign completed its second year of a three-year initiative in 2025, launching in late September and running through the end of December to align with peak future-planning periods for prospective students. The “Work Smart” creative theme was refreshed to continue emphasizing how technical education enables students to quickly succeed in both their careers and personal lives. The campaign ran across a broad mix of channels, including digital billboards, gas station TV, digital high school screens, broadcast and connected TV, YouTube, digital audio and podcasts, traditional radio, digital display, and paid social (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn). Targeting focused on all South Dakota residents, with additional emphasis on high school students, parents, and school staff where applicable.

With overall awareness as the primary goal, the campaign delivered strong results, demonstrating growth in awareness statewide, setting the stage for a comprehensive three-year performance comparison in 2026:

- **14,750,526 impressions**
- **1,322,091 interactions**, including clicks, video views, and social engagement

## Website & Social Performance

Compared to 2024, [builddakotascholarships.com](https://builddakotascholarships.com) experienced continued growth in 2025, including:

### Website Performance:

- **+3.6%** increase in total users
- **+7.6%** increase in engaged sessions
- **32,063** total key event conversions

*Key events included clicks to program pages, visits to technical college websites, application activity, and email inquiries.*

### Social Media Performance:

Social media channels also saw continued growth across platforms:

- **Facebook:** 3.4 million views (**+141.4% YoY**), 3,400 interactions, +283 followers
- **Instagram:** 1.3 million views (**+26.8% YoY**), continued audience growth to 195 total followers
- **LinkedIn:** Increased from 22 to 107 total followers

### Content Innovation:

User-generated content was introduced through the L&S Studio in late 2025, reaching **3,089 users** and achieving an average engagement rate of **3%**, a **20% increase** over static content engagement rate.

## Additional Marketing Support

Additional 2025 highlights included the continuation of the annual Finance Park sponsorship with Junior Achievement of South Dakota, a custom photo shoot to expand Build Dakota’s brand imagery library, and ongoing print, promotional, and website updates to support the Build Dakota team throughout the year.

## Looking Ahead

Overall, 2025 was a year of measurable progress toward Build Dakota’s mission—expanding awareness of the scholarship, increasing applications, and reinforcing the value of technical education across South Dakota. With strong momentum in place, Build Dakota is well positioned for continued growth and impact in the year ahead.

## 8. INCOME/EXPENSES

Information submitted by: Cassie Stoesser, Controller, South Dakota Community Foundation

	Year Ended				Year Ended			
	12/31/2020				12/31/2021			
	Sanford	Endowment	SDDOE	Total	Sanford	Endowment	SDDOE	Total
Beginning Balance	1,987,996	30,674,215		32,662,211	9,987,521	34,813,445		44,800,966
+ Contributions	10,245,397	2,100,000		12,345,397	392,099	-		392,099
+ Inv. Earnings	5,704	4,409,018		4,414,722	-	2,730,432		2,730,432
- Expenses	(4,467,680)	(153,685)		(4,621,364)	(4,756,404)	(181,466)		(4,937,870)
Inter-Fund Transfers	2,216,104	(2,216,104)		-				
Ending Balance	9,987,521	34,813,445	-	44,800,966	5,623,216	37,362,411	-	42,985,627
	Year Ended				Year Ended			
	12/31/2022				12/31/2023			
	Sanford	Endowment	SDDOE	Total	Sanford	Endowment	SDDOE	Total
Beginning Balance	5,623,216	37,362,411		42,985,627	673,239	35,280,974		35,954,213
+ Contributions	428,839	2,100,000		2,528,839	676,357	14,200,000		14,876,357
+ Inv. Earnings	-	(4,000,105)		(4,000,105)	-	5,172,746		5,172,746
- Expenses	(5,378,816)	(181,333)		(5,560,148)	(5,117,479)	(198,087)		(5,315,567)
Inter-Fund Transfers				-	3,900,000	(3,900,000)		-
Ending Balance	673,239	35,280,974	-	35,954,213	132,117	50,555,633	-	50,687,750
	Year Ended				Year Ended			
	12/31/2024				12/31/2025			
	Sanford	Endowment	SDDOE	Total	Sanford	Endowment	SDDOE	Total
Beginning Balance	132,117	50,555,633		50,687,750	100,000	50,690,257		50,790,257
+ Contributions	675,495	2,100,097		2,775,592	627,554	2,110,236		2,737,789
+ Inv. Earnings	-	4,353,083		4,353,083	-	7,649,425		7,649,425
- Expenses	(6,763,171)	(262,997)		(7,026,168)	(6,205,994)	(267,446)		(6,473,440)
Inter-Fund Transfers	6,055,560	(6,055,560)		-	5,478,440	(5,478,440)		-
Ending Balance	100,000	50,690,257	-	50,790,257	-	54,704,081	-	54,704,081

\*Note: Expenses include expenses paid out of the fund and grant distributions.

