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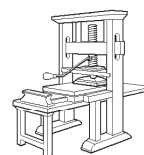
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On the cover: The Sandhills Global Technology Center is the newest building to open on the Lincoln campus.

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Write for The SCC Challenge and get class credit!

Journalism courses for fall:

JOUR 1810 - Introduction to Mass Media

This class covers many areas of mass media, including music, movies, social media, books, media law, and ethics, while getting a taste of what it's like to be a journalist for The SCC Challenge.

Opinion

It's okay not to know by 18

By Anisten Rennerfeldt

The number of students entering college undecided about their major continues to rise and brings up questions about what students should know right away about declaring something so major for their future.

Data and expert observations show that first-year students are more unclear, overwhelmed and confused about their interests. They need more time to find out their passions and purposes before making the long term decision about their career path.

Around 30% of college students in the U.S. decide to switch their major at least one time within three years, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Sometimes, students who decided to switch their major end up switching it another time.

Another way to look at it is that many colleges have reported that 15-20% of incoming freshmen come in without declaring a major and instead choose "undecided." Academic advisors say it is the new normal.

SCC Advisor Mariah Wailes said, "It is kind of expected these days unless the (student) is so set and determined."

Advisors know that students from an early age feel different types of pres-



sure. But being "forced" to feel like a major decision has to be made should not have to be a stress for 17-18 year olds.

Most in-coming student have probably not had college-level classes yet or had a chance to look at all their options. Being made to make a decision that early could come with doubt, regret or stress.

College is defined in so many different ways – an escape from home, party time, an education or all of the above. But for most people, it is also a time of change and growth with self-discovery, new people and more exposure.

High schools begin with encouraging students to think about their futures from an early age, but when the college applications roll around – some students still do not know.

When they are choosing what major to put down, they put what their parents did, what makes

the most money or what sounds easiest. They make these decisions before really finding where they belong in the workforce or what they are good at.

The confusion and unknown head space could lead to dropping out, bad academic grades or lack of motivation.

The Education Advisory Board said, "Students who change their majors may take longer to graduate, but those who take time to explore early in their college careers often report higher satisfaction."

In response to this, universities have decided to make some changes and offer "exploratory studies" for students who are undecided. This lets them take interest-based classes and general education classes while giving them time to ponder and de-stress.

"I have seen that students who come in first semester undeclared and then take some time to

look instead of guessing are much more confident in their final choice," Wailes said.

The University of Missouri created a program where students are put into sections of shared interests rather than certain majors. Doing this, they have seen students with broad mindsets narrow down their focus onto an area they want to pursue

Still, for lots of students, this early or late decision can be comforting but motivating.

In today's wild job market, there are changes each and every day, so being able to have flexibility can be more helpful than having one set in stone career plan.

Wailes mentioned, "I think being willing to change your major if you decide something is not for you is definitely a strength."

Something to do in search of guidance during this process could be taking a variety of different classes to see what is most interesting, and there are always professors or students to talk to about what they are into as well.

It is not a race to pick a major; the timing is the journey.

Having questions, support and patience can be the right direction.

Students are ‘armed to succeed’ with new Sandhills Global Technology Center

By Connor Palmer

LINCOLN - Southeast Community College (SCC) has officially opened the doors to its newest facility this semester.

The Sandhills Global Technology Center was designed to address the high demand for skilled employees, along with giving students new access to top-of-the-line technology.

This new facility was needed to meet the demands of students pursuing careers in IT, electronics, design drafting and biotech.

“This isn’t just about meeting industry needs,” said Rick Blessen, director of advancement at SCC. “What we are trying to do is send our students out best armed to succeed and excel in the industry—if that’s where they want to be.”

Blessen said that SCC’s older facilities were limiting the college’s ability to grow enrollment in certain programs. Some departments like Design and Drafting were in outdated spaces, while others like Biotechnology didn’t have an on-campus presence at all.

According to Blessen, planning for this building began about five years ago, after a meeting with SCC President Dr. Paul Illich

and the owner of Sandhills Global.

Sandhills Global saw the need for more workers in technology, so they responded with a \$5 million commitment to launch the project.

“That really drove the conversation forward,” Blessen said. “This building is industry-driven, but again, when I say industry, it’s really about giving students pathways to succeed and start earning right away.”

One feature that stands out in the Sandhills Global Technology Center is the access to advanced tools and resources usually reserved for graduate-level students at research universities, Blessen explains.

The building also features a robotic dog used in electronics programming courses and an overhead tracking system tied into the design drafting curriculum.

First-year students have access to it all, Blessen says.

Another feature in the new building is the college’s first 3D metal printer, located on the fourth floor.

Blessen explained that students can design and print in metal, like making miniature Yoda heads that are soft when printed but turn to stainless steel after

a heat treatment process.

The new technology center can hold over 1,000 students in person, and already, 540 students are utilizing the facility, according to Blessen.

Additionally, students from Milford travel to

Lincoln to take electronic classes due to high enrollment.

The building itself is also designed for transparency in learning. Everything, from wiring to ductwork, is left exposed

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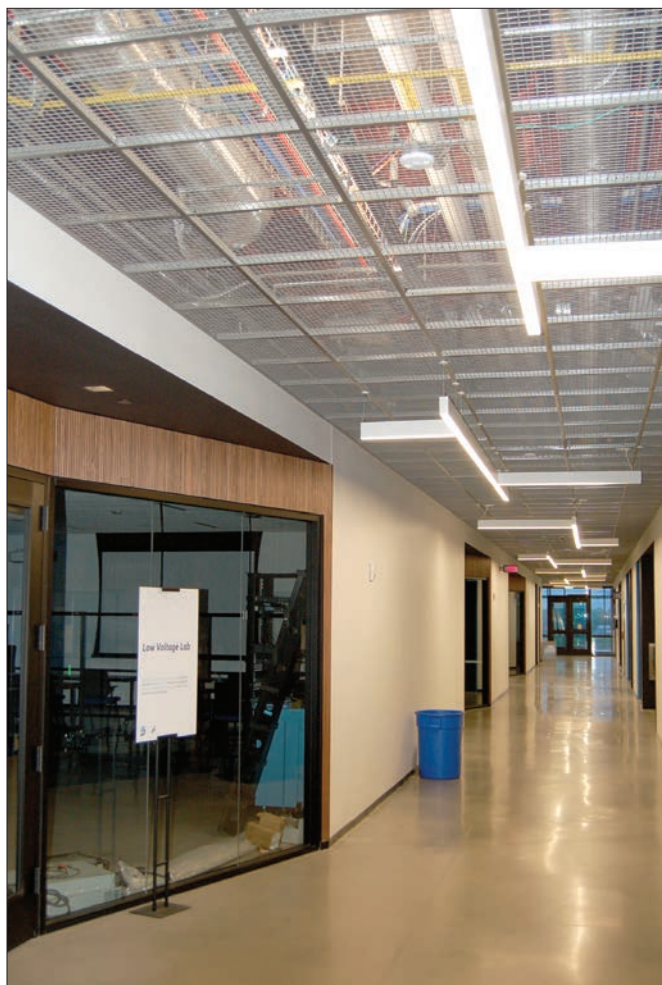


photo by Joshua Whitney

The Sandhills Global Technology Center opened for classes this semester, and its ceilings, above, features exposed ductwork, plumbing and electrical lines.

