

M MITCHELL TECHNICAL COLLEGE **FOUNDATION**



Volume 1

M MITCHELL TECHNICAL COLLEGE FOUNDATION

This first publication of our MTC Foundation magazine comes to you with much excitement. As Mitchell Tech continues to grow and succeed as one of the nation's best technical colleges, we wanted to share some of our successes with you in a tangible way. Our goal is to help you feel more connected to our college and our mission, and to feel a sense of pride in the accomplishments of our students, staff, alumni and leadership team as we work toward a bright and thriving future.

If you have feedback, ideas or stories to share, please email Nick Bakhtiari, Director of Foundation Relations, at Nick.Bakhtiari@mitchelltech.edu.

Opportunity.

With a growing campus, visionary leadership and industry partnerships that allow us to provide state-of-the-art training in some of the workforce's most in-demand careers, there has never been a better word to describe the future of Mitchell Technical College.

As the Director of Foundation Relations, I am humbled to be here during this exciting time of unprecedented progress, innovation and potential. I began this journey with Mitchell Tech just over a year ago, and I am amazed daily by the people around me. There is a reason MTC is one of the nation's best technical colleges, and it starts with the leadership, staff and faculty on this beautiful campus.

It is clear to me that MTC is something special—a place brimming with enthusiasm and pride, where students shine and graduates make a difference. Every day, a new story or statistic comes across my desk that I cannot wait to share with others. While this magazine will never have enough pages to hold them all, I felt it was important to give you a glimpse of what I have the privilege of seeing every day. I hope you enjoy this first edition of the MTC Foundation magazine, and look forward to many more to come.

Sincerely,

Nick Bakhtiari

Director of Foundation Relations
Mitchell Technical College Foundation
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Meet the Mitchell Technical College Foundation staff (l-r) Robin Jacobsen, Scholarship Advisor; Nick Bakhtiari, Director of Foundation Relations; and Sheryl Plagmann, Assistant Director of Foundation Relations.

This publication is published annually by the Mitchell Technical College Foundation, 1800 E. Spruce St., Mitchell, SD 57301 and distributed to alumni, parents, students and friends of Mitchell Technical College.

ON THE COVER: Mitchell Tech students leaving the Muth Electric Technology Center on the Mitchell Technical College campus.

The Foundation of the Foundation

The Mitchell Tech Foundation was established in 1999 by board members Chris Paustian, Gopal Vyas, Pat Clark, Keith Bartels, Ed Olson, Bob Mueller, and Greg Kohlenberg. The Foundation serves as the fund-raising arm for Mitchell Tech and is dedicated to four key areas of support:

- Building Scholarships
- Building Programs
- Building Endowments
- Building Relationships

Foundation board members include MTC alumni and business leaders in various industries. Members meet four times per year to help advise Mitchell Tech on the four pillars. Current MTC Foundation board members include:

David Kayser - Chair
Farmer Producer

Mike Sprang - Vice-Chair
TSTM

Marc Eyre - Treasurer
Black Hills Energy

Trent Dowling
Building Products Inc.

Jacki Miskimins
Vantage Point Solutions

Dr. Lori Repenning
MTC Faculty Representative

Terry Sabers
Retired, Muth Electric

Tom Boyko
East River Electric

Mark Wilson
President
Mitchell Technical College

Jared Hofer
Ex-Officio
Dean of Financial Operations
Mitchell Technical College

M Grads On The Go

Mitchell Tech is proud of all our talented graduates and the impact they make in our world. Here are just a few of our 2022 grads and the paths they are taking after graduation. You really can be the best at Mitchell Tech!



Brady Andersen ▲

High School: Graduated from Plankinton High School in 2020

MTC Program: Wi-Fi and Broadband Technologies

Why MTC?: I was interested in engineering/technology and had a great experience at Exploration Days. My brother attended Mitchell Tech and the campus just felt like home.

Highlights: I am grateful for the Build Dakota full-ride scholarship, Just Peachy scholarship in honor of former Director of Admissions Lance Carter, all the hands-on learning opportunities and my internship at Innovative Systems.