## 9. FUTURE FOCUS

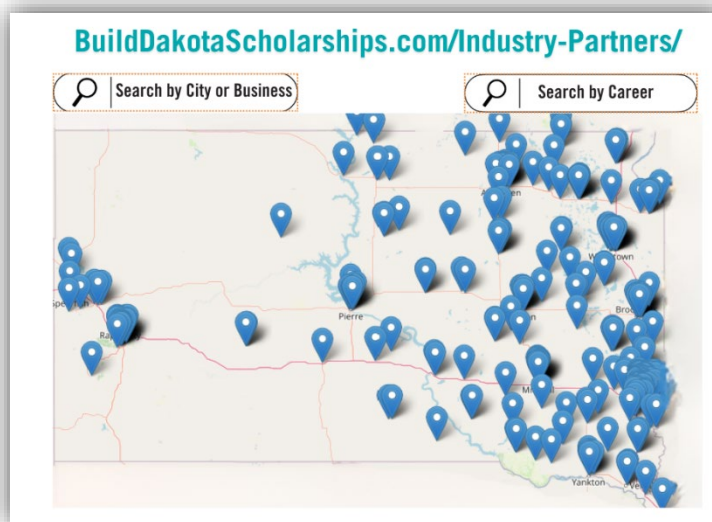
The Build Dakota Administration Board, program staff, and technical colleges will continue to expand and strengthen industry partnership programs while maintaining a focus on increasing applicant quality and sustaining a low default rate.

### 10-Year Strategic Planning

Through the generosity of First PREMIER Bank, Build Dakota partnered with RVM Consulting to facilitate a comprehensive strategic planning process. This effort included stakeholder focus groups led by the administration board and resulted in the identification of key priorities to be achieved over the next three years.

### Completed in 2025:

- Developed a comprehensive [ROI statement and values story](#)
- Increased engagement with organizations across South Dakota
- Created targeted [Toolkits](#) with best practices for key audiences:
  - Traditional students
  - Non-traditional students and adult learners
  - High school staff
  - Parents
  - Industry partners
  - State agencies
  - Economic development groups
- Delivered online sessions for targeted audiences
- Upgraded database systems to improve efficiency in scholar tracking and relationship management
- Expanded staff capacity with the addition of a Workforce Relations Coordinator
- Launched an [interactive industry partner map](#) on the website



**Planned for 2026:**

- Continuing to expand and strengthen engagement with organizations statewide
- Further enhance database capabilities to support tracking and outreach efforts
- Update and strengthen the **Build Dakota Roadshow** to increase industry partner engagement and promote technical careers
  - Increased emphasis on **manufacturing**



## 10. UPDATES AND SUCCESS STORIES FROM TECHNICAL COLLEGES

### LAKE AREA TECH CAMPUS UPDATE

At Lake Area Technical College, **recent investments are translating into measurable results.** Programs that expanded in prior years are celebrating first graduates, earning accreditation, and increasing capacity to meet workforce demand across South Dakota. Continued support through the Build Dakota Scholarship program continues to drive this progress and strengthen workforce outcomes statewide.



### Enrollment Growth and Strategic Expansion

LATC reached a record spring enrollment in January 2026 of 2,750 students, marking the first time total headcount surpassed 2,758. **Demand for career-focused technical education continues to grow,** along with dual credit participation from high school students beginning their college pathway early.

To sustain this growth, LATC has launched a comprehensive **10-year Master Campus Plan focused on expanding and modernizing academic and student support spaces.** The plan ensures facilities remain aligned with industry needs while positioning the college to serve increasing enrollment through 2035 and beyond.

### Healthcare Program Outcomes

The Surgical Technology program celebrated its first graduating class in May 2025. Of the nine graduates, four were Build Dakota Scholarship recipients. The program also **earned national accreditation,** reinforcing the quality of training and strengthening employer confidence in graduates.



A **newly remodeled Surgical Technology simulation lab,** made possible through a generous contribution from Sanford Health, provides a state-of-the-art environment that mirrors real operating rooms. These enhancements allow the program to deliver high-level, hands-on preparation for immediate workforce entry.



**In Pierre, updates to the nursing simulation center** were supported by Avera Health. The expanded simulation space increases access to practical healthcare training in central South Dakota and helps address ongoing workforce shortages.

### Student Engagement and Community Outreach

Student involvement continues to grow alongside enrollment. At the request of students, LATC **launched its first chorus**, expanding opportunities for campus engagement. The eSports program continues to gain national recognition and recently qualified for national championship competition. Upgrades to the eSports arena, including expanded space and updated hardware, support continued competitive success.



In celebration of its 60th Anniversary, LATC **connected with communities across the region through the 60th Anniversary Tailgate Tour**. Stops included Redfield, Northwestern, Aberdeen Central, Watertown, Deuel, Madison, Hamlin, Sioux Valley, Castlewood, and Milbank. The tour featured hands-on activities hosted by program staff and students and \$1,000 scholarship giveaways while strengthening connections with students, families, and alumni throughout South Dakota.



### Build Dakota Day

Our second annual Ready, Set, GO! event was held January 16, 2025, with 275+ guests on campus, including prospective students, parents and high school counselors, as well as representatives from 50+ STM Partners.