Land purchased in Milford for program development

By Teeko Toughbay

MILFORD – SCC recently announced the purchase of several lots surrounding its Milford campus and is looking for board approval for a Construction Technology Center.

The eight lots the

college purchased are part of the Timber Creek Development south of the Crete Carrier Diesel Tech and Welding Center in the southwest corner of campus.

On those lots, the construction trades programs will build new houses on permanent foundations.

These lots are in addition to two lots in this development which the college previously purchased for the same purpose.

Construction of the first home to be built by SCC students in this development began last fall and is close to completion.

The final touches on that home include the Concrete Technology Program pouring the driveway, garage floor and patio this semester.

The SCC Board is scheduled to tour the new home on May 20.

On the second lot previously purchased, the foundation was recently poured for construction to begin this fall.

These lots provide practical experience for several programs on the Milford campus.

Also planned for the Milford campus is a Construction Technology Center, pending board approval this summer.

Caleb Herwick, the dean of construction, manufacturing, electronics & technology at SCC, shared his enthusiasm about the upcoming project.

He emphasized that the Construction Technology Center will be an “ultra-modern facility that will house building construction, plumbing, HVAC and electrical construction under one roof.”

Pending approval, the groundbreaking for the

new center for construction and technology is scheduled for spring of 2026.

Upon completion, the building would feature large classrooms equipped with the latest technology to help with interactive learning.

Herwick said, “One of the standout features will be a large wall displaying various pipe connections, providing students with a visual aid for understanding complex plumbing systems.”

Additionally, Herwick implied the facility will include labs designed to enable students to work on multiple tasks simultaneously, fostering a dynamic and more engaging learning environment.

“Students will have the opportunity to work on multiple projects from plumbing, HVAC, electrical, and constructing some large sheds all at the same time,” he explained.

“The purpose of this modern center is to prepare students for the demands of the modern construction industry, where interdisciplinary skills are highly valued,” said Herwick.

As Herwick put it, “This new facility will not only provide students with a top-notch education but also equip them with the skills and experience needed to thrive in the construction industry.”

Sandhills Global Technology Center, continued



photo by Joshua Whitney

Planning for the newly-opened Sandhills Global Technology Center started five years ago. Above is the study area inside the building's main entrance.

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so students can see how systems are built and function.

“The whole building is learning on display,” Blessen said. “The students are blown away.”

Faculty have also embraced the new space.

“They hate moving, but

once they settled in, they loved it,” he said.

Blessen encourages anyone interested in the programs to visit the Sandhills Global Technology Center for themselves.

“It’s unlike anything else in the state,” he said. “And we’re just getting started.”

Lincoln Welding Center to be nation's largest



image courtesy SCC web cam

The Welding Technology Center, above, will be the largest of its kind in the country when it opens for the fall semester.

By Connor Palmer

LINCOLN - Southeast Community College (SCC) is in the final stages of opening the largest welding education facility in the nation, located on the Lincoln campus.

This new facility will provide training for students pursuing careers in welding and metal fabrication, addressing both industry demands and the growing need for skilled workers.

According to Rick Blessen, Director of Advancement, planning for the new Welding Technology Center began on May 26, 2021, with the goal of meeting the capacity needs of both the industry and students pursuing careers in welding and metal fabrication.

"When we set out with it, the intent wasn't to make it the largest," said Blessen. "The intent was to

meet the capacity needs."

During the planning stages, SCC worked closely with local businesses and industry partners to understand what was needed. Blessen said 32 companies provided feedback, including companies like Kawasaki and Speedway Motors.

Blessen said the input received helped shape the design of the new building.

Now SCC will have an 11,000-square-foot fabrication lab, the only one of

its kind in the Midwest, according to Blessen.

It will also include a total of 196 welding booths, with 180 for the general student population and 16 for industry partners.

Blessen explains that the new building will also have advanced technology, including automation and robotic welding.

"The robots aren't coming to take anybody's job," Blessen said. "They're allowing a welder to double their work and take stress

off their body."

Students will also have different paths to complete the program. Some may stay for a full associate's degree while others may earn a certificate or diploma and go straight to work, Blessen explains.

"This will give them a chance to start right away," Blessen said. "And if they take that first semester and are like, 'Yeah, this isn't for me,' so be it. We can help them find something else."

Blessen states that construction of the new Welding Technology Center remains on schedule and is expected to be completed by the start of August 2025, just in time for the arrival of students for the fall semester.

Blessen encourages students to consider the welding and fabrication pathway, noting that over 220 students are currently enrolled for the fall semester of 2025, highlighting the demand for the new facility.



Nebraska Hall to open for fall semester

By Tristin Chambers

MILFORD - Southeast Community College in Milford is completing a major renovation of Nebraska Hall, a century-old building with deep historic roots, transforming it into a modern hub for student services and support while preserving its architectural legacy.

A ribbon-cutting and open house is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 5.

Originally built in the early 1920s, Nebraska Hall has gone from serving injured veterans and aiding the World War II effort with around-the-clock training to housing students and now supporting them in new ways. Nebraska Hall has continually evolved to meet changing needs.

Today, the landmark building is being repurposed to better serve students at the Milford campus.

"Nebraska Hall has historic meaning to the campus and the community," said Jon Kisby, Associate Vice President of the Milford Campus.

"It's a 100-year-old building... It's just a really neat old building with some architectural things that you just don't find in newer structures," he explained.

The \$7.6 million renovation includes converting the first floor into a stu-



image courtesy SCC web cam

Nebraska Hall, a landmark building on the Milford campus which is more than a century old, will soon reopen for students.

dent union space featuring study rooms, hangout areas, a free food pantry, a coffee shop and vending options available 24/7.

"That just doesn't exist on this campus in any other space," Kisby said. "It really is all about students."

The second and third floors will consolidate key student services—such as financial aid, admissions and testing—into a single location.

"They're going to be able to come in and just enter one door... and walk out fully registered for classes and ready to go," he explained.

Despite the building's age, much of its original structure was retained, including its floors and exterior. This created chal-

lenges for architects and construction crews.

"You do come across something on a building that's 100 years old from time to time that you weren't anticipating," he said, noting that some stone and brick foundations had deteriorated and had to be rebuilt.

To address accessibility concerns, a new three-story addition was built on the north side of the structure. It includes an elevator, a welcome desk and a two-story atrium, making the building fully accessible and more welcoming.

"That didn't exist in the original structure," Kisby noted. "So that gives us full access to all floors for all individuals."

Community involvement was a significant part

of the project.

Around four to five years ago, a campaign called "Save Nebraska Hall" garnered support and fundraising from both the Milford community and Southeast Community College alumni.

