Vol. 55, No. 1: 2026

September

South Dakota ACTE® VIEWPOINT

Quarterly Newsletter



President's Welcome Letter

By: Karen Roudabush

Contact Karen at: President@sdacteonline.org

As we begin a new school year, I want to welcome each of you and thank you for being part of the South Dakota Association for Career and Technical Education (SDACTE) community. I am honored to serve as your SDACTE President and look forward to the opportunities ahead.

CTE teachers, administrators, counselors, and other professionals have a lasting impact on our students and communities. With overflowing plates and often thankless responsibilities, you continue to prepare students for careers, help them discover their strengths, connect them with industry, and provide experiences that extend far beyond the classroom. Thank you for your dedication to preparing South Dakota students for their futures. You make a difference!

At the heart of our work this year is a commitment to strengthening the value of SDACTE membership. Membership should mean more than paying annual dues. SDACTE exists to provide meaningful opportunities, resources, connections, and support that help you in the work you do every day. We will continue to offer quality programming and work to deliver a high-quality annual conference filled with valuable learning, connections, and experiences you won't want to miss.

Making membership matter means staying focused on why SDACTE exists: to empower educators with the leadership and resources necessary to cultivate a highly skilled and competitive workforce. By investing in our members, we strengthen CTE programs, expand opportunities for students, and contribute to strong communities and a strong workforce across South Dakota.

We also want to hear from you. What do you need from your professional organization? What resources, professional development, or connections would help you in your role? Your input can help guide our work and ensure membership continues to provide meaningful value.

Financial responsibility is also an important part of providing lasting value. SDACTE is committed to being thoughtful and intentional with membership dollars, ensuring our resources support meaningful programs, opportunities, and services. Responsible stewardship allows us to serve our members today while maintaining a strong and sustainable organization for the future.

As we move into the year ahead, my hope is that you can clearly identify what being part of SDACTE means to you. Membership matters when you feel supported, connected, valued, and equipped to do your best work for students. I encourage you to get involved: attend events, connect with your division, nominate colleagues for awards, serve on a committee, share your successes, or encourage another CTE professional to join.

Thank you for being part of SDACTE—I'm looking forward to a great year together!



CareerTech Vision Conference

December 2-5
New Orleans, LA

Follow the link below or scan the QR code to Register:
Vision Conference Registration

Check It Out!

Direct Live Links Inside this Viewpoint Newsletter

***Throughout this newsletter you will see blue bolded & underlined text. These links will direct you to important websites & opportunities available for our members!**

Vision for SDACTE



Meet Your President Elect!
By: Dr. Sara VandeKamp
Contact Sara at: PresidentElect@sdacteonline.org

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Sara Vande Kamp as the new President-Elect for the South Dakota Association of Career and Technical Education (SDACTE)! Sara brings two decades of experience in education and CTE advocacy to this leadership role, along with a deep commitment to creating opportunities for students, educators, and South Dakota communities.

Sara currently serves as the Director of Workforce Development at Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls, where she works to expand certificate programs, noncredit education, industry training, and other opportunities that connect education directly to the needs of South Dakota's workforce.

Her connection to CTE leadership runs deep. Sara previously served as President of the SDACTE Administration Division and has been actively involved in CTE advocacy, professional development, and statewide initiatives. She especially enjoys bringing people together; educators, employers, community partners, to find creative ways to strengthen CTE and build pathways for students into meaningful careers.

When she isn't working, Sara enjoys spending time with her husband, Kendall, and their two daughters, Ivy and Rose. She is passionate about giving back to her community. You can often find her supporting local organizations, enjoying a good cup of decaf coffee, picking flowers in her backyard prairie patch, or cheering on her daughters at their activities. She also admits that she is happiest when she has a trip to look forward to!

As President-Elect, Sara is looking forward to listening to SDACTE members, strengthening connections across divisions, and helping elevate the incredible work happening in CTE classrooms and programs across South Dakota. She believes some of the greatest opportunities in CTE come from working together and making sure educators have a strong voice in conversations about education, workforce, and economic development.