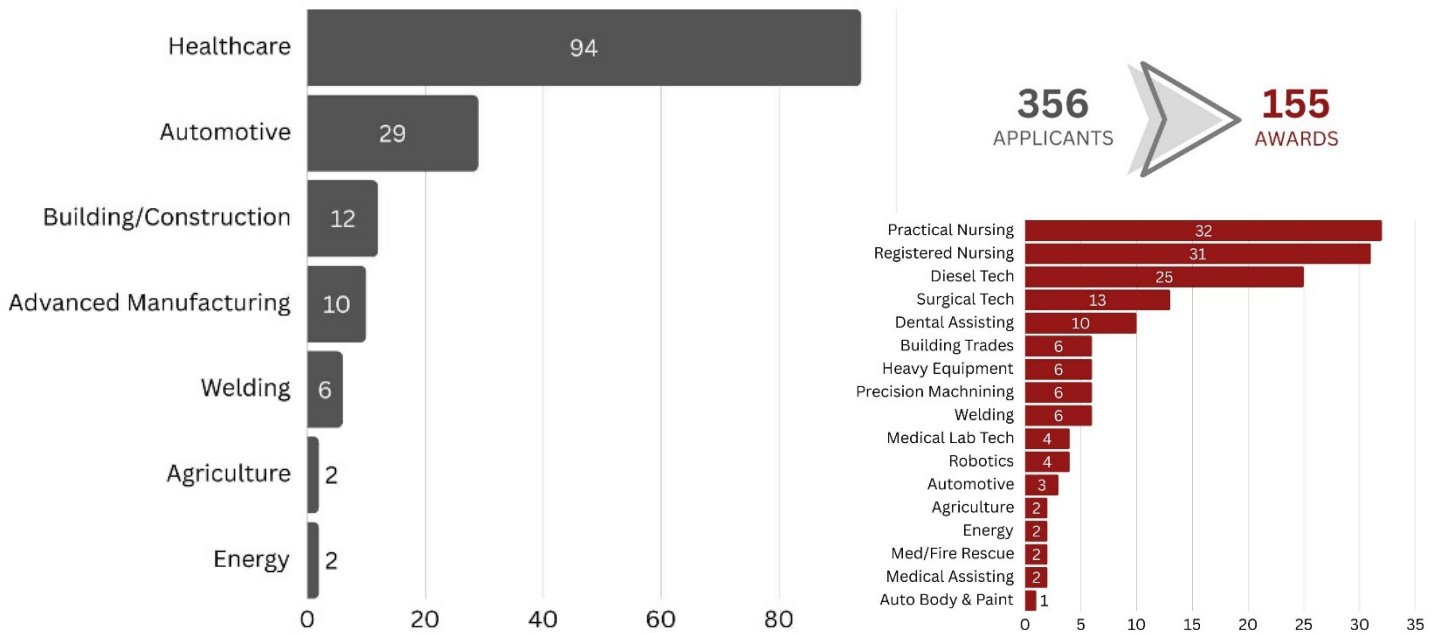
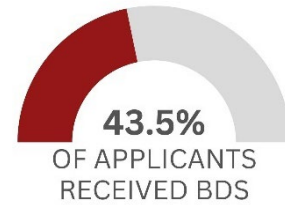


### Expanding Access and Affordability

Beyond Build Dakota, LATC continues to prioritize affordability. In response to rising dual credit costs statewide, the LATC Foundation **established a Dual Credit Scholarship to assist high school students facing financial barriers**. This initiative strengthens the pipeline into high-demand career programs and ensures more students can access technical education.

## COHORT 11 SUMMARY

In Medical Assisting's inaugural year of Build Dakota eligibility, two scholars were sponsored by industry. Overall, LATC awarded 155 scholarships in Cohort 11.



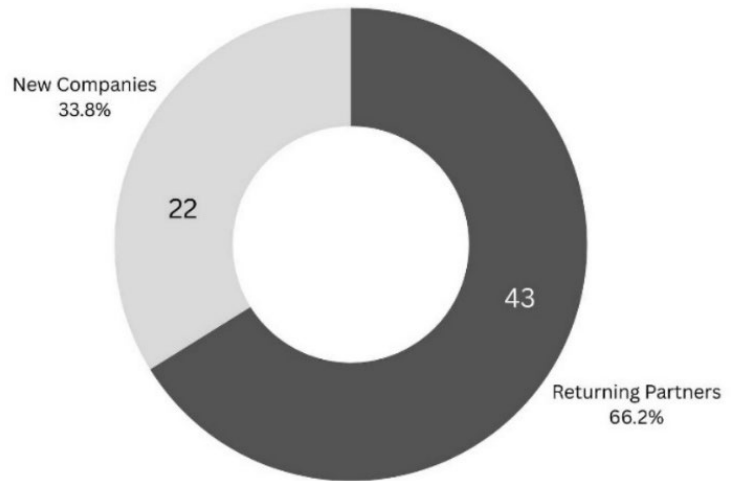
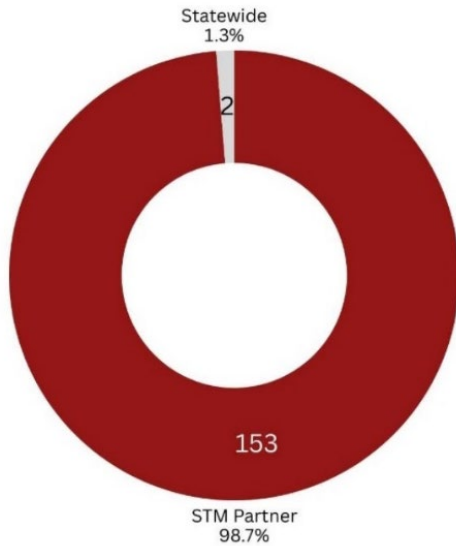
## INDUSTRY SUPPORT: STRETCH-THE-MILLION

Cohort 11 was exceptional as far as industry partnerships. Of the 155 awards, **all but two earned their scholarship with their commitment to an STM industry partner.**

In 2025, 103 companies signed up for the interview phase in hopes of a partnership. Of them, **65 moved forward with a Build Dakota/STM Partnership.**



The majority of companies (42) sponsored one student, 20 companies sponsored between 2-5 students, and a few companies sponsored 12 or more. Two statewide scholars were awarded due to unique circumstances.