From talks with Kisby, he made it clear many have fond memories of the building in its former uses, and that "There were some substantial contributions from the community," Kisby said, although exact figures were not available.

"There are always opportunities on the Milford campus," he explained, "for the communities to help move forward with projects important to their area."

Lincoln adds new staff to coffee shop, financial aid

Ashtyn Harpster

By Cadence Kaufman

LINCOLN - With a passion for coffee and excitement, Ashtyn Harpster became the new manager for Course Ground Coffee at Southeast Community College.

Harpster stepped into the role of managing the Course Ground Coffee shop located at the Lincoln campus of Southeast Community College in January of 2024.

With a background in customer service and management, Harpster is determined on bringing a welcoming space to both students and staff alike,



Ashtyn Harpster

one drink at a time.

Bringing her skills from Lexington, Neb., to Lincoln was a big step for Flynn.

She moved to Lincoln

in order to pursue her academic goals, studying and graduating under SCC's culinary program in 2020. She came back to SCC in January of 2024 to pursue the managerial position of Course Ground Coffee.

Course Ground Coffee is a relaxing space for students and staff to study, chat with friends or bask in the sun with the tall windows adorning every wall. Harpster's favorite part about the shop is the lively environment—being able to work with students and creating a positive atmosphere for everyone.

Course Ground Coffee roasts its own coffee

beans—one of Harpster's various reasons as to why she chose CGC over other competing coffee shops in Lincoln.

Harpster explained, "I love that we roast our own coffee here. That's one of the biggest things, and I love working with students. That's kind of my favorite part."

In addition, she said, "I love working with people who are willing to learn, and so I get a lot of new faces here especially since people are here for only two years, you know, on average. We get a lot of

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Joseph Warner

By Kaitlyn Hughes

LINCOLN – Southeast Community College (SCC) welcomes its new Associate Director of Financial Aid, Joseph Warner.

Growing up right here in Lincoln, Warner graduated from Lincoln Pius X before heading to Briar Cliff University to play soccer. At first, Warner said he thought he could coast through college. However, Briar Cliff's soccer coach quickly proved him wrong.

"I remember I missed a communications class on the third week, and the

soccer coach knocked on my dorm room door asking, 'Why weren't you at class?'" Warner recalls.

"That kind of instilled in me the accountability that you need to be successful in college," he said.

Warner's time at Briar Cliff was short lived. When his soccer coach retired, he transferred to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, still figuring out what he wanted to go into.

"I changed my major three times, and I eventually graduated with a history degree," he said.

However, after grad-

uation, Warner did not want to pursue anything in history. He asked himself, "What now?" and was faced with and unable to hide from his student loan debt.

After passing his final class, Warner walked into Nelnet and asked if they were looking for anyone to hire. Lucky for him, they did an interview on the spot, and the next week, he was working as a Consolidation Representative at Nelnet. What got him into financial aid was the connections.

"I had a lot of resources in the financial aid world,



Joseph Warner

friends of friends, they kind of took care of me," he stated.

He eventually ended

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Warner, continued

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up working at Nebraska Wesleyan as an assistant director.

“I added a lot of different roles, one of them being a mentor role,” mentioned Warner.

One thing for Warner is that he loves helping people, which ultimately helped him choose SCC as a place to work.

Warner noted, “I am using everything that I didn’t have in my college experience and using that to give to students.”

He mentions that he always wanted to serve others. By doing that, he explains that a major thing for people is, “asking yourself, what is my why and what is my purpose?”

Warner wants students to follow their dreams but not to stray far away from why they are doing it in the first place.

He enjoys spending time with his family and says that his biggest role model in his life is his dad.

“My dad is the best person I have ever met; he doesn’t have a college degree, but is extremely intelligent,” Warner shared.

Something that he learned from his dad is to “relax about your life,” and “to never look anyone up or down, everybody is eye to eye.”

He says his family, his mom, dad, two sisters and

brother, all live no more than five miles from each other and are all blessings in his life.

He expressed that three things matter most in his life: his faith, his family and anything that excites him.

“It could be helping other people, golfing with my buddies, Nebraska football, Nebraska baseball or any sport in general,” explained Warner.

He describes himself as a lifelong learner and wants to make the world a better place. Warner also shared his favorite Bible verse, Mark 10:45: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

One way that Warner balances his work life and personal life is to make things simple.

“I prioritize people,”

stated Warner.

“It (SCC) serves a purpose to our country, in our state, and in our community,” explained Warner, on his favorite part of SCC.

When asked about his most rewarding part of his job, Warner expressed, “There is a higher calling, that we are here to serve and lead young people, and to see that fruition is outstanding.”

The first week of school is his favorite time of the year because he gets to see new people with dreams, and he states that, “this is there starting block.”

While talking about financial aid’s importance, Warner shared that, “It’s the biggest (factor) if a student will finish their college journey,” and, “causes the most anxiety among all the factors when picking a college.”

Warner says that finan-

cial aid “is always changing,” and he also shared a way to become financially stable in college which is, “You always just gotta be aware of your finances in a general scope.”

Warner wishes students would remember three things about financial aid.

He states, “I want them to understand they’re not going to know everything,” adding “don’t avoid things that are stressing them out, confront them right away,” and emphasizes, “ask questions.”

As a final piece of advice Warner says, “Embrace humility as much as you can.”

He adds, “Be accepting of not knowing everything, be okay with that, and have a genuine excitement for life.”

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Zimmer to direct prison education program

By Anisten Rennerfeldt

LINCOLN - Tammy Zimmer has found a renewed sense of purpose through the UPWARD Prison Education Program.

Following high school, Zimmer's parents gave her the choice of heading into the workforce or going to college, and Zimmer found herself making the decision to apply for college.

Originally an undergraduate student in English, she focused on gender studies, literature and creative writing, but when asked what to do with those interests, Zimmer initially responded, "I don't want to teach."

However, her master's degree program required her to teach, and she quickly discovered a passion for the classroom.

Zimmer eventually secured a teaching position at Southeast Community College in Lincoln, Nebraska and spent seven years teaching at the Beatrice campus before transitioning into her new role as Administrative Director of the UPWARD Program.

Launched in Spring 2024, the UPWARD Program was revitalized by the return of a Pell Grant allowing incarcerated individuals access to education. The program serves four correctional facilities

where faculty teach in person, with access only to Canvas.

She says her daily routine and schedule changes each day. From answering emails, to creating presentations or responding to emergencies, she says she stays busy.

Zimmer said, "Making bridges for people" has been one of the most rewarding aspects of her work.

She described a particular success story of someone who struggled with manual labor jobs but, through the program, gained computer skills and confidence to apply for better employment opportunities.



Tammy Zimmer

Zimmer says she looks forward to the program expanding opportunities for incarcerated individuals, hoping to see them pursue bachelor's degrees, doctoral degrees or even become professors themselves.

Harpster, continued

from page 8

people that are in the door."