Tanner Peterson
New Teacher of the Year

Region V Award Winners!





Charlene Weber
Carl Perkins Community Service



Call for Presenters: Get Involved with Region V!
By: Bobbie Jo Donovan, Region V Policy Committee

Mark your calendars for the 2027 ACTE Region V Leadership Conference, taking place April 7–9, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Centered around the theme "Sound the Bell: Time to Lead," the conference will bring together CTE professionals from across the region to connect, collaborate, and strengthen leadership in CTE.

Attendees can expect engaging sessions, awesome tours, networking opportunities, and inspiring conversations focused on elevating programs and student success.
Bookmark the conference website and watch for more details coming soon. Registration will open in mid-September. The Call for Proposals will open at the end of September. The hotel booking link is available now on the website.









Grow Professionally with SDACTE Stipends

By: Travis Santistevan

Contact Travis at: PastPresident@sdacteonline.org



Looking for support for your next professional development opportunity? SDACTE offers stipends to help members attend conferences, continue their education, and bring new ideas back to their classrooms.
Available opportunities include:

- **ACTE CareerTech VISION:** Three $500 stipends. Applications are due 10 days prior to early bird registration closing.
- **Region V Conference:** Two $500 stipends. Applications are due 10 days before early bird registration closes.
- **National Policy Seminar:** One $500 stipend. Applications are due 10 days before early bird registration closes.
- **Professional Development:** $500 stipends to support continuing education coursework, subject to available funding. Applications are due the first day of the summer conference.
- **Floating Stipends:** Additional $500 stipends may be available from unused conference stipend funds. Applications are due 10 days before early bird registration closes.

Applicants must be SDACTE members. Each stipend has specific requirements, so review the application carefully. Conference stipend recipients are expected to share what they learn with fellow members.
Find application forms and complete details on the SDACTE Professional Development page. Submit completed applications to PastPresident@sdacteonline.org.

Take advantage of this membership benefit to grow your skills, connect with other educators, and support your students!

SUMMER CTE JOINT CONFERENCE SPONSOR

Thank you

GOVERNORS CYBER ACADEMY
DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Check them out online!

https://dsu.edu/admissions/undergraduate/cyber-academy.html

State Wide Opportunities



Fall Into Opportunity with South Dakota's CTSOs
By: Katie Paulson









Fall is an exciting time for students to discover the opportunities available through South Dakota's six statewide Career and Technical Student Organizations: Educators Rising, FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, HOSA–Future Health Professionals, and SkillsUSA. Through conferences, leadership workshops, competitive events, community service, career exploration, and industry connections, students strengthen their communication, teamwork, technical, and professional skills while connecting classroom learning to future careers.

CTE teachers and advisors play an essential role in encouraging students to get involved. An invitation to attend an event, participate in a chapter activity, try a competition, or accept a leadership role can help a student discover a passion and build confidence. The South Dakota CTSO Center is proud to support these meaningful opportunities and grateful to the educators who make them possible. This fall, encourage your students to take the next step and discover where a CTSO can take them!

Level Up Your CTE Classroom: Professional Development Opportunities
By: Amber Rost



Energy Best Practices Day
Sept. 23, Mitchell – Unsure of how to incorporate popular energy careers into your CTE program? Then this PD is for you! Administrators and educators alike can get ahead of the exciting changes with Northwestern Energy and The Center for Energy Workforce Development. They will share free, classroom-ready curriculum and resources; industry panelists will show how schools can best prepare students for these high-demand and high-wage careers. Register today! Questions? Reach out to Mercedes Snedeker.

Health Science Professional Development Day
Oct. 7, Watertown – Learn how to strengthen and grow your health science program while learning more about new post-secondary programs. You will also get the chance to experience emerging technology and discover resources and strategies you can bring back to your health science classroom. Register today! Questions? Reach out to Melissa Ettswold.

