Vol. 55, No. 2: 2026
November

VIEWPOINT

Quarterly Newsletter

CareerTech Vision Conference
December 2nd - 5th | New Orleans, LA
Follow the link below or scan the QR code to Register:
Vision Conference Registration





Big Ideas, Big Easy & a Shrimp Boil



By: Karen Roudabush
Contact Karen at: President@sdacteonline.org

SDACTE members, pack your bags for ACTE's CareerTech VISION 2026, December 2–5 in New Orleans! With over 600 presenters, 300 exhibitors, and 6,000 attendees, the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center will be buzzing with fresh ideas and opportunities to connect. ACTE shares its 100th anniversary year with Route 66 and the original Winnie-the-Pooh book—proof that great pathways, lifelong learning, and stopping for snacks never go out of style!

Explore the CareerTech Expo on Thursday and Friday, featuring the latest CTE equipment, technology, classroom resources, demonstrations, and exhibitor workshops. Other highlights include Thursday's Centennial Kickoff, Friday's Mega Sessions, and Saturday's Grand Finale celebration. Three South Dakotans will also be recognized at Wednesday's ACTE Awards Gala!

Join us for our South Dakota Hospitality and Networking Shrimp Boil Social on Friday, December 4, from 4–7 p.m.! Lenessa Keehn's parents are graciously hosting at their home in Gretna, approximately a 10–15-minute trip from the convention center. Come enjoy good food, great company, and conversations that require absolutely no presentation slides. South Dakota conference attendees will be sent an invitation with RSVP information. RSVPs will be required so food can be ordered, and directions will be sent to everyone who RSVPs. Let's celebrate the great work happening in South Dakota CTE and bring that energy to VISION as we connect, learn, and shape what comes next for our students!

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





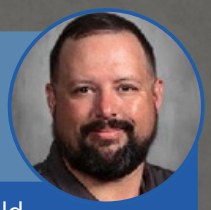




Go All In for CTE: Apply for ACTE's Achieve 100 Award

By: Travis Santistevan

Contact Travis at: PastPresident@sdacteonline.org



Does every CTE educator at your school belong to ACTE? If so, your school could earn national recognition! The Association for Career and Technical Education's Achieve 100 Award recognizes schools and institutions with 100% ACTE membership among their CTE staff.

South Dakota schools are already setting an example. Bridgewater-Emery High School, Doland School, Parker High School and Philip High School are among the 2026 recipients. Congratulations to these schools for their commitment to CTE and professional involvement!

First-time recipients receive an engraved plaque, with an additional plate awarded for each subsequent qualifying year. Award winners also receive recognition in ACTE's Techniques magazine and during the National Policy Seminar.

Now is a great time to check with your CTE team and work toward full participation. For the 2027 award, all CTE staff must be active ACTE members by December 31, 2026, and applications are due February 1, 2027. The online application requires each CTE faculty member's name and ACTE membership number.

Let's add more South Dakota schools to the list! Review the requirements and access the application at ACTE's Achieve 100 Award webpage.

If you have any questions, please reach out! We would love to have more of our wonderful programs recognized on the national level. See you at VISION in New Orleans as we celebrate 100 years of ACTE!

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

Region Updates



ACTE Awards of Excellence: 2028 Awards Cycle
By: Tracy Kern, Region V Awards Committee

The ACTE Awards of Excellence requirements have been updated, and these changes will take effect beginning with the 2028 Awards Cycle. For those in South Dakota interested in submitting a candidate for nomination, please begin by contacting your respective SDACTE division awards chair.

The nomination process and advancement through the awards cycle in South Dakota will follow this progression:

- SDACTE Division
- SDACTE State
- ACTE Region V
- ACTE National

Please keep in mind that all candidates advancing through the awards process beginning with the 2028 cycle must meet the updated award requirements.

To review the changes, visit the ACTE Awards of Excellence website. Scroll down to each individual award category. Updated requirements are highlighted in red.

South Dakota has so much to be proud of! We have outstanding CTE educators, administrators, counselors, and professionals making a difference in the lives of students and communities across our state. I encourage you to consider nominating individuals who exemplify excellence in CTE and showcase the incredible work happening throughout South Dakota.