Career Outlook: Had multiple job offers before graduation, chose a position as a Voice Service Technician at SDN in Sioux Falls.

Grad advice: Go to Exploration Days and see what MTC has to offer. They do an amazing job and there are so many opportunities and scholarships available. I graduated in two years with a degree and a job.

"I had multiple job offers before graduation."

Brady Andersen



Bailey Binger ▲

High School: A 2020 grad from Hitchcock-Tulare High School.

MTC Program: Progressive Welding Technology

Why MTC?: After touring Mitchell Tech with my parents, we knew this was the school for me. I really like the wide variety of welding experiences, including multiple welding processes I didn't even know existed. I also enjoyed the events offered to MTC students, like free ice skating, golfing at Great Shots, grocery bag bingo, free donuts and pizza.

Highlights: I am grateful for Mitchell Tech's welding instructors who worked extremely hard to give me the training and knowledge to be successful. I am really looking forward to putting what I have learned from each of them to work!

Career Outlook: I have a great love for farming and cattle, but I also have a love for welding. I found a way to do both. Because I live in such a rural area, I am starting a mobile welding repair business so that farmers and ranchers can call me if equipment breaks down and I can get them back up and running again.

Grad Advice: I highly recommend Mitchell Technical College. I remember hearing the commercial with the catchy phrase "Be the best at Mitchell Tech." After graduating with my degree, I stand behind it.

Sue Elliott ▼

High School: Sturgis Brown High School, Class of 1983

MTC Program: Registered Nurse (LPN to RN)

Why MTC?: As a non-traditional student, I was already working as an LPN through State Home Care, Inc. and wanted to take the next step. I started looking online and saw that I had everything but chemistry and math completed as my prerequisites through Mitchell Tech. I called the Nursing Director, Carena Jarding, and she immediately welcomed me to the program and helped me with the paperwork. A Build Dakota scholarship came into play, and it really felt like it was meant to be. Also, I was dreading having to take a math class, but my online instructor, Scott Kortan, was wonderful. The whole experience has been fantastic!



Highlights: My clinical experience with my instructors has been awesome. Mitchell Tech nursing instructors really wanted to see me succeed. They know what it takes and are prepared to push you through the challenges. It feels like a whole team is on your side.

Grad Advice: Continue working if you must, but nursing students should try to cut back to part-time. The classes can be a lot of work, but if you study hard and stay positive, the light at the end of the tunnel just gets brighter and brighter!

M The Best Just Keeps Getting Better

MTC events bring people together to connect, celebrate and remember

Each year, Mitchell Tech hosts several engaging social events designed to help people feel valued and involved. Three of our favorite gatherings were made possible through the Mitchell Tech Foundation!



Foundation Donor Reception

The signature Donor Reception is held on the second Thursday of December to honor individuals, families, and businesses who have donated to MTC in the past year. Donors are served an upscale dinner by the students in the Culinary Academy of South Dakota and receive special awards for their generous contributions. The elegant evening is a highlight on the MTC events calendar, and we look forward to it every year!



The Mitchell Tech Golf Classic

Held each fall, the Golf Classic encourages MTC students to play in a one-night golf tournament as a way to participate in a social event and be introduced to the MTC Foundation. They will learn what the Foundation does to help students. The event comes with some fun twists, including a drawing for many prizes and the lure of delicious free food. Another intriguing feature for the students is that they can be paired up with MTC industry partners and have a unique opportunity to visit in a casual setting. Approximately 60 students attend the event each year at Lakeview Golf Course in Mitchell.



Mitchell Tech Scholarship Luncheons

Mitchell Tech is extremely proud to offer our students a variety of scholarships, made possible by our many generous donors. Providing donors with a way to meet scholarship recipients was the inspiration behind the Scholarship Luncheons. MTC connects donors with recipients and makes all the arrangements for the luncheon, held in the Oak Room on the MTC campus. Gourmet meals are served by the Culinary Academy of South Dakota, and students are encouraged to offer tours of their program.