"I like that people could come and study here because I know I needed a place like this when I went here," she explained. "I would have really appreciated to have such a beautiful, big open place with so many options for coffee and caffeine."

"So that's one of the main reasons, I love working with students and I love education so I'm happy to be here," Harpster said.

Harpster hopes to bring more student engagement to the shop, whether that be through drink creation contests or other types of events.

Currently, Course Ground Coffee hosts a piano class on Monday nights taught by SCC's President, Dr. Paul Illich, and his wife, Gail Illich, who teaches math at the college.

Harpster strives to have more engagement with students via the "course. groundcoffee" page on Instagram and Facebook.

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Baer steps in as new assistant dean for Arts & Sciences

By Kaitlyn Aberg

Coming from the world of art education, Stephanie Baer arrives at Southeast Community College as the Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences.

Baer shares that a normal day at work for her includes “coming in early to answer emails and provide feedback, scheduling observations, taking notes in different classrooms, and meeting with different faculty and students. Every day is different.”

She was born and raised in Lincoln, and since she was a young girl, she said she always wanted to be an artist, and in middle school and high school, she wanted to study art in college. This is where she decided to use her love for art to get her bachelors in fine arts degree in 1998.

She earned her master’s degree in Secondary Education in 2004 and began teaching in Dodge City, Kan. After getting married,



Stephanie Baer

she moved to Colorado with her husband.

Baer says she couldn’t stay away from Lincoln. She continued her education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2007, where she started her doctorate program and after finishing her PhD in educational studies in 2012, she taught at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

She eventually moved to Ohio and continued teaching at Miami Univer-

sity in Oxford, Ohio, for eight years before coming back to Lincoln to teach at LPS, Nebraska Wesleyan and UNL.

Baer feels SCC is the perfect fit for her.

“I knew this was the right job once I started to talk to other teachers, because it is supportive and feels like a team,” says Baer.

Baer works with 53 faculty and provides professional development as well as support. Observing classrooms and supporting them is what she loves the most within her job.

Since starting in January, Baer says she feels very comfortable here.

Throughout her education journey, Baer states that her mom is her biggest influence.

Baer explains, “I am a fifth-generation teacher on my mom’s side and she has been a central part of the learning and developing process within my career.”

Today, Baer and her mom meet weekly to talk about teaching and life. Baer says her dad was a leader in his job and has also played a major role in guiding her today.

If Baer had to have dinner with one celebrity she would choose “Ben Folds, who was popular in the 90’s and joined the Kennedy Center to advocate for arts education.”

She saw him in concert and loved to watch him perform and also judge the *Sing Off* show.

Currently, she is researching “play” and how it should be a part of learning at all ages and keeps a basket of toys and fidgets in her office.

Outside of work, Baer loves to be with her two kids (14) and (16) and her husband. She also loves puzzles and going on walks. She is also an artist, and in her free time, she loves to make scrapbooks as well as bind books and journals.

American Welding Society provides connections

By Heather Granfors

LINCOLN – The American Welding Society club connects with industry and potential future employers.

Karen Foster said, “Throughout the year (the group does) fundraisers, like one of them they do is sell raffle tickets.”

Anyone in the welding

program here at SCC is automatically signed up for the Southeast chapter of the American Welding Society.

Foster said The American Welding Society started around the early 80’s.

Throughout the year, there are meetings, but not on a regular schedule, although there is always one at the end of each

semester, and at the end of the year, the welding team takes the students out and buys them lunch.

Advantages of this program is that students get to connect with potential employers, apply for special scholarships and see a list of what’s going on in the community to be a part of.

“Skills USA is con-

nected with the American welding society, and there are competitions through the school in that, but other than that there aren’t other competitions through the Welding club or anything,” said Foster.

He added that the Welding Society is a good place to keep up with the latest technology trends.

Beatrice add program director, instructor

Twila L'Ecuyer

By Heather Granfors

BEATRICE - As the Apprenticeship Program Director, Twila L'Ecuyer's role is to help give students find opportunities and real-world practice in what they want to do.

She originally grew up in St. Joseph, Mo., moved to north central Kansas to marry her husband, and before her new role at SCC, she worked in Fairbury at the Fairbury Housing Authority.

L'Ecuyer began the position at the beginning of the semester and said, "I'm already starting to see fun ways to get students involved and to be successful."

L'Ecuyer graduated from Missouri Western with a degree in Commu-

nication Studies and a minor in political science. She said her biggest advocate in college was her speech and debate coach because he was always positive and got her back on track focusing on the positives.

When asked when she knew this position was the right one for her, she said, "When I saw it posted, I was really excited."

In the past, she said she's worked with people straight out of high school and would have loved to share this opportunity with them to help them be more successful.

L'Ecuyer said, "My favorite part of working here at SCC is the way in which it's a true collaboration getting to feed off colleagues and gaining

different perspectives."

One thing that helps make each day go as smooth as possible, she said, is having a great supervisor.

"It's great to know who to connect with for different things, and being able to ask questions is helpful to help keep students right on track," L'Ecuyer said.

Advice that L'Ecuyer has for someone wanting to do what she does "is to take the time to get an education/skill and look for opportunities and be willing to learn about things that are outside your box."

L'Ecuyer also stated that "Bringing self-motivation to a job is also helpful because that's what your boss want to see."

When she is stuck

on something that she's working on, she says she sometimes she likes to take a step back, work on something else and come back to it once she gains the right perspective back to what she missed maybe at first.

L'Ecuyer has two teenage daughters, one is graduating this semester, and one is a sophomore, so her personal interests are supporting them at their activities.

Her family also has a farm, so when she isn't going from game to game, she loves helping her husband with his projects on the farm.

L'Ecuyer said she is really glad to be a part of SCC and is excited to be a part of things going forward.

Myah Vrbka

By Luna Hinkley

BEATRICE - Myah Vrbka is a new Horticulture and Turfgrass instructor at the Beatrice Southeast Community College location.

Vrbka states that she is from Cortland and first became interested in Horticulture when she was 19 and took a job at Campbell's Nursery for five years, which was much

longer than she said she was planning on.

Horticulture, as Vrbka explains, is "The study of plants in general," and she adds, "Anybody planning on working with plants could benefit greatly from taking my course."

Her first class, Arboriculture, teaches how to identify tree species and diagnose issues; her second class, Greenhouse Management, teaches

parts of the greenhouse; finally, Plant Propagation teaches vegetative propagation and seed testing.

Vrbka says she does not enjoy lectures, as she prefers doing activities with her students and providing a baseline structure for her courses.

She explained that the best way to prepare for her courses is to simply have work experience.

One thing she wants

students to know before starting her courses is "They better get used to getting dirty."

Outside of the classroom, she enjoys animals and has "volunteered at the Cat house, as well as the Humane Society."

One thing Vrbka wants her students and/or fellow faculty to know is that she is really chatty and likes to talk to people.

Lincoln adds instructors for Humans Services, Auto Tech

Lizeth Cuandon

By Daniel Vallier

LINCOLN – Lizeth Cuandon, a new Human Services instructor at Southeast Community College, brings a wealth of experience and passion for helping others.