If you have questions or concerns regarding the Region V or National Awards process, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for helping recognize and celebrate the outstanding work happening in Career and Technical Education!



Region V Updates: Connect, Collaborate & Lead!
By: Bobbie Jo Donovan, Region V Policy Committee

Region V @ ACTE Vision Conference
If you are attending ACTE Vision and will be in New Orleans by Wednesday, be sure to attend the Region V Member Meeting at 2:00 pm.

Region V Conference
Join us in Colorado Springs! More information can be found here!
April 7-9, 2027

Call for Proposals: Due 12/10/26 by noon.
Interested in presenting? Check it out here!

Centennial Trivia Challenge: 100 Questions for 100 Years

In honor of ACTE's 100th anniversary celebration, we're continuing our Centennial Trivia Challenge: 100 Questions for 100 Years!

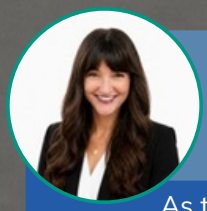
Question #91
In the 1970s, "COWS" was a nickname for what?

A. Council of Women in Service
B. Conference of Western States, the precursor to today's ACTE Region V meetings
C. Council of Wood Suppliers
D. Colorado Workforce Specialists

Answer: B: Conference of Western States — Region V is the one in which SDACTE belongs!

Your Region V Leaders include:
Tracy Kern - Region V Awards Chairperson
Bobbie Jo Donovan - Region V Policy Committee
Sara Vande Kamp - Region V Legislative Committee
Coleen Keffeler - Region V Fellows (Leadership) Committee

Post Secondary Updates



Fall Forward: Building Connections and Preparing for What's Next
By: Dr. Sara VandeKamp
Contact Sara at: PresidentElect@sdacteonline.org

As the leaves change and the holiday season approaches, fall is a natural time to reflect on the work happening around us and look ahead to what's next.

At Southeast Technical College, Workforce Development continues to build connections between education, industry, and our community. From customized industry training and professional development to new opportunities that help employers address workforce needs, our focus remains on creating meaningful learning experiences that support individuals, businesses, and the region we serve. It's exciting to see the partnerships taking shape and the opportunities ahead as we continue to respond to an ever-changing workforce.

Beyond Southeast Tech, I'm preparing for the next chapter of my leadership. As your President-Elect, I look forward to supporting career and technical education across our state, connecting with fellow educators and leaders, and helping advance the important work happening in CTE. I'll soon be representing South Dakota at ACTE's VISION conference in December, where educators and industry partners from across the country come together to share ideas, explore emerging trends, and strengthen career and technical education.

I'm also continuing my work with ACTE's Region V Legislative and Resolutions Committee and collaborating with Josh Hall on legislative issues affecting career and technical education in South Dakota. Keeping our state connected to regional and national conversations is an important part of this work. If you have legislative concerns, ideas, or issues you believe deserve greater attention, I encourage you to reach out. I welcome the opportunity to hear your perspectives and help ensure South Dakota's voice is part of these conversations.

As we head into the holiday season, I'm especially grateful for the people, partnerships, and professional communities that make this work meaningful. Whether we're developing new training opportunities, supporting students and employers, advocating for CTE, or collaborating with colleagues across the state and nation, the common thread is the same: preparing people for what comes next.

CTE IN ACTION

Driving Success: Cody Sokolosky Earns National Recognition



Congratulations to Northeast Technical High School Automotive Instructor Cody Sokolosky — winner of a $75,000 Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Prize for Teaching Excellence and the first-ever winner from South Dakota!

Cody was one of just 25 skilled-trades teachers nationwide selected from 569 applicants across 49 states. His application went through three rounds of judging by experts in education, industry, philanthropy, and civic leadership. Cody and the Northeast Technical High School Automotive program received a $75,000 award — $50,000 for the program and $25,000 for Cody!



An incredible and well-deserved honor for Cody, the Automotive program, Northeast Technical High School, and South Dakota! Thank you to Harbor Freight Tools for Schools for its tremendous support of Career and Technical Education and skilled-trades teachers across the country.