### FUTURE FOCUS

LATC's Foundation continues to manage all aspects of the Build Dakota Scholarship. The Foundation works very close with Admissions, Marketing, Outreach, Financial Aid, Student Services, Bookstore, Data Team, and program staff.

Lake Area Tech is pleased to partner with Build Dakota and the other technical colleges to promote this life-changing opportunity. LATC hit the road with Build Dakota Roadshow, **visiting 54 high schools across the state** from Rapid City to McIntosh and Rosholt to Vermillion in Fall 2025.



**STUDENT STORIES**



*Daron has been a great addition to our TCDC team as he is eager to learn and grow.*

**ERIC NEGAARD**  
TWIN CITY DIE CASTINGS CO.  
WATERTOWN, SD

Daron started with Twin City Die Castings in June of 2023 when we partnered with him on a Build Dakota Scholarship for Precision Machining.

While going to school, Daron started working in our secondary production area running several different products in CNC machines. Over his two years of school, this evolved into learning several different CNC machine tools and using his newly obtained skills to support production.

Since graduating from LATC, Daron has transitioned from production into a support role within our die shop where the focus is on our molds. Daron has been a great addition to our TCDC team as he is eager to learn and grow. A very successful BDS partnership!



*I am very grateful to have received the Build Dakota Scholarship! Having job security after I graduated was important to me and helped lighten the load of stress surrounding graduating and taking the Certified Surgical Technologist exam.*

*While I was in school, not having financial stress allowed me to focus on academics and the hands-on portion of my job.*

*The application process for Build Dakota was easy to follow, and they have staff available to answer any questions you may have along the way. My experience with the Build Dakota scholarship helped me be prepared for post graduate life and excel in school.*



*Kayla has been doing an exceptional job here. She really excelled while she was doing her schooling and continued that into her job with us.*

## MITCHELL TECHNICAL COLLEGE UPDATE

Mitchell Technical College is proud to celebrate another record-setting year of growth, achievement, and innovation in technical education. Total enrollment reached 1,344 students, including 616 first-year students. This milestone demonstrates the college's ongoing commitment to providing high-quality, hands-on education that prepares students for the workforce of tomorrow.



Mitchell Tech's reputation for excellence has been nationally recognized. The college was named the #1 community college in South Dakota and ranked #13 nationally in WalletHub's 2025 Best & Worst Community Colleges report. In addition, Mitchell Tech ranked 1st in South Dakota and 9th nationally in SmartAsset's 2025 Best Community Colleges in America analysis.

Construction has begun on a new Utilities Underground Lab, an expansion that would increase program capacity across the Construction & Energy Division. In addition, it will allow students to receive extensive education and training indoors before



moving out into the elements for the next phase of their coursework, where they apply what they have learned under real-world conditions. The two-phase energy division expansion will support industry needs by providing an additional 48,000 square feet of space for direct instruction of students and accommodating enrollment growth in these programs: Power Line Construction & Maintenance, Electrical Utilities & Substation Technology, and Wind Turbine Technology.

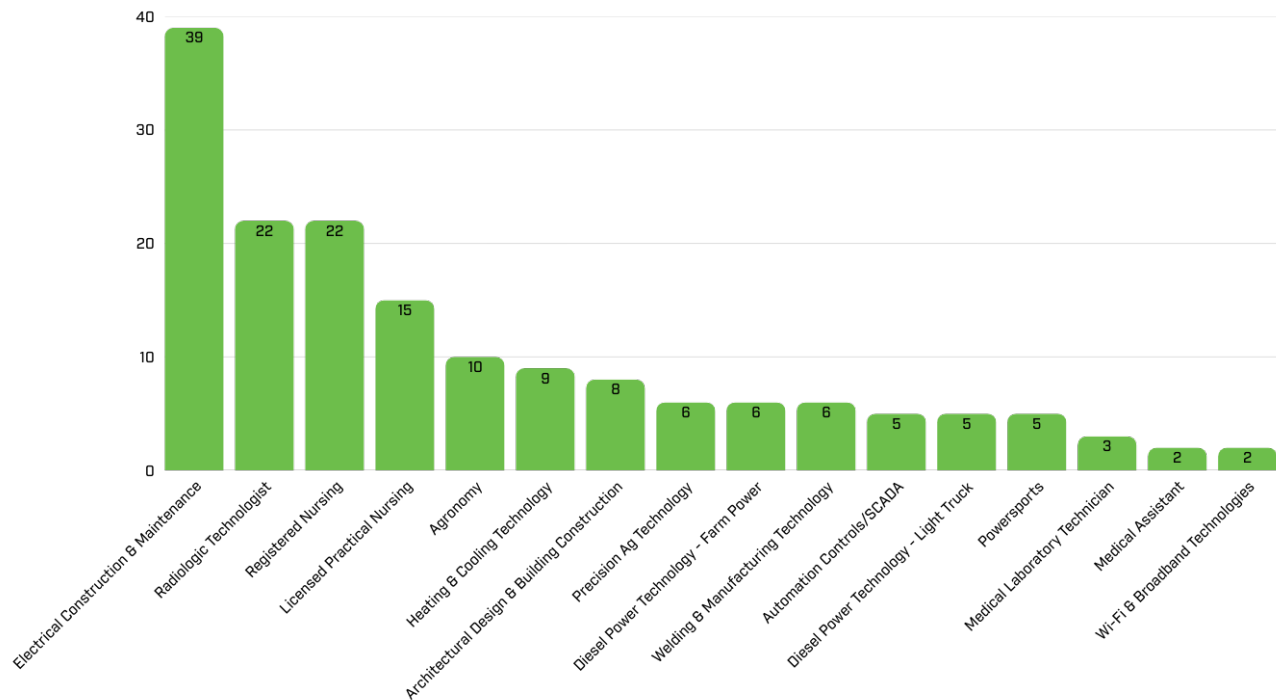
Mitchell Tech's Electrical Construction & Maintenance program continues to exceed industry demand, with enrollment consistently overfilled for several years. To meet workforce needs, the program will expand lab space, add a fifth instructor, and grow to 100 first-year students in 2026. These enhancements ensure students receive the hands-on training required to succeed in a rapidly growing electrical industry. The 2025-26 academic year marked the launch of the new Drone Racing program. This collegiate competitive program gives students the chance to build technical, strategic, and teamwork skills while competing against other colleges. As the program grows, it is designed not only to challenge students' piloting skills but also to foster problem-solving, collaboration, and innovation—skills that transfer directly to technical careers.