Foundationally Driven

Mitchell Tech Alum Combines Passion with a Purpose

Mike Sprang vividly remembers putting together his first board with a switch and a light bulb at Willow Lake High School. When he flipped the switch, nothing happened. He chuckles over the memory, but also recalls this as a defining moment in his life.

“I remember being really excited about this project, probably more excited than anything else I had been exposed to in high school,” he says. “My actual light bulb didn’t turn on, but a different kind of light bulb went off in my head. I knew this might be the path for me.”

Fortunately for Mike, several key things fell into place to make this path a reality.

“My brother Bob and his family had recently moved to Mitchell and they told me I could live with them if I wanted to attend Mitchell Tech,” explains Mike. “Mitchell Tech had a two-year Electrical Construction and Maintenance degree. Thanks to this degree, I was able to land a job before I graduated.”

Another important piece of the puzzle came together in the Mitchell Tech financial aid office.

“I grew up in a household with a lot of love but not a lot of money,” he explains. “My father passed away when I was two and my mom did the best she could. I didn’t know what was possible, but the Director of Financial Aid, Grant Uecker, was so kind and compassionate. He did everything to help me get the funding I needed, from helping with all the paperwork for taking out a student loan to finding good work study opportunities. He was critical to my success.”

Over forty years later, Mike is still excited to go to work every day. He spent twenty-eight years at J.H. Larson where he served as branch manager beginning in 1995. Through the years, he has been passionate about continuing his education and staying on top of the industry.

In 2011, he was designated as a Certified Lighting Efficiency Professional by the Association of Energy Engineers. In May of this year, Mike took a new position as the Director of Sales at TSTM in Sioux Falls.

“I decided to do something different for the last part of my career,” he explains. “Even though I’ve been in this industry for decades, it’s still fun to learn new things.”

Throughout his career, Mike has been deeply involved in serving both the industry and Mitchell Tech. One of his favorite positions is serving on the MTC Foundation Board of Trustees.

“The Foundation is really on the right track and moving in the right direction,” he says. “The people on board are great advocates and we are in the middle of some exciting things. The Center for Student Success is something that is here to serve the needs of all students, but especially the needs of students who might be struggling or needing some extra assistance. Whether helping with life skills or gas money or just basic needs, the Center for Student Success is a difference maker.”

Giving back is so important to Mike that he uses a quote from Theodore Roosevelt as his personal mantra: “Every man owes a part of his time and money to the business or industry in which he is engaged.”

He also has some experienced advice for the students he encounters at MTC.

“It doesn’t matter what it is you do, but it does matter that you build a base of knowledge. Make sure you enjoy what you are doing, and then get the basics down in college. The real learning happens on the job. Make sure you keep up with what is happening in your industry, keep learning, and stay involved. If you do a great job and stay true to who you are, you will be successful.”

Mitchell Tech had a two-year Electrical Construction and Maintenance degree. Thanks to this degree, I was able to land a job before I graduated.

Mike Sprang

Community and Industry Involvement:

- MTC Foundation Board of Trustees since 2018, currently serving as Vice-Chair
- MTC Advisory Board Chairperson for the ECM Program
- South Dakota Safety Council Board of Directors since 2014, current State Treasurer
- Member of the Home Builders Association of the Sioux Empire for nearly twenty years, serving on Board of Directors from 2004-2009, Homebuilders Care Foundation Board of Trustees from 2010-2015 (Chair in 2013), and holding positions on the HMA Events Committee, Members Service Committee, Past Board Committee and the Code Review Committee
- Active member of South Dakota Electrical Council in many capacities, including State President from 2003-2005, Board of Directors since 2007, and State Treasurer since 2009

Mike Sprang



The Center for Student Success

Provides Support Beyond the Classroom

On a small campus like Mitchell Tech, it's easy to notice when something just isn't right. Perhaps a student suddenly stops coming to class. Maybe the student's grades have significantly dropped, or a negative attitude or behavior is now surfacing in the classroom.

Thanks to the Center for Student Success, there is an avenue to support these situations. By utilizing the Student Alert system, instructors and staff can privately submit concerns about the academic, personal, social, physical, or mental well-being of a student to the Center for Student Success. After a Student Alert is submitted, the Director of Student Success will determine the best course of action to address the concern and provide appropriate support to the student.