Post Secondary Updates



Western Dakota Technical College Expands Partnerships, Earns Recognition, and Advances Student Success

By: Fawn Wilde

Western Dakota Technical College (WDTC) is full of exciting updates as we near the end of 2026!
We've partnered with Black Hills Home Builders Association to construct a home from the ground up. During the 2026-2027 academic year, students from Construction Technology, Plumbing Technology, Electrical Trades, and other WDTC programs are working alongside industry professionals to build a home on campus. Upon completion, the home will be relocated to New Underwood, South Dakota. The project provides students with valuable real-world experience while showcasing the power of hands-on learning and industry collaboration.

The Catapult Stakeholders Group Initiative launched in August with support from the John T. Vucurevich Foundation, the South Dakota Community Foundation, and numerous individual donors. The multi-year initiative brings together more than 65 leaders from education, business, workforce development, and community organizations across western South Dakota to engage in shared learning, meaningful dialogue, and collaborative action to strengthen connections between education, career pathways, and workforce development. Together, they are identifying workforce challenges, building stronger regional partnerships, and developing and implementing strategies that support a sustainable workforce pipeline and a stronger economy for future generations.

WDTC's commitment to high-quality technical education was recently recognized when its Welding & Fabrication program received the Association of Technical Educators and Administrators (ATEA) Outstanding Technical Program Award. The honor recognizes the program's success in developing highly skilled, confident graduates and reflects the dedication of instructors who challenge students to excel while providing individualized support, as evidenced by student success in SkillsUSA competitions.

The accreditation of WDTC's Business and Accounting programs through the International Accreditation Council for Business Education (IACBE) is another notable achievement. This internationally recognized accreditation follows a rigorous independent review process focused on measurable student learning outcomes, continuous improvement, and alignment with institutional mission and industry needs. Unlike accreditation models that primarily assess resources and inputs, IACBE emphasizes what students actually learn and accomplish.

We invite you to immerse yourself in some upcoming reading material as Health Information Management Program Director Joelle Boshart has two articles slated for national publication. From In-Person to Online: What I Learned When the Classroom Disappeared will be published in ACTE's Techniques magazine, while AI, the Student, and the Art of Learning to Think Like a Coder will be published by the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC).

In addition, WDTC's Agricultural Business program continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of today's agriculture industry. Through fully online courses and flexible degree and certificate pathways, students gain practical knowledge in agricultural production, business management, and financial decision-making. The program's real-world focus prepares graduates to manage agricultural operations and pursue careers throughout the agricultural sector. Through these initiatives and accomplishments, WDTC remains committed to preparing a skilled workforce, fostering meaningful partnerships, and creating opportunities that benefit students, employers, and communities across South Dakota. Do you have ideas for collaboration? Let's chat!

Healthy Connections: Learning, Leading & Growing Together

By: Shannon Buelow
Contact Shannon at: HealthScienceDivision@sdacteonline.org



Fall is a busy and exciting time in Health Science! In October, several members of our Health Science Division had the opportunity to come together for a day of learning, sharing, and networking.

Our time together included presentations on the role of the pharmacy technician, ways to incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) into the classroom, and creative strategies to make learning more engaging for students. One of the highlights was exploring the use of escape rooms as a fun, interactive learning activity. We even had the opportunity to participate in an escape room ourselves! It was a great way to experience firsthand how these activities encourage teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication.

These gatherings are a valuable opportunity to connect with fellow Health Science educators, exchange ideas, learn about new trends in healthcare, and bring fresh inspiration back to our classrooms. Thank you to everyone who took the time to participate and share their knowledge!

HOSA – A New Season Begins!
HOSA chapters have also been busy kicking off the school year with their fall launches! It is exciting to see students getting involved, setting goals, exploring healthcare careers, and preparing for another great year of leadership, service, and competition. We look forward to seeing what this new HOSA season brings for our students and chapters across the state!

A Healthy Reminder
As we head into flu season, remember to take care of yourselves and encourage your students to do the same. Frequent handwashing, staying home when sick, and practicing good hygiene are simple ways to help keep our classrooms and communities healthy.

Looking Ahead
As we move through the school year, let's continue to support one another and share ideas that make our Health Science programs stronger!
· Share Classroom Ideas: Have a great lesson, simulation, activity, or project? Share it with fellow educators!
· Build Healthcare Partnerships: Continue connecting with local hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, and other healthcare professionals to create meaningful opportunities for students.
· Promote Student Experiences: Encourage job shadowing, clinical experiences, HOSA involvement, and career exploration.
· Stay Connected: Take advantage of opportunities to network, collaborate, and learn from other Health Science educators across South Dakota.