Originally from Mexico and fluent in Spanish, Cuandon's journey to the classroom is deeply rooted in her background in nonprofit work and her personal connection to the field.

Cuandon joined SCC in January 2024 after spending a decade working in various nonprofit roles.



Lizeth Cuandon

A graduate of the SCC Human Services program in 2012, Cuandon returned to teach after completing her bachelor's degree in

Social Work from Wesleyan University.

"I've always felt connected to this field," Cuandon said. "It feels full circle to now be teaching the same program I graduated from."

Cuandon currently co-teaches several courses in the Human Services department, including community skills at The Career Academy (TCA) and group theory and process. She also prepares students for their practicum experiences, which include mock interviews, resume building and hands-on practice.

"It's incredibly reward-

ing to be part of students' personal and professional growth," Cuandon noted.

Her teaching approach is student-centered, using role-playing scenarios and peer feedback to help students engage with real-world challenges in human services.

"I really enjoy seeing students come out of their shells and start to accept feedback," Cuandon said. "They often begin as really critical of themselves, but this process helps them grow and build confidence."

As a new instruc-

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Kyler Weist

By Hailey Jakubowski

LINCOLN - Kyler Weist, a professor in Southeast Community College's (SCC) Automotive Technology program, is combining his decade of shop experience with a passion for instruction to prepare the next generation of auto technicians.

Having spent eight and a half years at a dealership before returning to SCC to teach, Weist is dedicated to providing students with knowledge and hands-on experience.

Weist grew up on acreage outside of Colon, Neb., where his interest in cars



Kyler Weist

began at a very early age.

"Growing up, I always liked cars, NASCAR and helping my dad tinker in the shop," he said.

This passion led him to SCC automotive program where he became a graduate before entering the workforce. Since then, he has come back to instruct basic transportation maintenance, automotive wire repair and electricity basics.

"I was looking for something else to do, and I got burned out," Weist said. "I've always had a passion for the automotive industry, and I thought I could bring my talent and knowledge back to teach the next generation."

His classes are set up to combine classroom learning with lab.

"The first part of the semester is focused on the basics, where we teach students about maintenance and repairs, like tire repairs, oil changes and rotations," Weist explained.

"As we progress, students get more hands-on time in the lab, which I believe is the best way to learn," he added.

With newer cars only becoming more advanced, especially with the evolution of hybrid and electric technology, Weist said it's essential that students get up to speed on the learning curve.

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SCC adds two staff for tech support

Marcia Roberson

By Milo Hintz

LINCOLN – With the new year, a new Information Systems Analyst/Programmer and IT help, Marcia Roberson, has joined SCC “behind the scenes” for student support.

Roberson’s work here at SCC is to help support and monitor the online software SCC uses and to help SCC create digital programs for staff, students and faculty to use.

She sees her work at SCC as “Supporting the entire campus. The things I do will affect everyone

on campus. It’s a supportive role, you build things so students, staff and faculty get what they need.”

Roberson grew up near Weeping Water on a farm with her family. She moved to Lincoln when she started attending college at Wesleyan University due to its smaller class sizes, compared to bigger universities such as UNL.

When first going to Wesleyan, Roberson was undecided on what she wanted to major in. She started taking general education classes and soon found her love for mathematics.



Marcia Roberson

“I looked into engineering,” Roberson said, “But physics? I do not like.”

At the same time, Roberson developed a love for ceramics. Wesleyan

is credited with being a “liberal arts” school, having its students focus on degrees within the liberal arts fields of study. By taking ceramics, Roberson found that she loved getting to do something so logical but also has an artistic outlet.

“You get so ingrained in one side, the logic side, you need your creative side to balance it out,” said Roberson.

She took an interest in computer software due to the problem-solving aspect of it, but Wesleyan did not offer computer

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Karley Rupprecht

By Teeko Toughbay

MILFORD – It was back in autumn when Karley Rupprecht stepped into her new role as a student tech at the Southeast Community College Milford Campus.

Born in Marysville, Kan., and raised in the town of Hanover, Kan., Rupprecht’s journey to this position had been one fueled by her passion for education and her desire to make a difference.

She served as a teacher assistant during her high school years. This experi-

ence was a pivotal moment that motivated her to pursue a student tech position.



Karley Rupprecht

“I am excited for the opportunity at the very institution where I graduated from just last year,” Rupprecht said when asked what made her choose the tech position at Southeast.

She works with admissions, registration and the front desk, and in addition to her day-to-day tasks, Rupprecht also takes on the responsibility of assisting students with obtaining ID cards and parking passes. Her goal is to make their transition to college life a little smoother.

When asked where can

students get additional support on campus, she recommended the CAPS program.

She said, “I recommend all students to check out the CAPS program; it’s a great resource.”

One of Rupprecht’s greatest joys in her new role is the opportunity to meet and communicate with students from diverse backgrounds.

She said, “I treat every student with the same level of respect and care, ensuring that each interac-

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SkillsUSA sends 17 to national competition

By Teeko Toughbay
and Jennifer Snyder

The Southeast Community College SkillsUSA Lincoln and Milford Chapters had a strong showing at the 2025 Nebraska State Leadership and Skills Championships, April 10-12 in Grand Island.

Seventeen students qualified for the National Leadership and Skills Conference, June 23-27 in Atlanta, Ga. In addition, four Career Academy students also qualified for nationals.

"I am so proud of the efforts and accomplishments of all our student competitors," said Lynnette Frey, SCC Manufacturing Engineering Technology program chair and SkillsUSA advisor. "Many students spent evening and weekends studying and preparing for this competition."

SCC had 103 students competing at the state competition between the Lincoln, Milford and TCA chapters earning 47 total medals.

The Milford chapter won 27 medals while the Lincoln and TCA chapters each won 10.

The breakdown by chapter is:

* Lincoln: 27 state participants, 10 medals (6 gold, 2 silver, 2 bronze)

* Milford: 46 state participants, 27 medals (13 gold, 8 silver, 6 bronze)

* TCA: 30 state participants, 10 medals (5 gold, 1 silver, 4 bronze)

"It is exciting when students get to prove their knowledge and skill in a field where they will soon be professionals in the industry," Frey said.

"I am thankful for the SkillsUSA organization and the opportunities it creates for students," she added. "It warms my heart to see these students so passionate and engaged in their field of study."

"The conference (gives) students from all over the state an opportunity to showcase their leadership skills in their respective fields of study," said Jeff Ives, an advisor for SkillsUSA at the Milford Campus.

Ives stated the conference's main purpose and goal is to ensure a skilled workforce in America.

He further elaborated that SkillsUSA focuses on technical, skilled and service careers.

"SkillsUSA also provides a platform for students to develop not only their technical skills but also their leadership, teamwork, citizenship and character development," he added.