Mitchell Tech continues to produce career-ready graduates in high-demand fields across South Dakota. Through partnerships like Build Dakota, Mitchell Technical College remains dedicated to expanding opportunities for students, supporting workforce development, and maintaining its position as a leader in technical education.

## COHORT 11 SUMMARY

Our record-breaking scholarship trends continued this year, with a total of 176 awards distributed to incoming Mitchell Tech students. The awards process remains highly competitive, reflecting the strong interest in scholarships that support hands-on technical education and workforce preparation.

The majority of awards were given to students in the Electrical Construction & Maintenance program, followed by Radiologic Technologist and Registered Nursing programs, Practical Nursing, and Agronomy.



## INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Mitchell Technical College continues to strengthen its relationships with new and existing employers through the Build Dakota Scholarship program. The ongoing success of the Double Edge partnership has encouraged additional businesses to engage with Mitchell Tech, further expanding opportunities for students and industry alike.

Cohort 10 Double Edge Impact:

- 165 Double Edge scholarships awarded
- \$1,368,000 in industry partner funds committed to MTC students
- \$3.46 million in combined Build Dakota/Double Edge funds awarded to Cohort 10
- 11 full Build Dakota scholarships awarded

This year, Mitchell Tech hosted its second Build Dakota Industry Connection Fair representing all Build Dakota programs. The event provided companies with the opportunity to meet, engage with, and interview incoming students, strengthening the pipeline of talent for South Dakota's workforce.



Mitchell Tech continues to retain all major industry partnerships and remains dedicated to supporting workforce needs in high-demand fields, including small communities across the state. Many of our partners continue to rely on even a single student to address critical workforce shortages, underscoring the importance of these partnerships in meeting local and regional employment needs.

### **FUTURE FOCUS/GOALS FOR BUILD DAKOTA**

Mitchell Technical College is actively promoting the Build Dakota Scholarship program at all levels, with an increased focus on non-traditional marketing and recruitment strategies. The college continues to educate students, parents, educators, counselors, workforce development professionals, and industry partners about the benefits of both the Build Dakota and Double Edge programs. Mitchell Tech also participates in the Build Dakota Road Show, coordinated by Deni Martin, to reach students across the region.

The enrollment team remains committed to supporting and promoting Build Dakota at career and educational events throughout South Dakota and the broader Great Plains region.

Support for Build Dakota does not end once a scholarship is awarded. Each Build Dakota Scholar is paired with a student success coach who provides guidance and mentorship throughout their program, ensuring students are fully supported as they progress toward graduation and career readiness.

### **SUCCESS STORIES**

#### **Tiah Holzbauer, Licensed Practical Nursing & Registered Nurse, 2026**

The Build Dakota Scholarship has had a life-changing impact on my education and career path.

I began working as a Certified Nursing Assistant at Avera St. Benedict Hospital in Parkston, where I discovered my passion for patient care and knew I wanted to continue my education in nursing. As a non-traditional student, the Build Dakota Scholarship removed financial barriers and allowed me to focus fully on the LPN program while continuing to work in healthcare.

With the support and sponsorship of my employer, I graduated from the LPN program and transitioned into my role as a Licensed Practical Nurse at Avera St. Benedict Hospital. Today, with continued encouragement from Avera and the Build Dakota program, I am furthering my education in the RN program.



Because of Build Dakota’s investment in workforce development and an employer who believes in my growth, I am able to advance my career while staying in my hometown and caring for the community that first inspired me to pursue nursing.

**Jeremy Jensen, Owner of Jensen Design Build, LLC**

The Build Dakota Scholarship program has had a meaningful impact on both our company and workforce development in the region. As a thriving construction and development company, one of the biggest challenges in our industry is finding motivated, skilled individuals who are ready to step into the trades. Build Dakota plays a critical role in helping bridge that gap.