As Health Science educators, we have the exciting responsibility of preparing the next generation of healthcare professionals. Together, we are making a difference by inspiring students, creating meaningful learning experiences, and connecting classroom learning to the real world.
Wishing everyone a healthy, successful, and wonderful fall season!

Division Updates



Admin Division: Reflecting and Looking Ahead

By: Tracy Chase

Contact Tracy at: ADMINdivision@sdacteonline.org

One of the best parts of being involved in CTE is the people we meet and the relationships we build along the way. Whether we are catching up at a state conference or sharing ideas with colleagues from across the country, those connections help us grow and create new opportunities for students.

Nationally, ACTE's CareerTech VISION will take place December 2–5, 2026, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The conference will celebrate ACTE's 100th anniversary while bringing educators, administrators, and industry leaders together to share ideas and explore what comes next for CTE.

This upcoming convention brings back a special memory. Terry Rieckman and I worked together in agricultural education as co-advisors for 14 years. In 2015–16, Terry served as NAAE president, and I was fortunate enough to attend the national convention he presided over. It was a proud moment to see a longtime colleague and friend lead at the national level. CTE has changed so much in the past 10 years, and I am happy to have been along for the ride. From my time in the classroom to my role in administration, watching opportunities for students grow has been rewarding. I can't wait to see what the next 10 years will bring!



Building Connections Through BMIT Professional Development

By: Amy Pierson

Contact Amy at: BMITdivision@sdacteonline.org

BMIT Division Members – Some of you may have just returned from Southeast Technical College's Best Practices PD held on November 18. Hopefully, you had a great opportunity to connect, share ideas, and learn from one another!

We are fortunate to have another professional development opportunity coming up. Dakota State University is hosting Business Education Practices/Professional Development on Wednesday, December 2, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

You can register using this link: https://forms.gle/azDnxMGhZYfoxiK98

ON THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S Notepad:



- The SDACTE website is being updated. Please reach out to your Division President to collectively send in updates or information that needs to be shared.
- The SDACTE Calendar is a collective resource for all SDACTE members. Submit calendar deadlines/links/important dates to executivedirector@sdacteonline.org

Division Updates



Teaching Today, Empowering Tomorrow

By: Carrie Kafka

Contact Carrie at: FCSdivision@sdacteonline.org

Greetings FCS Family! As we settle into another school year, the FCS Division has taken time to reflect on the successes of our summer conference and is already looking ahead to planning another great experience in 2027 at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown. If you have any suggestions for our upcoming conference, please reach out! Our FCS Board would love to hear our members' ideas!

As FCS educators, we know that some of the best learning experiences come from trying something new. I encourage each of you to challenge yourself to step outside your comfort zone this school year. Whether it's incorporating a new teaching strategy, trying a hands-on activity, or bringing a fresh idea into your classroom, even small changes can make a big impact.

As we approach the holiday season, there are so many opportunities to bring FCS to life! Whether it's baking pies for Thanksgiving, promoting National Family Week, putting together Christmas care packages, or finding ways for students to give back to their communities, these experiences remind us of the importance of the skills we teach every day. Sometimes, in the busyness of lesson planning, grading, and everyday classroom challenges, it's easy to forget just how much our work matters. We aren't just teaching lessons; we are equipping students with essential life skills they will carry with them long after they leave our classrooms. From building healthy relationships and managing finances to preparing meals and caring for others, the skills we teach today help shape the families, careers, and communities of tomorrow. Never underestimate the impact you are making!

I hope you find time this holiday season to enjoy family, friends, and the traditions that make this time of year special. Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season and a well-deserved break!

Full Speed Ahead: Finding Success in the Busy Season

By: Mollie Andrews

Contact Mollie at: AFNRdivision@sdacteonline.org



It seems like I was just welcoming everyone back to the new school year, and here we are already looking at the end of the semester. I used to say if I just get through the next "thing" then it will slow down. Well, I've gotten through a lot of things lately, and it seems like we just keep getting faster!

