



WAUKESHA
COUNTY TECHNICAL
COLLEGE

Hands-on
Higher Ed



Class of 2026 grads to cross the stage May 16!

To honor students' remarkable academic accomplishments, WCTC will celebrate with two commencement ceremonies on Saturday, May 16, for those earning technical diplomas, associate degrees and apprenticeships:

- 10 a.m. – School of Applied Technologies and School of Health
- 1:30 p.m. – Schools of Business, Protective & Human Services and Arts & Sciences.

The ceremonies will take place on the Pewaukee Campus in the Anthony J. Natalizio (AJN) Center, Building S.

Outstanding Student Award recipients – those who embody the spirit and mission of WCTC – will also be honored. They include:

- School of Applied Technologies – Sarah Metz, Mechanical Engineering Technology (student speaker)
- School of Arts & Sciences – Dylan Holmes, Liberal Arts (student speaker)
- School of Business – Karina Gibson, Marketing
- School of Health – Eric Edgerly, Surgical Technology

- School of Protective & Human Services – Kat Morgan, Foundations of Teacher Education

In addition, Daniel Hogan, a student in the IT-Web & Software Development program, will receive the Outstanding Student – Grit Award. This is presented to an individual who demonstrates courage, resolve, strength of character, perseverance and determination in reaching long-term goals.

For more information, visit www.wctc.edu/graduation.



Caleb Bryant named district ambassador for 2026-27

Caleb Bryant spent the bulk of his career working in the world of finance, specifically, mortgage banking, before deciding to take a break and make a fundamental shift. His job was solid, but the satisfaction and excitement in his day-to-day work was average, at best, he said.

“Personally, I didn’t feel like I had challenged myself to the level at which I am capable. WCTC was the conduit for me to be able to do that,” he said. “It was an obtainable challenge that made me just uncomfortable enough to say, ‘Go for it!’”

And go for it, he did. Bryant followed his curiosity and dual enrolled in the IT-Data and Analytics Specialist program as well as the AI Data Specialist program, swapping spreadsheets and timesheets for machine learning models and class projects. He left his job and is now focusing on school full time, with plans to tackle an entirely new career in information technology.

[Read more. →](#)

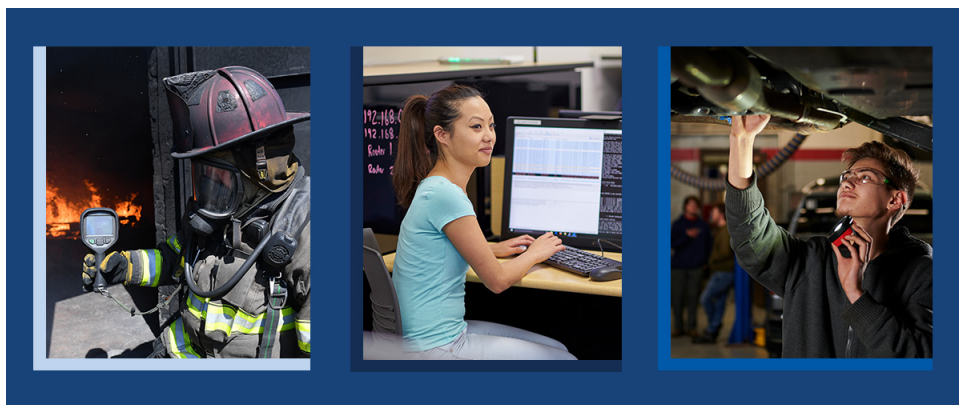


Ascendium scholarships benefit 55 WCTC students

A total of 55 WCTC students each received a \$2,000 scholarship through Ascendium's Tools of the Trade program, an initiative designed to help construction and industrial trade apprentices cover expenses such as tools, equipment, clothing, tuition and more.

The WCTC students are part of a cohort of 806 apprentices across the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) receiving a total of more than \$1.6 million in financial support this year. Now in its 13th year, the program addresses critical financial needs as Wisconsin apprenticeship enrollment continues to hit record highs.

WTCS President Layla Merrifield said, "Ascendium's continued investment in Wisconsin's apprentices is truly transformational. ... We're grateful for Ascendium's support of our students to ensure more apprentices can stay on track, complete their training and step confidently into high-demand careers that keep Wisconsin moving forward."



Join us for an upcoming meet and greet event!