Through the program and our partnership with Mitchell Technical College, we had the opportunity to work with Jackson—a student who came to us with strong foundational training, a solid work ethic, and a clear commitment to building a career in the construction field. Because of the Build Dakota partnership with our company, it helps support students financially, whereas they can focus on developing real skills and gaining experience, rather than being weighed down by the financial burden of education.

Jackson has become a valuable part of our team, contributing on active projects and continuing to grow professionally in a real-world construction environment. Programs like Build Dakota allow companies like us to invest in young talent early, develop long-term careers, and strengthen the skilled workforce that South Dakota communities depend on for housing, infrastructure, and growth.

Build Dakota is not only supporting students, it is strengthening local businesses, addressing workforce shortages, and helping keep talent here in South Dakota.



**Jackson Bachmann – Jensen Design Build Double Edge student**

The Build Dakota Scholarship has changed my life in so many ways. It has allowed me to attend college without any financial worry, opened many new doors of opportunity, and helped lay the path for my future.

When looking into college, I was not exactly sure what I wanted to go into. A big factor in my decision was that I did not want to go to college for many years, and I did not want to go into a large amount of student loan debt. What helped me decide was the Build Dakota scholarship, because it allowed me to go to a 2-year tech school for free. I chose to go to Mitchell Tech and major in the Architectural Design and Building Construction program. Thus, I went out and found an industry partner in the construction industry who helps pay for the other half of my schooling along with Build Dakota themselves. I chose Jensen Design Build in Mitchell, where I work as an intern and gain more experience in the construction industry while I am attending school and for three years after I graduate.

In conclusion, I am able to attend college without any financial worry. I am gaining firsthand experience in the construction industry at school and work. As well as my future is set up with a job right after graduating. All thanks to the Build Dakota Scholarship!

### **Bryan Lund, HVAC Service Manager at Johnson Controls**

Johnson Controls has been an active partner since the inception of the Build Dakota Scholarship and the Double Edge program, and we have seen firsthand the tremendous impact they have on workforce development, student success, and the technical industries that rely on skilled talent.

With the majority of our team based in South Dakota, we recognize how unique and valuable these programs are. Neighboring states frequently express admiration—and even envy—for the opportunities Build Dakota creates for both students and employers. The model works, and it works exceptionally well.

Johnson Controls has consistently maintained at least one student in the Double Edge program at all times, and the outcomes have been overwhelmingly positive. One of our most memorable success stories involves a Build Dakota student from Minnesota who, nearing graduation, still needed a position in South Dakota to fulfill his commitment. He reached out to our team, had already secured housing in Watertown, and the timing aligned perfectly. Today, five years after graduating from MTC, he continues to live in Watertown and remains a valued Johnson Controls employee—long past his required service period.

Stories like this demonstrate the true strength of the Build Dakota and Double Edge programs.

They are a win-win-win for all involved:

- A win for Johnson Controls, by strengthening our talent pipeline with well-trained, motivated technicians
- A win for students, who gain education, opportunity, and long-term career stability
- A win for MTC, whose graduates continue to excel in high-demand technical fields

These partnerships play a vital role in developing the next generation of HVAC and controls professionals, and we are proud to support them. Johnson Controls remains committed to continuing our involvement and championing the success of Build Dakota and its students.

Thank you for your leadership and for the meaningful impact you continue to make across South Dakota and beyond.



## SOUTHEAST TECHNICAL COLLEGE

On behalf of Southeast Technical College’s (STC) faculty, staff, and Build Dakota alumni and students, President Cory Clasemann extends sincere appreciation to Governor Larry Rhoden and Mr. T. Denny Sanford for their steady commitment to technical education across the state.



In Fall 2025, STC launched *Southeast Tech 2030: A Vision for Growth, Innovation, and Impact*. It is a bold, forward-looking strategic plan rooted in our mission to prepare students for thriving careers through innovative, industry-driven pathways and strong community partnerships. It reaffirms STC’s commitment to being a truly student-ready institution and reinforces the Build Dakota mission to build a better future for students and South Dakota.

Since the launch of Build Dakota in 2015, STC’s enrollment has grown from 2,196 to a record 2,815 in Fall 2025—a 28% increase. For Cohort 11, we received nearly **600 applications** and awarded **172 scholarships**, supported by **60 industry partners**.

## WELLS FARGO HOMEBUILDING LAB EXPANDS WORKFORCE CAPACITY AT STC

Since taking office in July 2024, President Clasemann has prioritized building relationships with business and civic leaders, resulting in key gifts for the Wells Fargo Homebuilding Lab and the James Abdnor Center for Advanced Manufacturing. These added facilities will introduce new manufacturing majors and increase capacity in our existing Build Dakota programs.

The Wells Fargo Homebuilding Lab will expand hands-on learning in STC’s trade and construction programs while supporting affordable housing in the Sioux Falls region. Located on the south end of campus between the Ed Wood Trade Center and the Sioux Falls School District’s Career and Technical Education Academy, the project is funded by a \$2 million grant from Wells Fargo. It was announced in December alongside Gov. Larry Rhoden, U.S. Congressman Dusty Johnson, Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken, and skilled trades advocate Mike Rowe.