ProStart Professional Development for Hospitality and Tourism Educators
Oct. 26-27, Mitchell – This training is designed for ProStart teachers or those considering bringing it to their school. Connect with industry professionals and post-secondary instructors on classroom and lab management, culinary techniques, competition preparation, and industry practices. Register today! Questions? Reach out to Jamie Boettcher.

Post-Secondary Updates



Professional Development Opportunities for CTE Leaders and Educators

By: Dr. Sara Vande Kamp

As we move into the fall and winter conference season, we encourage CTE professionals to take advantage of two outstanding opportunities for learning, networking, and sharing innovative practices. Check them out!

ACTE Best Practices and Innovations Conference
October 6-8, 2026 | Denver, Colorado
The Best Practices and Innovations Conference brings together career and technical education professionals from across the country to explore effective strategies, emerging trends, and innovative programs that are making an impact in CTE. Conference sessions focus on practical approaches that participants can bring back to their schools, colleges, and organizations. Attendees will have opportunities to learn from national experts, connect with colleagues, and discover new ideas that support student success and workforce development.

ACTE CareerTech VISION 2026
December 2-5, 2026 | New Orleans, Louisiana
ACTE's CareerTech VISION is the premier annual event for career and technical education professionals. Drawing thousands of educators, administrators, counselors, and workforce partners from across the nation, VISION offers hundreds of professional development sessions, a large CareerTech Expo, national networking opportunities, and insights into the latest trends shaping CTE. Participants will gain valuable knowledge, resources, and connections to strengthen programs and support learners at every level.
Whether you're looking for innovative classroom strategies, program development ideas, leadership insights, or opportunities to connect with fellow CTE professionals, these conferences provide valuable experiences that can benefit both educators and students.
For registration and conference details, visit www.acteonline.org.



THREE SOUTH DAKOTA CTE STARS ARE HEADED TO NATIONALS!

By: Tracy Kern, Region V Awards Committee

South Dakota has some exciting news to celebrate! Three of the eight Region V ACTE Award of Excellence winners are from South Dakota! This is an incredible accomplishment and a wonderful reflection of the outstanding Career and Technical Education professionals across our state.

Please join the South Dakota CTE community in congratulating these three outstanding candidates as they move forward to compete at the national ACTE level:

- Sara Vande Kamp - Postsecondary Professional of the Year
- Tanner Peterson - New Teacher of the Year
- Charlene Weber - Carl Perkins Community Service Award

Three Candidates. One State. So Much to Celebrate! Having three of the eight Region V candidates represent South Dakota is something the entire South Dakota CTE community can be extremely proud of!

These candidates have demonstrated the dedication, commitment and passion that make Career and Technical Education such an important part of education and workforce development.

Now it is time to CHEER THEM ON! As they prepare to compete at the national ACTE level, any encouragement, congratulations or words of support will be greatly appreciated. If you are attending ACTE CareerTech VISION and the Awards Gala, be sure to look for Sara, Tanner and Charlene and give them some extra South Dakota CTE support.

The Awards Gala will be held on December 2nd @ 6:00–8:00 p.m.

Let's make sure our South Dakota candidates know that the entire South Dakota CTE community is cheering them on! Congratulations, Sara, Tanner and Charlene! South Dakota is proud to have you representing our state at the national level!

South Dakota CTE is cheering for you!

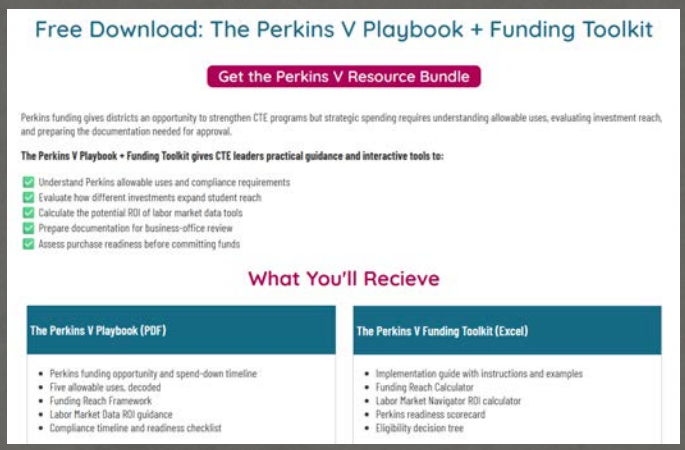
Updates & Perkins V

Video Highlight!