As many of us returned from the National FFA Convention where South Dakota was represented very well, we grabbed another gear and started preparing students for our Leadership Development Contests. I'm sure many of us question our sanity when we are trying to finish up portfolios, put together presentations, and get in one more practice before the looming deadlines of contest dates. But we tend to forget the long hours we put in when we see them succeed. Success doesn't mean just winning, but seeing students accomplish something they didn't think they could. Giving a presentation, memorizing the FFA creed, or running for district office are just a few examples of students stepping outside of their comfort zone, building confidence, and realizing what they are capable of.

I like to think we are doing the same thing in our classrooms. Teaching a new class, trying a new lab, or taking on a leadership role within our organization are all ways we learn, grow, and challenge ourselves. And those are successes we should be proud of! It's hard for us to see the results of our time and effort when we are in the thick of the busy season (I know, they are all busy!), but I hope you get a chance to slow down enough to see the impact you are making.

We have several opportunities to step out of our comfort zone and become more involved in our CTE community. Whether you are attending NAAE, State Leadership Development Events, or Winter PD, I encourage you to try something new. Attend workshops, join committees, share ideas, and connect with other educators. The more we get involved and support each other in our own successes, the stronger our CTE community becomes.

Good luck to everyone with the upcoming contests, holidays, and end-of-semester chaos! I hope you all take some time to enjoy the holidays with your family and friends and enjoy the success of making it through another semester!



AI in the Classroom: Trial, Error, and Opportunity

By: Jason Karels

Contact Jason at: TradesIndustryDivision@sdacteonline.org

Greetings as we enter the holiday season! Having recently moved from my farm acreage to Milbank, I'm looking forward to welcoming trick-or-treaters to my doorstep as I write this. Amid the activities and distractions that are headed our way, I hope you're finding things to look forward to this holiday season as well.
As the season changes, I've also been reflecting on another change in my work: figuring out where artificial intelligence fits—and where it doesn't.

Is AI useful? Can it spark an idea? How do I use AI if it "makes things up" on occasion? Are its results useful or just... meh? In my experience, the answer to all those questions is, well-yes.

Among my first uses of AI—primarily Perplexity—was to write general knowledge questions for the Milbank FFA agricultural mechanics team. Although AI produced (mostly) suitable questions, I spent a considerable amount of time organizing and checking the multiple-choice answers. I was surprised by how often AI structured the answer choices to make the correct response a giveaway.

Time saved compared with writing the questions myself? A wash. What I saved in searching I lost in editing and organizing. I also use AI for searches, especially now that Google results often feel cluttered with distracting information. I've found it useful for troubleshooting, but I still need enough background knowledge to recognize when an answer doesn't make sense. Checking the results remains part of the job.

The lesson for me? Don't trust—verify. AI's suggestions have not been fully accurate, but it has given me a path to follow so that I could eventually find the real issue. Can AI help open the door to an opportunity? A local manufacturer approached my school about working together to address a need in its industry. I used Perplexity to draft an initial proposal to share with my principal. With about sixty seconds of input from me, I had a starting point for a conversation about introducing new industrial skills to my students.

Did that eliminate the work ahead? Absolutely not. Did it create an exciting opportunity? Absolutely. My experience with AI has been a mix of useful starting points, disappointing results, and opportunities I'm glad I pursued. I still must bring the knowledge, check the answers, and do the work. I encourage you to explore.

As we head into the holiday season, I hope you find a little time to recharge—and something new to look forward to in your classroom. For me, that new opportunity may mean more work, but it's work I'm excited to do.

CTE IN ACTION

ACTE NextLevel Postsecondary CTE Fellowship Applications Now Open!

Applications are now open for NextLevel Postsecondary CTE Fellowship – Cohort 9!

This opportunity helps emerging postsecondary CTE leaders develop leadership skills, build connections, and grow professionally.

Application Deadline: December 15, 2026
Ready to take the next step? **Learn more and apply here!**

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Learn About Vision Coverage Today

As a member of SDACTE/ACTE, you can enroll in MetLife Dental Insurance and Vision Insurance fetauring the Superior Vision® network. Together, these benefits support your overall health and your wallet with the coverage you need and lower out-of-pocket costs* for routine exames, dental procedures, eyewear and more.

View this as a webpage