## **ABDNOR CENTER POSITIONS STC AT THE FOREFRONT OF MANUFACTURING INNOVATION**

STC has also announced plans for the James Abdnor Center for Advanced Manufacturing, a new facility with state-of-the-art labs, classrooms, and collaborative spaces designed to prepare students for careers in South Dakota’s largest industry by GDP—manufacturing. The Abdnor Center will enhance existing programs and support new offerings in Advanced Manufacturing Technology and Mechanical Engineering.

The Sioux Falls School Board approved the Abdnor Center’s name in honor of Senator James Abdnor, recognizing his commitment to education and opportunity. As manufacturing evolves through automation, modeling software, and artificial intelligence, the Abdnor Center will serve as a hub for innovation and workforce readiness.



## **EXPANDING PATHWAYS IN HEALTH AND EARLY CHILDHOOD AT STC**

For Cohort 11, STC expanded its Build Dakota offerings by adding Medical Assistant, a diploma program requested by Sanford Health and Avera Health, and Early Childhood Specialist, an associate program addressing the critical shortage of affordable, reliable childcare for working families. In response to this need, the City of Sioux Falls provided a \$450,000 gift for student scholarships. Used as matching funds, this investment makes it feasible for childcare providers to sponsor students through Build Dakota.

## STC CAREER FAIRS AND SIGNING DAY SHOWCASE STRONG INDUSTRY COMMITMENT

As Build Dakota enters its second decade, demand continues to grow, especially in healthcare and trade programs at STC. For Cohorts 9, 10, and 11, and as we prepare for Cohort 12, we have capped the number of students each industry partner may sponsor. Businesses could support more than 200 additional students. This strong demand reflects the program’s success and underscores the need for expanded funding to avoid turning away partners and students.

STC’s Career Services team hosts ten industry-specific career fairs each year—Engineering and Mechatronics; Health (Fall and Spring); Horticulture Technology and Sports Turf Management; Industrial Technology; Information Technology; Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN); Transportation Technology; and Veterinary Technician—along with a part-time career fair. These events connect employers with our campus community and prospective employees.

Our annual Build Dakota Signing Day remains a signature celebration, honoring sponsors, new scholars and their families, and the faculty and staff who support their success.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### From Garage to Career: Jett Yaggie’s Collision Repair Journey at STC



From a young age, Jett Yaggie was immersed in the world of cars, restoring classics alongside her dad. After rebuilding her first engine at 14, she realized mechanical work was not her passion—but collision repair was. With a strong artistic background, she learned to airbrush, completed an internship at a hometown body shop, and discovered her love for the craftsmanship behind autobody work.

Receiving the Build Dakota Scholarship became a turning point. “The Build Dakota Scholarship means trust to me,” Jett says. “My sponsor is putting all their trust in me succeeding and giving me a chance of a lifetime.”

Without the scholarship, college would not have been an option. Now, Jett is gaining the skills she needs to succeed in collision repair and confidently planning her future. “I can confidently plan out the next five years of my life because of this scholarship and have a head start in the world.”

### Powering His Future: Logan Wilcox’s Path at STC to Becoming an Electrician



Growing up, Logan Wilcox spent hours working alongside his stepdad on home projects, where he discovered a passion for electrical work. He was drawn to precision and problem-solving—and quickly realized it could become his career.

That goal became attainable through the Build Dakota Scholarship.

Without a college fund and facing family financial challenges, tuition would have been a major barrier. “Having the Build Dakota Scholarship has helped me immensely,” Logan says. “I can focus on school without constantly worrying about finances.”

With that support, Logan is fully determined to master his trade and prepare for a high-demand career. “This scholarship has set my future up for success,” he shares, “and I plan to keep being ambitious after I graduate.”

## WESTERN DAKOTA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

This Spring, we saw a marked increase in degree-seeking students, and we are still tracking ahead of last year's students served and credit hours for the entire year.

WDTC's new Radiologic Technology program continues to see immense popularity with Build Dakota and non-Build Dakota students. Applications for that program continue to exceed expectations and waiting lists are being formed to accommodate as many students as possible.



Western Dakota Technical College has begun the implementation of a new Dental Hygiene program. Erik Mutterer has been hired as Program Director and the courses are expected to begin in 2027. At this time, this program will be considered Build Dakota eligible and will bridge off the previously existing Dental Assistant program.



### **WELCOME DR. KENDRA ERICSON, PRESIDENT OF WDTC:**

Western Dakota Technical College is excited to welcome **Dr. Kendra Ericson** as our new President. Dr. Ericson joined WDTC on June 12<sup>th</sup> and hit the ground running with a focus on expanding and improving WDTC's image and reputation across Western South Dakota.

## **SIGNING DAY**

WDTC's Build Dakota Signing Day/Celebration is scheduled for June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Aside from completing paperwork, we are hoping the event will serve as a celebratory introduction for Cohort 12 before they officially begin classes in the Fall.