The link below will take you to the video that South Dakota submitted to be included in the ACTE 100 year celebration and will be played at Vision.

Click Here to Watch!

A special thanks to Travis Lape for putting this together and thank you to the teachers that submitted photos on short notice.



Follow this link to access the Playbook and Funding Toolkit!

https://p2c.org/perkins/#toolkit

*Please meet with your consortium director for specific South Dakota Perkins Requirements.

ON THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S Notepad:



From the CTE Policy Watch via ACTE:

School Counselor Survey Finds Increased Interest in CTE Pathways

Only 56% of counselors agree/strongly agree that their school/district measures student success and career development effectively through structured activities and advising systems, assessment of student skills and interests, and support from their district and state.

For the 44% that did not agree, **issues raised include metrics that are overly focused on college pathways or compliance, lack of quantitative measures, and lack of follow-up on collected data.**

This and more data on the School Counselor survey can be found on the blog linked above.

For more information on how school counseling intersects with CTE, check out ACTE's CTE 101 for Counselors microsite. It provides school counselors with key information about CTE, Perkins, and career exploration to help them guide students and families in making informed decisions about their educational and career goals.



T&I Division Update

By: Jason Karels
Contact Jason at: TradesIndustryDivision@sdacteonline.org

Greetings, and I hope you are off to a successful start to the school year! My name is Jason Karels, and I am the 2026-2027 president for the Trade and Industry Division of SDACTE. I am excited to serve as your representative, and I hope I can be of service to the organization, and most importantly, to you.

I am not sure how this happened: I graduated college, turned around, and blinked a few times, and to my shock, closing in on 31 years of teaching. I have taught high school Ag Ed, Ag Production and Ag Precision at LATC, and the past nine years at Milbank HS in a variety of Trade and Industry courses. In other words; Whatever My Principal Tells Me To.

I look forward to connecting with Trade and Industry teachers from across the state, and finding ways our division can better support you. Regardless of programs, assignments, and divisions, we all share the goal of helping students develop the skills, confidence, and work ethic they need for their futures. Please do not hesitate to reach out with ideas, concerns, successes, or questions. I am looking forward to a great year and to working alongside all of you.

Division Updates



Admin Division Introduction
By: Tracy Chase

Contact Tracy at: ADMINdivision@sdacteonline.org

Say hello to Tracy Chase, your 2026 Administration Division President! Tracy is in her 25th year in education. She spent 21 years teaching science and agriculture and has served in secondary administration for the past four years. She is passionate about STEM education and work-based learning that opens new opportunities for students.

One of Tracy's favorite parts of education is hearing from former students years later. She loves learning about their new jobs, moves, weddings, and growing families and values the connections that last long after graduation.

As division president, Tracy looks forward to meeting members of other divisions, listening to their ideas, and connecting people with resources and one another. She is grateful for the opportunity to serve and eager to work together to strengthen administrative leadership and expand career and technical education across South Dakota.



A Message from Your Heath Science Division President
By: Shannon Buelow

Contact Shannon at: HealthScienceDivision@sdacteonline.org

My name is Shannon Buelow, and I am a Health Science Instructor at Northeast Technical High School in Watertown, South Dakota. I am honored to serve as the SDACTE Health Science Division President, this is my second year serving in this role.

I am excited to be part of this division and especially excited to have this year's conference in my hometown at Lake Area Technical College. Being able to connect with other Health Science educators from across South Dakota and share ideas is something I truly value.