"We have four student success coaches on staff, including two who have degrees in mental health counseling," explains Danita Lucas, Director of MTC's Center for Student Success. "Our department has grown from just one coach to four, and our services have expanded to include things like the Student Alert program, a food pantry we call the Mitchell Tech Cupboard, and our student emergency fund called the MTCares Fund. Our goal is to help students thrive in all aspects of their life, not just in the classroom."

MTC's Center for Student Success started to take shape in 2016 as it transitioned from the Instructional Services Center. Rather than just offering faculty support, tutoring and academic resources, the evolving Center began incorporating

student success coaches, disability services, career placement services and a mandatory first-year seminar course called Student Success, designed to help students navigate the MTC experience successfully.

"Each coach teaches the Student Success course, focused on things like financial aid, time management, study skills and specifically how to use the Center for Student Success," says Danita. "We really try to promote our services during this class, so students understand the depth of resources available to them for free, right here on campus."

One of the more recent projects being launched by the Center includes a Foundation initiative to enhance the MTCares Fund. This fund ensures money is available to students facing financial burdens that may cause them to drop out.

"Some of our students work forty hours a week just to be here," explains Danita. "They are living paycheck to paycheck with no family support. So when their car breaks down or they can't pay rent or they need gas money, the situation can be very stressful. They can apply to utilize the MTCares Fund to help them through the rough patch and stay in school. Our goal is for the student to graduate and move into a rewarding career."



The Center for Student Success Mission Statement

It is the purpose of The Center for Student Success to provide students with the services and support necessary to fulfill their educational, personal, and career goals.

A full list of services provided by The Center for Student Success includes:

- Help with academic coursework, including tutoring, study aids, research databases, print resources, and electronic media
- Assistance with course scheduling, program changes, graduation requirements, and withdrawing from a program or class
- Coaching for students to help them work through academic, personal, and career-related challenges
- Counseling services related to mental health and personal concerns
- Advising and academic success plans
- Disability and Learning Services
- Guidance on career decisions, internship selection, job searches, resumes, and interviews
- Information about Mitchell Tech's Student Representative Board and other Mitchell Tech clubs and activities
- Printing, copying, and scanning services
- Computer access, including Internet, email, MyTech and application software
- Guidance on where to access important campus services, such as financial aid, Business Office, scholarships, etc.
- Information about off-campus resources, such as housing, healthcare, transportation, financial sources, student discounts, available memberships, childcare, and other support services



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Dale Letcher

Memorial Scholarship

Keeping a Legacy Alive

“He was so proud of those homes. He could tell you the details of each and every one of them,” explains his wife, Sheila.

When Dale Letcher was alive, he and his wife Sheila had a habit of driving past the homes Mitchell Tech students built as part of the Architectural Design and Building Construction program he instructed.

“He was so proud of those homes. He could tell you the details of each and every one of them,” explains his wife, Sheila. “He and his students helped build about sixty houses before he retired.”

Dale’s devotion to Mitchell Tech continued after he passed away in 2020.