## **SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF INDUSTRY PARTNERS**

### **SUCCESSES**

- Muth Electric is sponsoring 10 Electric Trades Build Dakota Scholarships for Cohort 12
  - Biggest commitment from non-medical sponsor for WDTC ever
- Sanford Health is continuing to move into the Black Hills area via Black Hills Orthopedic & Spine Center, Black Hills Surgical Hospital
- Every Industry Sponsor who has agreed to sponsor a student is returning from last year
  - Build Dakota is proving it's worth to local companies and keeping them coming back
- Cohort 11 registered more returning Industry Sponsors than ever before
  - Correlating to the most pledged sponsorship funds ever

## **CHALLENGES**

- Ensuring small businesses/HR teams can compete with larger businesses for BDS students
- Current strategy is to limit total dollars for larger companies and re-evaluate as time passes/applications come in
- Smaller numbers of non-medical BDS applications
- Programs like Construction Technology have very few interested students despite Industry Partnerships being available

## **CAMPUS FUTURE FOCUS/GOALS**

Western Dakota Technical College recently underwent an internal SWOT analysis to determine next steps for the College under Dr. Ericson's leadership.

The following areas have been identified as goals to focus on in the immediate future:

- Student Housing
  - Working toward creating a safe and affordable housing environment for students
- Campus Expansion
  - Investigating opportunities to potentially expand shop space
- Increased Community Engagement
- Marketing Rebrand
- New Program Additions
  - Dental Hygiene program being created and integrated into Build Dakota program

## **SUCCESS STORIES**

### **MUTH ELECTRIC (10 BD SCHOLARSHIP DONATION)**



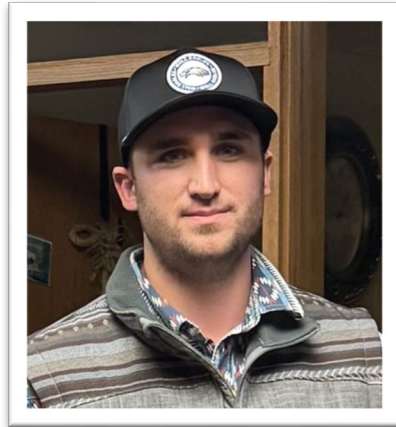
Muth Electric is sponsoring 10 Build Dakota Scholarships for WDTC's Electrical Trades program students at Western Dakota Technical College (WDTC). Muth Electric has been an avid supporter of the BDS program since the scholarship program's beginning in 2015.

"This is something we have believed in for a long time. We have retained over 85% of our Build Dakota graduates over the 10-year period," Arin Winger, Senior Recruiter for Muth Electric, said. "Our goal is to keep students for more than three years. If they invest in us like we have in them, we will be able to find success together."

This philosophy also highlights the commitment to community that Muth Electric proudly champions; instead of hiring traveling journeymen, they instead chose to literally invest in the future of our community.

"It serves all our best interests to find talent early, recognize their upside, and develop that talent. Muth Electric is a family company three generations strong," Winger said.

### **Garrett Strohschein, WDTC Class of 2021 – Electrical Trades**



After seeing his brother successfully navigate the Electrical Trades program at Western Dakota Technical College, Garrett decided that it was his turn to begin his educational journey. To do this, Garrett sought out, and received, a Build Dakota Scholarship to WDTC.

Through the support of the Build Dakota Scholarship and Foundation staff, Garrett was able to focus his time on studying and practicing. Gone were his worries about making payments, working a part-time job, or affording books and other essential supplies.

“It was a great scholarship, not having to worry about finances. If you know you are going back (in state), it’s about the best it gets,” Strohschein said.

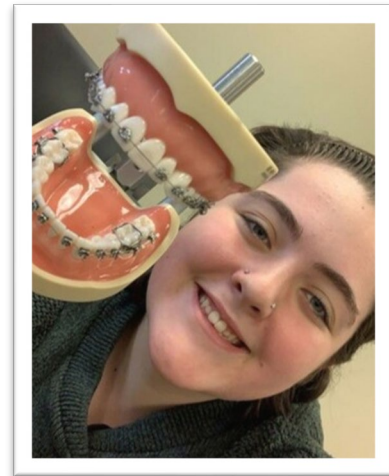
Following his graduation, Garrett spent time working in a Wyoming coal mine before returning to school and pursuing a degree in education. Combining these skills, Garrett now serves as Career & Technical Education (CTE) Director for Wall School District where he advocates for expanded CTE programs throughout the region.

“I am organizing CTE career fairs for business, trades, and agriculture, with this year being the first one. I am also working a lot with a local building center; my class is building sheds that we have auctioned to help fund the program. We are also putting on a CTE banquet and auction,” Strohschein said, “I want (my students) to have a general understanding that even if they don’t take a career in trades, they can still change their own lightbulb, light switch, outlet, and other basic skills that aren’t as common.”

### **Mercedes Starkweather, WDTC Class of 2023 - Dental Assisting**

Before beginning her educational journey at Western Dakota Technical College, Mercedes Starkweather had the difficult task of finding a way to pay for schooling. Through the Build Dakota Scholarship, she was able to not only pursue her dream career without the constant struggle of finances dangling over her head, but she was able to experience her potential community impact before she even graduated.

“The Build Dakota Scholarship has brought me to so many places in the past few months! One of those places being a girl scout event that my dental class attended to help educate kids of the importance of brushing, flossing, and how alginate works! It was so fun, and I am so grateful for the opportunity!”



But the fun isn’t limited to external events; Starkweather got to have plenty of fun within the classroom as well.

“The Build Dakota Scholarship has let me do so many things in school! We got to make impressions on each other this week! It was such a fun skill, and I am so happy to have an impression of my teeth.” As Starkweather continues to navigate post-graduate life, she remains incredibly thankful to the Build Dakota Scholarship Fund for making all her dreams possible.