Interested in learning more about career-specific employers? WCTC meet and greet events are designed for current and prospective students, alumni and community members to explore a wide variety of careers and the pathways and employment opportunities specific to them. Upcoming events include:

- **Public Safety Meet and Greet – Tuesday, April 14 – Canceled**
- **IT Career and Internship Meet and Greet – Wednesday, April 15, 2-4:30 p.m.**
- **Transportation Meet and Greet – Wednesday, April 22, 5-7 p.m.**

For more career-related activities, check out the College's [events calendar](#).



Congratulations, WCTC Collegiate DECA!

Congratulations to WCTC students for their impressive achievements at the Collegiate DECA State Career Development Conference, held March 5-7, at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, Wis. More than 85 students from schools within the Wisconsin Technical College System, University of Wisconsin campuses and Marquette University participated in the event. Students competed in business exams, prepared events and case studies, and attended breakout sessions on artificial intelligence and LinkedIn strategies. The WCTC chapter also brought home impressive awards:

Collegiate DECA – Student-of-the-Year Award

- Karina Gibson – First Place
- Gabby Matthews – Second Place

Collegiate DECA Community Service Award – Second Place

The WCTC chapter was recognized for hosting booths at WCTC's Children's Party, Holiday Party and Open Houses; collecting food donations for the Campus Cupboard; and hosting a tour and lunch at the Harley Davidson Museum for visiting German students.

Collegiate DECA Diamond Trophy – Second Place

This honor is awarded to the chapter that displays overall leadership in the four points of the DECA Diamond – Career Understanding, Civic Consciousness, Social Intelligence and Leadership Development.

Top Business Cluster Exams Medals

- Hannah Jackson
- Stephen Schreiner

Entrepreneurship Operations

- Stephen Schreiner – Second place
- Gabby Matthews – Finalist

Marketing Communication

- Sophia Martin – Finalist
- Austin Slominski – Finalist

Marketing Management

- Isabella Behnke- Zhou – Finalist

Restaurant and Tourism Management

- Hannah Jackson – Third place
- Jack Buss – Finalist

Sports and Entertainment Marketing

- Karina Gibson – Third place
- Brittany Myers – Third place

Mae J. Laatsch Scholarship

Hannah Jackson received the Mae Laatsch Scholarship – a generous financial gift that will offset registration fees for the upcoming national conference.

(All WCTC competitors qualified for the upcoming national conference in Louisville, Ky.)

Collegiate DECA is an internationally recognized organization for college students preparing for business careers. DECA programs engage students from a variety of educational disciplines while maintaining a strong focus on business-related areas.



The 2026 Campus Cupboard Challenge a record-breaking success

From March 2-6, the WCTC campus community came together for a "friendly battle of generosity" coordinated by the Administrative Services Team. Thanks to the collective spirit of the entire WCTC community, a staggering 4,106 items were collected plus \$2,226 in cash donations to benefit the College's Campus Cupboard.

The School of Arts & Sciences was the champion, collecting 864 items; Student Affairs placed second; and the School of Applied Technologies, Early College Opportunities and the Corporate Training Center placed third.

Because of this year's success, the challenge will become an annual event. Thank you to everyone who participated in the challenge and for keeping the pantry stocked!



Coming Soon: WCTC to launch AI podcast

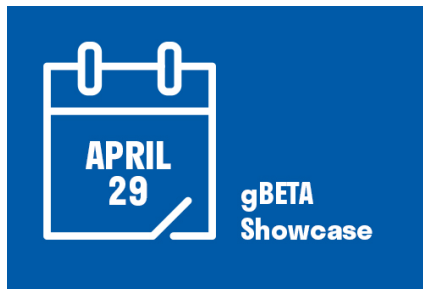
Later this spring, WCTC will launch a new AI podcast – AI, Applied – that will explore how artificial intelligence is shaping WCTC, the community and the nation. Conversations will explore how real people are putting AI to work in their jobs and workflows. Sarah J. Buzska, director of the Applied AI Lab, will serve as host.

Each episode will feature employers, educators, students and community partners talking about how they are using AI tools to solve problems, save time and create new opportunities on the shop floor, in offices, in classrooms and across the region. Guests will share practical examples of what's working, what's not and what they've learned along the way.

This podcast extends the mission of the Applied AI Lab, and it also highlights WCTC's growing role as Wisconsin's hub for applied AI education, training and industry partnerships.