Ives said he enjoys "getting students prepared for the competition and participating in mock trials in the days leading to

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photos contributed

Taking home honors from the SkillsUSA at the 2025 Nebraska State Leadership and Skills Championships were, from left, Nash Peterson, Kerek Heithier, and Tristan Welch, SCC Lincoln Chapter (2nd place winners, Technical Team Problem Solving) and Tobias Jordan, Sara Newbanks, Rocky Wright, and Jax Christianson (not pictured, Eric Smith), SCC Milford Chapter (1st place winners, Technical Team Problem Solving). At bottom, also taking home honors from the SkillsUSA state competitions were, from left, Jackson Graves, SCC Milford Chapter (1st place winner, Technical Drafting) and Vedah Henrichs, SCC Lincoln Chapter (3rd place winner, Technical Drafting).

Opportunities abound in PTK

By Kaitlyn Aberg

Phi Theta Kappa is an honor society for community college students. Besides recognition for their academic success, PTK provides members opportunities for leadership training, scholarships, exploring career paths and building a network of peers and trusted advisors.

To be invited to join PTK, students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher. Additionally, students are asked to maintain good character and academic integrity before and after joining PTK.

The process here at Southeast includes running a report on all students and seeing who is eligible to join and reaching out to invite them to join.

In this initial email, students are learning what PTK is and are given the opportunity to reach out



PHI THETA KAPPA
FOUNDATION

and ask necessary questions.

Once the student decides to accept or decline, there is a one-time fee that students will pay to become members. Once that is paid, there is also an induction ceremony welcoming them to PTK.

The \$85 fee covers access to webinars, professional development, and gives exclusive access to PTK-only scholarships and transfer opportunities to four-year colleges. \$70 of this fee goes to the national body of PTK, the remaining \$15 is added to cover the chapter fee which helps pay for an honor stole at graduation.

But students can apply to get the national fee waived. Each school may nominate Three students for the Golden Opportunity Scholarship. These scholarships are awarded randomly by PTK and can break the barrier if income is a hold up.

Students are encouraged to attend scheduled meetings, volunteer in the community and work on a project called 'The College Project' during their involvement while at SCC.

"The goal of the chapter advisors in the upcoming year is to have the PTK members choose a college project where they identify a project that they can

work on throughout the academic year as a group," says Renae Reis, PTK advisor.

There is a manageable time commitment to this chapter.

"25-30 hours per year to get involved, you can do more or less; it's really what you chose to make of it," said Reis.

Opportunities for leadership and scholarships is independent and is available online through PTK.org

"The goal for PTK at Southeast is to build up a resume of volunteering in the community and learning leadership skills to carry on throughout life," Reis says.

She added that PTK isn't just about academic achievement, it's about giving back to the community, learning lifetime leadership skill and preparing for life after SCC.

Career Placement Services prepares for life after college

By Luna Hinkley

Life after graduation seems scary for so many students, even those just starting college. What can students do to help prepare them for life after college or even nearing the end of completion?

At Southeast Community College students are provided with free access to the SCC Career Services program, where they can

ask questions and help get to where one needs to be.

The people in this program can also help students decide what exactly one needs to be thinking about.

With thanks to this the SCC Career Services program, often times events such as career fairs and meet-and-greets are held at the campus throughout the year. Through these events, students can be di-

rected to the right path and help get citizens' future careers started.

The office for Career Services is located in the Student Support area inside the Lincoln campus main building's entrance and accepts both walk-ins and scheduled appointments.

Every semester at Southeast Community College, Career Services hosts job fairs, where students

can connect one-on-one with future employers in fields like healthcare, technology, trades and business.

Available Monday through Friday, the SCC office is open to the public.

Students can also visit southeast.edu/careerservices for contact information and the event calendar.

SCC Pride celebrates with Spring Fling

By Milo Hintz

LINCOLN – Pride Club at Southeast Community College recently held its Spring Fling on Friday, April 18, from 7 to 9:30 p.m.

The Spring Fling, which is open to all students, is a “dance party” where students can present their cultural/traditional clothing or present themselves at their most confident.

Any comfortable clothing is encouraged as well.

Kalika Jantzen, a staff advisor of the club, has said, “It is an opportunity for students to express themselves and be confident, while comfortable in



who they are.”

Admission was either \$5 or any food that can be donated for the SCC pantry. There was a limit of two tickets per student, with the option of one of these tickets being someone from outside SCC.

The welcoming envi-

ronment included cultural dance lessons, drinks, food and party favors.

Pride Club at SCC has always encouraged social engagement and skill improvement.

Jantzen states, “The value of student and community that pride at SCC

offers continues to grow every semester.”

The club has a long history of creating a safe space for LGBTQ+ students along and for anyone who wants to join. Starting in 2016, the club has been mainly funded by student engagement and activity.

The club is known for having booths about sexual education along with tables on pronouns and other LGBTQ+ language education.

They also value community building with events such as the Spring Fling or public hangouts with board games and other activities.

Psychology and Sociology Club offers exploration

By Allie Anderson

LINCOLN - Recognizing a need to understand human behavior and complexities of social dynamics, the Psychology and Sociology Club offers students the ability to explore those interests outside of a traditional academic setting.

As they meet every Tuesday, this club has become a place for students who are excited to dive deeper into the fields of psychology and sociology. The club usually meets from 12:30 p.m. to 12:50 p.m., which is a time when most students are able to

attend.

Co-Advisor Nicole Trevena-Flores says attendance fluctuates on a weekly basis from five to fifteen, with diverse academic backgrounds and interests.

This club is maintained by a four-member executive board, consisting of a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. Trevena-Flores says this provides a structure of necessary leadership, and the plans of activities and events lie in the hands of the board members.

“We don’t require students to pay dues or anything, so everyone is welcome to come,” she

said.

The reason she wanted to be apart of this club is because, “Honestly, it was from my own undergrad experience,” she stated.

Trevena-Flores recalled how she was involved in a similar club during her studies and how it offered support and connection. She was eager to recreate that same type of environment for this club.

Activities range from guest speakers to exploring themes in psychology and sociology. Past events have included a session of hypnosis and discussion around providing support to veterans, which showed

the club’s commitment to broadening their own understanding of psychology and social issues.

Among the club’s most successful aspects is their field trip to the Glory Psychiatric Museum, an experience she said many students found eye-opening. This field trip not only educated the members about mental health history but also created a deeper respect for a career field that she said is usually misunderstood.

“It’s not a fun experience,” Trevena-Flores noted, “but it’s really in-

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Two SCC wrestlers crowned national champion



photos by Chad Greene

Keith Smith, above, became the first male National Champion in program history at the NJCAA National Tournament Saturday night. Smith led the way for the Bobcats, who saw four other men hit the championship podium. For the Women, Martha Hinneh, below, won the gold as a National Champion. As a team, the Men finished 6th nationally, the Women finished 5th.



By Hailey Jakubowski

At Southeast Community College in Lincoln Nebraska, wrestling is more than just a sport, it's a mission. Terry Pack is the coach leading these teams with Olympic level passion and division I impact, along with a knack for turning ambition into growth.