Sharing the healthcare world with students is my passion. I enjoy working with students, helping them discover the many opportunities within healthcare, and getting them excited about their future careers. I also enjoy working with healthcare professionals and creating connections between education and the healthcare community. These partnerships are so important in helping our students understand what it means to be a healthcare professional and preparing them for the workforce.

As we move through the year, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, suggestions, ideas, or topics you would like to discuss. I want to hear what is happening in your Health Science programs, what is working well, and what challenges you may be facing. I hope we can continue to learn from and support one another as Health Science educators across South Dakota. I'm looking foward to another great year in the Health Sciences division!



BMIT Division Update
By: Amy Pierson

Contact Amy at: BMITdivision@sdacteonline.org

The SDACTE Board has begun planning for next summer's conference, which is scheduled to be held at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown, South Dakota, during the week of July 25. The board recently toured the Lake Area campus and held our leadership conference there. We were very impressed with the facilities and programs!

The Board understands that beginning the conference on a Sunday takes away one of the final weekends of summer. With that in mind, we are discussing options for adjusting the conference schedule. Watch your email for a message from me at bmitdivision@sdacteonline.org with some possible options. We would appreciate your input, ideas, and suggestions as we work to determine the best schedule for our members.

The South Dakota Department of Education will also be offering a Best Practices Workshop again this year. The workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, November 18, and will be held at Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Watch your email for additional details for this professional development opportunity tailored for our division! Wishing everyone a successful and rewarding 2026–2027 school year!

Member Benefits



Let's Talk Member Benefits!
By: Lenessa Keehn

Office Days: Monday & Wednesday
Contact Lenessa: executivedirector@sdacteonline.org

Recently, I was a guest speaker in the SDSU AgEd & FCS Edu classrooms — something that I've been doing for the last three-four years for Dr. Hasselquist and Dr. Graves. I visit with the students each year about trade associations and organizations. In that 50-minute class period, we discuss and look up a variety of educational associations in addition to non-education related associations in a variety of industries. Our conversation allows us to go down a rabbit-hole of discovery, but what I want to bring back to you is this: Member Benefits.

In every engaged conversation I have with the students, the conversation brings up four main points: The who, the where, the what, and most importantly — the why.

The easiest questions for the students to answer, as is with all of us, include:
Who — what is the name of the organization? Who are they?
Where — where do I find them (online)?
What — what do they represent? What is their mission statement and vision statement?
As with any student, these are the easy answers — they can look that up and answer quickly.
The hardest question is the Why. Why should I be a member? This is no different than the decades old question that we have — why am I a member of SDACTE/ACTE?

I can't give you that answer. The website can't give you that answer. The board of directors, even though it becomes a strategic goal every year, cannot give you an answer. It is not as black and white as the first three questions. So, to answer the question "What are the benefits of being a member?" I am asking you — what is important to you?

Every member's value system is not the same. Therefore, every answer on why am I a member? What are my benefits? Will not be the same from one person to the next. To find out what your benefits are, you have to take a deeper dive into your organization/association. What can they do for you? What do they provide? The students did a great job of really trying to figure out why they would join a certain association/organization. Answers ranged from curriculum resources, award & scholarship programs, networking, discounted rates for workshops & professional development, pathways to leadership & volunteer opportunities, to career protection, insurance, licensing & certification, travel, and legislative advocacy.

SDACTE/ACTE also provides all of the tangible & intangible benefits listed above. The SDSU students also researched trade publications for the organizations. Magazines, newsletters, podcasts, and webinars were all listed. This was the one item that students found beneficial right now — they could look up information from an archive on a variety of topics that have been featured. ACTE sends out the Techniques magazine, with an online/digital version if preferred. The archive is quite extensive. You can look up any article from any issue from as far back as September 1996. SDACTE sends out this newsletter, The Viewpoint four times during a school year with information from every division president as well as highlights from the Department of Education and your Regional leaders.