Check back at www.wctc.edu/ai in the coming weeks for more details!





[View full calendar →](#)



Student Spotlight: Elijah Smith, DEA Firefighter/EMS

For many, the desire to help others starts with a childhood dream. For Elijah Smith, a senior at Mukwonago High School, that dream is rapidly becoming a reality through WCTC's Firefighter/EMS Dual Enrollment Academy (DEA). Smith is turning his fascination with fire service into a professional foundation.

"I have had an interest in becoming a first responder my entire life," he said. "From dressing up as a firefighter for Halloween to seeing emergency vehicles drive by, I have always had a desire to be a part of the action."

That passion hit home when Smith's father began working in fire and EMS. Smith said tagging along with his dad made it easy to fall in love with the profession, so after learning about the academy from a former student, he decided to give it a try.

Beyond Technical Skills

The program provides essential certifications like Firefighter 1 and EMT, but Smith has learned the benefits of a technical education extend well beyond the

classroom. He's discovering more about the "soft skills" critical to a successful career.

"One of the most important things I have learned is how a good working culture and camaraderie can determine the success you have," Smith said. He also highlights the shift in focus from high school to college, noting that being surrounded by peers who share the same passion creates a more engaging and supportive learning environment.

Additionally, as a high school and DEA student, Smith said it's been beneficial to have access to so many resources – from the on-campus services to the staff and faculty. "I love coming to school every day and challenging myself while receiving support from my classmates and instructors and constantly being reminded that everybody wants to see you succeed."

Post-Secondary Plans

As he prepares to graduate from high school in June, Smith is considering several post-secondary paths, including the Air National Guard or applying for full-time department positions. Regardless of his immediate next step, he plans to return to WCTC for Firefighter 2 training.



Student Spotlight: Luke Belawski, DEA Criminal Justice Studies

Oconomowoc High School senior Luke Belawski is already gaining momentum in his career goals – even before he receives his high school diploma. He is spending his final year fully immersed in the WCTC Criminal Justice Studies Dual Enrollment Academy (DEA), getting a preview of the realities of life in law enforcement.

Belawski learned of the program through school counselors and a WCTC information night, and he quickly enrolled.

"I realized my interest early in high school when I started learning more about myself," he said. "The idea of helping people, making a positive impact on the community and being a part of something bigger than myself is what drew me to this career focus."

A Bridge from High School to College

The academy provides a bridge between high school and a professional career, requiring a level of responsibility that Belawski appreciates. He said being on campus has changed how he views his own education.

"Going through this program helps you be recognized for the maturity and growth that it takes to be in this program," Belawski said. "You are treated like an adult and given constant support from awesome instructors who truly want you to succeed."

Belawski credits the program's instructors for providing students with an authentic view of law enforcement.

"The biggest benefits are the relationships you make along the way, the hands-on learning, and the instructors who have true experience in this field. Not only is this a great program for learning, but it is also a better program for gaining valuable relationships," said Belawski, who plans to continue in the program next year and earn his associate degree.

WCTC in the News...

Check out a few WCTC stories recently featured in local news outlets.

[Wisconsin's best kept secret: Students increasingly choose technical colleges](#)

Wisconsin Technical College System enrollment has risen 18% since 2020. While University of Wisconsin System enrollment remains largely unchanged, more high school students are opting for technical schools like WCTC.

[WCTC faculty honored for contributions to transitional housing for women veterans](#)

WCTC instructor Berdie Cowser, Ph.D., who teaches in the Leadership Development program, co-created Boudicca House, Wisconsin's only transitional housing for women veterans and women veterans with children.

[Wisconsin gamers level up, turning esports into a profession](#)

Hundreds of gamers participated in the Wisconsin Esports Summit, where players and industry pros came together to explore how gaming can become more than just a hobby. WCTC's Ian Sheeley has been a gamer his entire life, and two years ago, it became part of his job title.





WAUKESHA
COUNTY TECHNICAL
COLLEGE

Hands-on
Higher Ed

Waukesha County Technical College
WCTC
800 Main Street
Pewaukee, WI 53072

[Add us to your address book](#)

Equal Opportunity Affirmative Action Employer/Educator

[Subscribe to WCTC emails](#)

Was this email forwarded to you? Sign up to get them straight from the source.

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).