Although this is only the second year for this program, it's making waves on the national stage, in part thanks to Pack's leadership and the culture that he's building.

"We took 10 (wrestlers) to nationals, and six of those were freshmen," Pack said. "You're talking about a team that's only in its second year of being a program; most places don't do that."

Southeast Community College now hosts both a women's and men's wrestling team, a very uncommon setup even among the more established schools. Pack is quick to emphasize that both teams are doing more than just showing up, they are winning.

In 2024, the men placed ninth in the nation as a team at the NJCAA National Championships. Throughout the season, multiple wrestlers ranked in the top 10 in their weight classes.

Pack doesn't hesitate when speaking about the athletes that stood out. He

speaks on top performers that come to mind, Colin Menold and Issac White.

Menold was just one match shy from placing in the nationals, and White had a good performance making it to the blood round.

These wrestlers had a big impact on the program helping them push the team to one of its strongest seasons yet.

"We've got guys here who didn't come in with full scholarships but wanted to be part of something special," Pack said

This emphasizes the culture that drives the SCC program. While the women's team is still young, Pack sees major potential.

"Our women's team is just getting started, but the energy and drive are there," he said. "They're right where we want them to be."

Several other women's team members stood out, including a standout newcomer Martha Hinneh, who holds a high school state championship.

Pack talks about one of the most surprising things about these teams is how quickly they have been recruiting, and this isn't just local athletes.

"This week alone, we had kids from Colorado and Texas sign on, no scholarships, either. They turned down offers from

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Bobcat Basketball wins regional championship

By Kenna Kolm

LINCOLN - The SCC Bobcats 2025 Men's Basketball Team is currently 12-19 overall in the 2024-25 season. Their home record is 6-10, away record is 5-7, and neutral record is 1-2.

With their conference record standing at 12-19, the team's recent upcoming is a three-game win streak.

The current head men's basketball coach at Southeast Community College (SCC) Lincoln for the Bobcats is Joel Wooton. Alongside him is assistant coach Emmanuel Hardy.

One of the team's recent wins was against Central Community College in Columbus for the regional tournament championship.

Back in February the team triumphed over Dakota County Technical College, located in Minnesota, with a score of 87 to 69. This secured their spot in the National Tournament in Danville, Ill., which took place a little over a month ago.

During the first game of the tournament the Bobcats were trailing by three points at halftime, and they went on to dominate the second half. They were able to limit DCTC to just 29 points while scoring 50 themselves to seal the victory.

Viktor Kachalowski led SCC with 22 points, followed by PJ Newbill with 20, Jonan Claussen with

13, and Marquis Tolliver with 12.

Following this, they headed off to the national tournament.

A week after the first game that led them into the tournament, the NJCAA DII National Basketball League announced their opening round assignment.

SCC carried a No. 20 seed into the post season.

So Wooton claimed he was "bringing a positive energy into the tournament" and said he "had trust that the team would come out successful."

However, the game didn't go as planned. The team fell short after a slow start in their matchup against Henry Ford College, from Michigan.

The score unfortunately came out to be 80 to 70 in the first round, in favor of the Hawksters.

Wooton is well experienced with a 44-year career, 20 of which have been at SCC. In addition to the men's team, Wooton also helps coach the women's team here at SCC.

He has a successful track record, having won four District championships and nine regional championships. Additionally, two of his previous teams were also honored as National Academic Teams of the year.

When interviewed, Wooton was able to reflect on the previous loss stating, "We played our worst basketball in a month and

still could have beaten the No. 13 team in the tournament."

He added, "We missed way too many lay-ups and free throws in the first half, and our comeback just happened to come up short."

Wooton wraps it up by saying, "With that being said, however, there's no point in fixating on the losses. The future is what we are focused on."

photo by Chad Greene

At right, freshman guard Chang Deng of Lincoln gets 2 points during the regional championship game over Central CC. Below, Head Coach long-time Head Coach Joel Wooton, with his wife and former SCC instructor and coach Vicki Wooton, holds his Region 9 Coach of the Year Award for 2024-5.



Esports club expands competitions

By Milo Hintz

LINCOLN – Gaming has completely changed over the course of only a few years. Southeast Community College offers a way to blend the attention of detail and reflexes needed for gaming into an opportunity for professional growth with the inclusion of an Esports club.

Esports is no joke to Southeast's Lincoln campus.

This year, the Esports club had the opportunity to compete in many games such as *Fortnite*, *League of Legends*, *Overwatch 2*, *Apex Legends*, *Mario Kart 8*, *Street Fighter 6* and *Rocket League*.

The club starts spring season strong with *Fortnite*. *Fortnite* is a third-person shooter game that is played like a battle royale: the last person or team standing wins. The game is known for its outrageous skins and ways to win.

Members of the club who have climbed the competitive ranks since the beginning, Sylvia and Wompzilla, won with a 2-7 record in the No Build category.

Sylvia and Wompzilla were also known for their teamwork playing *Overwatch 2* and *League of Legends*.

Overwatch 2 is a first-person shooter game that allows the player to take on three different types of categories. Tank defense or offense (DPS) and support. Each character within the category has special skills that can help the team all together.

This year, pizzaboy, LXLly, sageu, LucioMain, TZ connor07 and ColonelSamders competed in playing *Overwatch 2* and only missed playoffs by one game, scoring 3-4.

Apex Legends NJCAA National Champion of last fall returned this year to compete for Southeast. ColonelSamders is currently 5-3. *Apex Legends* is another battle royale game and is known for its interesting array of characters and realistic mechanics.

Doing Nintendo proud, Jigglyboi finished with a 12-2 record and has qualified for Super Regionals in *Mario Kart 8*, a racing car game with Nintendo's most beloved characters.

Street Fighter 6 is a well-known fighting arcade game that takes button warfare to another level, and its side scrolling technology allows the player to get full view of the battle. Rai7007 competed and won 13-2 and qualified for *Street Fighter 6* Super Regionals April



photo by Chad Greene

Above, esports head coach Christopher Cummins watches on as Collin Hdugna works through an exercise.

10.

Soccer is not a sport that only humans can play. *Rocket League* is a game where soccer turns crazy with cars. The objectives are the same, get the ball in the goal and defend the team's own goal; however,

the catch is that the player must do so with only a car.

KDeception, Leäk3d, danando18 and AlexdaAlig8er finished this season in *Rocket League* with a 9-4 record, qualifying for Super Regionals.



African American Read-In draws a crowd

By Allie Anderson

On February 25, students and staff at Southeast Community College came together to celebrate African American literature during the annual African American Read-In, an event that drew a good number of participants.

The theme for this year's Read-In was The Harlem Renaissance, celebrating the heritage and cultural basis of African American writers.

Southeast Community College hosted its annual African American Read-in, led by Lindsay Wortmann alongside her colleague, Carolyn Nolte, and around 25 students and faculty attended.

"We wanted to do themes that showcase a more positive frame of mind when it comes to African American Literature because I think many kinds of think that oh, it's so depressing," Wortmann said.