Member Benefits. What are the benefits to being a member of SDACTE/ACTE? We can point you in any direction, but you need to know what is important to you as an educator, a leader, and a professional in your content area/industry.

Division Updates



2026-2027 SDACTE Board of Directors



Introducing Your FCS Division President
By: Carrie Kafka

Contact Carrie at: FCSdivision@sdacteonline.org

I'm Carrie Kafka, and I'm excited to be serving as your FCS Division President! I am in my 18th year of teaching and am a proud graduate of SDSU. I teach in my hometown of Parkston, and I LOVE TEACHING FCS! One of my favorite things about Family and Consumer Sciences is the variety. There is always something new to teach, learn, create, or try, and I truly never get bored with my content.

My husband, Adam, and I live on my family farm east of Parkston, SD, where we farm and run a Shorthorn cattle company. We have three children: Ava (12), Owen (10), and Eli (7). In my spare time—when I'm not teaching or running to activities with my own children—I enjoy a lazy Saturday morning lounging in bed with a good Hallmark movie, gardening, soaking up the sun at the pool, reading, crafting, cooking, and baking. I also love a good bargain, so you'll often find me checking the clearance rack or wandering through the dollar store. :)

As I begin my year as FCS Division President, one of my biggest goals is to help our FCS educators feel connected and supported. One of the best resources we have is each other! I hope our division can continue to be a place where we share ideas, celebrate what is happening in our classrooms, learn from one another, and advocate for the importance of Family and Consumer Sciences education.

FCS teachers wear MANY hats, and sometimes it can feel like we are on our own little island in our schools. My hope is that SDACTE gives us opportunities to build relationships with other educators who understand exactly what we do—the labs, the projects, the FCCLA events, the lesson planning, and all the wonderful craziness that comes with being an FCS teacher!

I am excited to see what this year has in store for SDACTE and our FCS Division. I look forward to connecting with all of you, learning from you, and celebrating the amazing things happening in FCS classrooms across South Dakota!

Meet Your AFNR Division President
By: Mollie Andrews

Contact Mollie at: AFNRdivision@sdacteonline.org



I am Mollie Andrews, current president of the South Dakota Association of Agriculture Educators (SDAAE). I am starting my 8th year teaching agriculture in Burke and Gregory high schools and advising the Gregory County FFA chapter.

My husband and I stay busy chasing our children, Sadie (13) and Beck(10) in all their activities. We also help out on my family's commercial cow/calf operation. When I get free time, you can find me in a good book or out riding horses, however I haven't gotten much of either lately!

My path to teaching was not exactly traditional, and I think it might be relatable to some of you. I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in 2007. After college, I spent several years working in different areas of agriculture—from ranches and sale barns to daycares and office settings. Each of those experiences has shaped the way I teach and helped me understand the importance of connecting what students learn in the classroom to the real world.

One of my favorite parts of teaching is watching a student try something new and discover that they are good at it—or, maybe even better, that they really enjoy it. Sometimes that experience sparks an interest in a career they had never considered before. And isn't that what Career and Technical Education is all about? Giving students the opportunity to explore different interests, discover what they enjoy (and sometimes what they don't!), and gain real-world skills before they leave high school and begin the next chapter of their lives.

I am proud to teach in a rural community and to see firsthand the impact CTE programs can have on students and the communities they call home. Ultimately, we are helping students discover their strengths, find their passions, and help prepare them to become the next generation of workers, leaders, and difference makers in our communities.

I am looking forward to this year to continue to learn, collaborate and share all of the great things happening in CTE programs across South Dakota. I hope you all have a great school year and thank you for all that you do!

Award Winners



Katie Paulson
Administrator of the Year

The Administrator of the Year Award recognizes administrative CTE professionals who demonstrate leadership in ensuring teacher and student success while making significant contributions to innovative, unique, and effective Career and Technical Education programs.