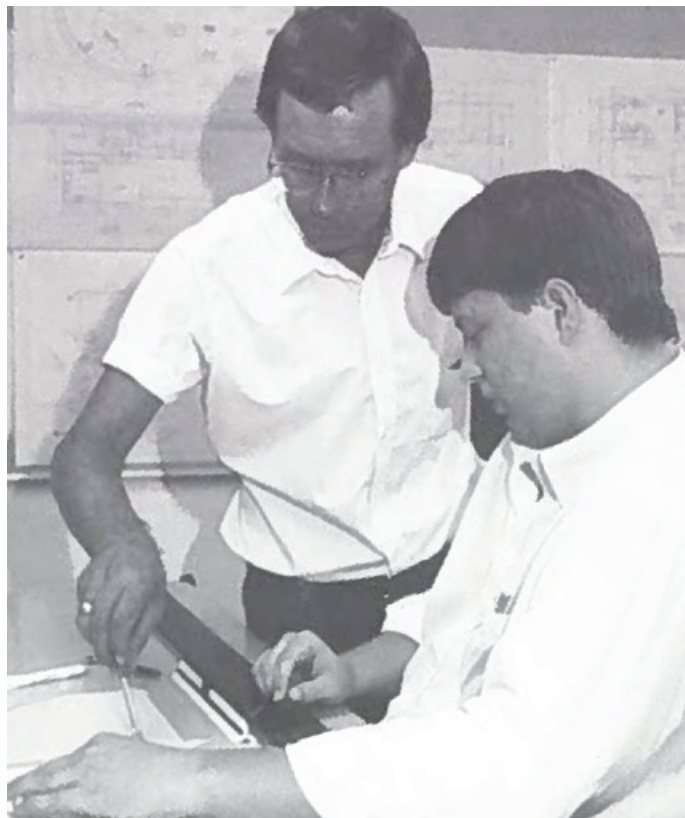
“Dale had Alzheimer’s and COPD. We knew he wasn’t going to get better,” says Sheila. “We sat down before he got too sick and talked about this. The scholarship was his idea. He loved MTI and wanted to help students who needed the money.”

Sheila talks about meeting the first Dale Letcher Memorial Scholarship recipient during a donor gathering sponsored by Mitchell Tech in 2021.

“That was truly special. The first scholarship recipient’s name is Brandon

Bosworth, and he is just the salt of the earth,” she says. “Dale would have liked him. Mitchell Tech is so good at keeping us connected. Meeting Brandon was beyond thoughtful.”

Today, students can apply for the Dale Letcher Memorial Scholarship at MTC if they are entering



into the Architectural Design and Building Construction program. The award is worth \$1,000, with \$500 distributed each year of the two-year program. Dale’s wife, Sheila, and his children, Laura, Michael, and Bradley, are proud to remain part of the college their dad considered his second home for nearly three decades.

“We used to joke that if our house was on fire and Mitchell Tech was on fire, Dale would go to the school and put that fire out first,” says Sheila. “That’s how much he loved his job.”

Alum Spotlight:

Katie Royston, Radiation Therapy

Katie Royston graduated with an Associate of Arts degree in radiologic technology and then continued her education at Mitchell Tech with an Associate of Arts degree in radiation therapy. She completed her coursework in 2010 and took a position at Avera Queen of Peace Hospital, where she currently works full-time in the cancer center as a radiation therapist.

Q: Why did you pursue a career in radiology?

Katie: I was diagnosed with a malignant tumor at age six, and part of my cancer treatment included radiation therapy. I always thought I would like to help other people the way those radiation therapists helped me. The program was newly available at Mitchell Tech after graduating high school, so it was great timing.

Q: What drew you to Mitchell Tech?

Katie: I did apply to other places that offered this program, but Mitchell Tech offered the associate’s degree and not just a certificate. The school was affordable and it was close to home, plus I was able to live off-campus close to my family, so it was the best of both worlds.

Q: Are there any people on campus who made a strong impact?

Katie: I have great things to say about all my professors. I do want to mention one—her name was Leeann Messer at the time. She has since passed away, but she was a very compassionate teacher who really cared about her students. She was a big part of my experience.

Q: How do you stay connected to MTC?

Katie: When I worked in the X-ray department at Queen of Peace hospital, I was a clinical instructor for Mitchell Tech students during their clinicals. Now that I work in radiation therapy, we get one student each semester who works in our department as part of their clinical experience. Also, my husband Jesse teaches Wi-Fi and Broadband Technologies at MTC, and it is fun to see all the amazing things they have for faculty and their families, like the Christmas parties and on-campus events.

Q: What would you tell someone who is considering MTC?

Katie: When I attended, MTC was MTI and it was located by the high school. Since then, the campus is all-new with amazing facilities out by the interstate and a growing list of programs and opportunities. MTC is making an impact in our community and our state, and the education you will receive is not only affordable, but relevant to today’s job market. I can’t say enough good things.



Hats Off to the MTC Rodeo Team!