Katie Paulson was honored as the 2026 recipient. Strong CTSO programs across the state depend on administrators who understand their value and are willing to support the educators and students within them. From encouraging innovative programming and professional development to supporting equipment, leadership, partnerships, student organizations, and hands-on learning opportunities, administrative leadership can have a tremendous impact on what CTE programs are able to accomplish. This award recognizes leadership that Katie has provided to create an environment where both CTSO advisers, CTE teachers, students, members, and leaders can succeed throughout SD!



Travis Santistevan
Teacher of the Year

The Teacher of the Year Award recognizes outstanding middle and secondary CTE teachers who demonstrate innovation in the classroom, commitment to their students, and dedication to improving Career and Technical Education within their schools and communities.

Travis Santistevan was selected as the 2026 Teacher of the Year. CTE teachers have the unique opportunity to help students connect academic knowledge with practical, real-world skills. Through hands-on experiences, problem solving, career exploration, leadership development, and industry connections, Travis helps students discover talents and interests they may not have known they possessed. This award celebrates Travis who continually finds ways to make learning relevant while preparing students with skills they can carry into college, careers, and life. Congratulations, Travis!



Molly Roeman
New Teacher of the Year

The New Teacher of the Year Award recognizes CTE teachers with three to five years of experience who have already made significant contributions to innovative and unique Career and Technical Education programs while demonstrating strong professional commitment early in their careers.

Molly Roeman was selected as the 2026 recipient. Beginning a career in CTE means taking on much more than teaching content—it often includes building industry partnerships, incorporating hands-on learning, advising student organizations, staying current with changing careers and technologies, and finding creative ways to prepare students for life after graduation. This award celebrates Molly and her enthusiasm and new ideas that she has brought to the profession and recognizes the impact they are already making on students and CTE. Congratulations on making a big impact in your CTE classroom and through your fellow educators , Molly!

Award Winners



Dr. Jennifer Poulos
Carl Perkins Community Service Award

The Carl Perkins Community Service Award recognizes CTE members who have used Career and Technical Education to make a significant impact on a community or humanitarian cause through leadership in programs and activities that promote community involvement.

Jennifer Poulos was honored with this year's award. Community service provides students with an opportunity to take the knowledge and skills they develop through CTE and use them for something bigger than themselves. Whether Dr. Poulos's students apply that through service projects, partnerships, leadership activities, or community outreach, this CTE educator helps students understand the importance of giving back. This award celebrates that connection between career preparation, leadership, and service and recognizes Dr. Jennifer Poulos the positive impact CTE can have far beyond the walls of a classroom.



Travis Lape
Counseling & Career Development Professional Award

The Counseling & Career Development Professional Award recognizes professionals who help students explore career opportunities, develop meaningful education and career plans, and make informed decisions about their futures.

Travis Lape was recognized with this year's award. Career connection is an essential part of helping students understand not only what opportunities are available, but also how their individual interests, strengths, skills, and goals can connect to those opportunities. Counselors and career development professionals such as Travis, help students navigate the many pathways available after high school. His work is an important link between students, educators, families, employers, and postsecondary opportunities and helps students see that there are many different pathways to a successful future. Thank you Travis Lape for your expertise in CTE and passion for making it great in the district in which you work and across our great state!



Brigitte Brucklacher
Lifetime Achievement Award

The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes CTE professionals for their leadership on behalf of ACTE, innovations in Career and Technical Education, and contributions to the field over an extended period of time.

Brigitte Brucklacher was honored as this year's recipient. A career dedicated to CTE creates an impact that extends far beyond a single classroom or school year. Experienced CTE professionals such as Brigitte, influence generations of students while also mentoring colleagues, strengthening programs, supporting professional organizations, and helping the field evolve as education and workforce needs change. The Lifetime Achievement Award celebrates sustained commitment to the profession and the lasting difference one individual can make in the lives of students, educators, and the broader CTE community. Congratulations on a leaving your legacy in CTE, Brigitte!

Award Winners



South Dakota Army National Guard
Award of Merit

The Award of Merit recognizes organizations outside the field of Career and Technical Education for outstanding contributions to the improvement, promotion, development, and progress of CTE.

The South Dakota Army National Guard was selected as this year's recipient. Partnerships between education and organizations such as the National Guard help students connect classroom learning with the wide variety of opportunities available after graduation. Support from outside organizations also strengthens CTE by exposing students to careers, workplace expectations, technical skills, leadership, and service. The Award of Merit celebrates those partners who recognize the value of CTE and invest in opportunities that help South Dakota students prepare for their futures. Thank you to the South Dakota Army National Guard for your extensive support, expertise, programming and opportunities you provide for SD CTE educators and students!



Fawn Wilde
Postsecondary Professional of the Year

The Post-Secondary Professional Award recognizes outstanding CTE professionals at the postsecondary level who educate students in career and technical pathways, demonstrate innovation in the classroom, and show dedication to improving CTE within their institutions and communities.

Fawn Wilde was selected as this year's recipient. Postsecondary CTE professionals play a critical role in helping students make the transition from education into their chosen careers. Their classrooms combine technical knowledge, hands-on experience, industry expectations, and career preparation. By continually adapting programs to meet the needs of students and the workforce, postsecondary educators help ensure graduates leave their programs prepared with relevant skills and confidence to take their next steps.



Dean Kurtz Construction
Friend of CTE

The Friend of CTE Award recognizes individuals, businesses, and organizations for their contributions to the work and purposes of SDACTE and honors the commitment and dedication they demonstrate in supporting Career and Technical Education.

This year's recipient, Dean Kurtz Construction, represents the tremendous value that business and industry partners bring to CTE. These partnerships help bridge the gap between education and the workplace, giving educators valuable industry connections while helping students understand how the skills they learn in the classroom translate into real careers. Supporters of CTE, such as Dean help create stronger programs, greater career awareness, and more opportunities for students to envision themselves as part of South Dakota's future workforce. Thank you for your continued partnership to South Dakota CTE!

Conference Highlights



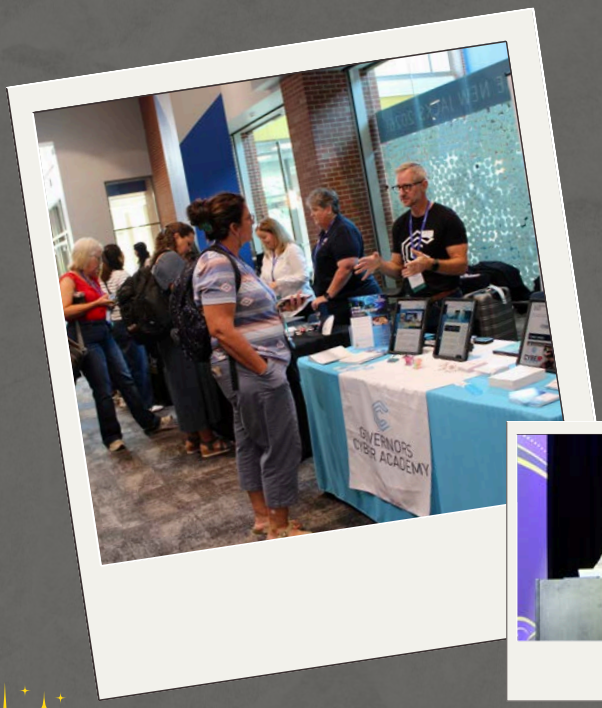




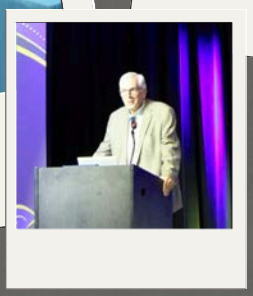












Conference Highlights

Check out the highlights from our SDACTE Conference held this summer at South Dakota State University! Educators and professionals from across South Dakota came together for inspiring sessions, hands-on learning, and valuable networking opportunities. It was an incredible time to grow, connect, and share ideas that strengthen career and technical education in our state!