It all started in 1992 with three bull riders and an innocent request.

"When students come to you asking if they can start something new on campus, you say yes, and then you're it," jokes Jimmie Nicolaus, who has been on staff at MTC since 1996, both as an instructor in the electrical program and currently as an Maintenance Tech. "Those three students were the beginning of Mitchell Tech's Rodeo Team, and I have been along for the ride ever since."



Cody Noble Photography

"People are always surprised that we have a rodeo team. Then they are really surprised when I tell them it's been around for thirty years!" says Jimmie.

The rodeo team's membership has fluctuated over the years, with anywhere between three and twenty-seven members on the roster. The 2021-22 season included eighteen students. The athletes are welcome to compete in any standard college rodeo event. The team generally competes in six rodeos each fall and four or five rodeos in the spring, weather depending. The group travels all over the Midwest, generally caravanning with trucks, trailers, and the MTC van, which is driven by Jimmie.

"I tell the students riding with me, if you don't like seventies rock, you might want to find a different ride," he jokes. "We usually travel about six hours each way so I get to know them all pretty well. Rodeo is a small world, so these students are able to make friends and connections that last a lifetime. Many of them keep rodeoing after college."

Jimmie says the area rodeo community is very supportive of the MTC students, giving them places to board their horses, providing opportunities for fundraising,

and even offering venues for the occasional practice. Students raise money for the club through projects like parking cars at Dakotafest, helping at the Avera Gala, and hosting the Mavericks Rodeo Rendezvous each fall.

Because Jimmie is well connected in the rodeo community, his involvement with the rodeo team helps attract students to the program and to MTC. He is assisted by Blaine Carey, who heads up the timed events. Blaine is an instructor in MTC's SD Center for Farm/Ranch Management Program and provides valuable expertise as a former college rodeo head coach.

The rodeo club is the only organization on campus that travels to athletic competitions, but Jimmie says MTC instructors are understanding of the time students are away from class.

"These students miss several days of school each year for rodeos, and they are pretty good at time management, just like most student-athletes," he explains. "They learn to be responsible and go on to be very successful. I am pretty proud of the places they end up. Must be why I keep on doing this—and a special thanks to my wife Janet and our sons for putting up with this crazy life all these years!"

Addressing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

As the Center for Student Success grows and evolves to meet the changing needs of Mitchell Tech students, a committee dedicated to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is working alongside staff to create, advocate and strengthen opportunities for student support on campus, particularly when it comes to economically disadvantaged students.

"In recent years, we have become aware that some of our students face unexpected financial situations that threaten their education," said Nick Bakhtiari, Director of Foundation Relations.

"We want to make an MTC education attainable for all of our students, and an emergency hardship should not derail that potentially life-changing education."

In addition to projects such as the MTCares Fund to help students in unexpected financial situations, Mitchell Tech is increasing access to free mental health counseling, disability and learning services, student life coaching, tutoring, access to computers and technology and more, all in an effort to promote diversity, equity and inclusion on campus.

The official MTC statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:

Mitchell Tech seeks and values a diverse population, and responds to the unique needs of individuals, recognizing the dignity and worth of all people and fostering a climate of respect among its students, faculty, staff and administrators.

Jimmie Nicolaus
Rodeo Coach and Maintenance Tech

For more information about the Mitchell Technical College Rodeo Team, contact Jimmie at jimmie.nicolaus@mitchelltech.edu.



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If you have a story idea that would be great for this publication, please send it to foundation@mitchelltech.edu.

Tools for Technicians

Empower students with the right tools they need to build a future.

You can contribute to students' success by helping to support our **Tools for Technicians** project. This project's purpose is to put the right tools into every Mitchell Tech student's hands. Each student must have the proper tools in their tool box in order to maximize their potential. We need your help to ensure that every student can get the most out of their education. Please consider donating to this project by visiting www.mitchelltech.edu/donate or using this QR code:



Education can open doors, tools can build them.

Objectives:

- Each student has the same opportunity for success
- Keeping students focused on completing their education
- Eliminate the cost of tools to a student