"But we really try to pick pieces that are not only inspirational but represent the uniqueness of Black literature and Black voices," she added.

This event featured inspiring poems, reading and music from authors like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston and music and art.

Wortmann said she focuses on a mission to make literature engaging and accessible for younger generations, "not just, traditional reading from the paper, but also seeing videos of the authors performing it and also incorporating music."

The event coordinators spread the word about this event in different ways, like campus fliers, faculty emails for professors to share the news about the event to their students and display advertising in busy areas and different buildings.

Both instructors said they will develop publicity next year by posting on social media and more advertising around campus.

Wortmann said, "The response from the people that attended was amazing and rewarding."

Many of the readers, which included students and faculty members, were faced with nerves she said because they wanted to do it right, but the audience always applauded.

"There was such a beautiful sense of encouragement," Wortmann observed. "Students were cheering for each other, and you could just feel the appreciation outbeaming from the crowd."

One of the standout moments of the event was

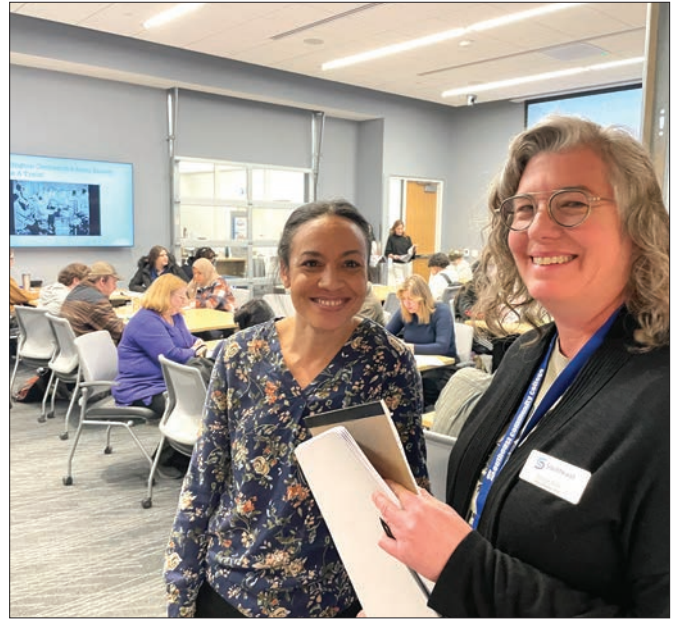


photo contributed

English instructors Lindsay Wortmann, left, and Carolyn Nolte hosted the African American Read-In in February.

the reading of Hughes' poem "Let American Be America Again," which deeply related with many of the audience members.

"It moved people visibly," Wortmann recalled. "During moments like that, you could just feel everyone emotions as each had their own meaningful interpretation from the powerful words of the poem."

Feedback from all the participants was very positive, she said, with many people coming back feeling inspired and empowered.

"The messages conveyed about identity, freedom of expression,

and the nature of African American experiences really struck a chord with everyone in attendance," said Wortmann.

Looking ahead, Wortmann and Nolte said they plan to extend the read-in next year by incorporating different live performances like a choir.

"We want this to be an experience that encourages students to engage not just with literature but with the culture and community," said Wortmann. "Next year, we're considering a civil rights theme, tapping into another rich African American heritage."

Review

Novocaine: not exactly painless

By Kaitlyn Hughes

Novocaine hit theaters and really packed a punch, starring Jack Quaid, son of famous actor Dennis Quaid, in his breakout role.

Novocaine was gruesome and at many points throughout the film, hard to watch.

The story follows Nathan Caine, nicknamed “Novocaine” in elementary school, as he was diagnosed with a disease that causes him to not feel any type of pain called congenital insensitivity to pain with anhidrosis (CIPA).

He went about his whole life as a careful man, being cautious of everything he touched or walked by. He even avoided chewing actual food in case he bit off his tongue unknowingly.

Freshly into a relationship with his new girlfriend/co-worker Sherry, played by Amber Midthunder, the night before, Nathan shows up for his job at a trust credit union in a happy mood excited to talk to her again.

However, he gets interrupted by three robbers dressed up in Santa Clause outfits, succeeding in not just robbing the bank – but killing the boss and kidnapping Sherry.

To save her, Nathan goes through many bloody



image courtesy Paramount Pictures

Released in March, *Novocaine*, starring Jack Quaid, above, is not for the squeamish.

and brutal side quests on a hunt to find her. Throughout those intense scenes we can see him stepping out of his comfort zone to protect himself from the villains of the story.

Although the main lead cannot feel pain, I felt every little stab and scratch; just thinking about it now makes my skin crawl.

At one part in the movie, Nathan must defend himself with an arrow through his leg and a knife in his hand, which he obviously was unable to feel, so it freaked out the men that he was fighting with.

The movie did bring out a little comedic relief, but it was inadequate enough for me to not want to hide behind my popcorn bucket or grimace every five

minutes.

Novocaine gave me a mix of emotions: laughter, uneasiness, and the desire to get up and leave several times. I was shocked by how graphic just one movie could be.

Usually, I am a major fan of action-comedy movies; however, this movie brought all action and just a little comedy sprinkled throughout.

What I enjoyed about the film was that the plot was very interesting. It had a storyline that drew fans to the edge of their seats.

The plot twists were jaw-dropping, the action was incredibly intense, and the directors of the movie, Dan Berk and Robert Olson, did not hold

back on the brutality in the film.

The soundtrack of the movie was remarkable. At a point in the movie, ironically, the song “Everybody Hurts” by R.E.M. plays, poking fun at the main character who is unable to do just that.

Even though I had an urge to get up and leave, I was glad that I made it through to the end, although I don’t think I’ll watch it again just because I feel forever traumatized by the first time.

If you are into gory, action-packed, comedy movies, *Novocaine* might be perfect for you. However, if you are anything like me, once is more than enough.

Latest edition of *Illuminations* launched

By Connor Palmer

The 26th edition of *Illuminations* was recently released during a launch party, showcasing the creative talents of Southeast Community College's faculty, staff and students.

The magazine accepts poetry, prose, creative nonfiction, fiction, visual art and the recent addition of academic essays from student research projects.

Illuminations has had multiple editors over the years, but this year a new face is overseeing the magazine.

Cheney Luttich, who works on the Lincoln campus, finished publishing her first magazine as the editor.

The launch party took place on SCC's Lincoln campus on Friday, April 25.

"We all get together

for an hour or so, read excerpts and celebrate," Luttich says.

Copies will be available for all students and staff soon after.

Luttich encourages people to contribute to the magazine.

She states, "Even if you don't want to be a writer when you grow up, seeing something that you've created in print, like, that's pretty cool. It's very satisfying."

Students who contribute to *Illuminations* also have a chance to win prizes for their work.

"There are prizes for first and second place, which is pretty cool," Luttich says.

When asked why this magazine is an important part of our school community, Luttich says that there is often a stereotype that community colleges

aren't as hard as universities, and that's just not the case.

"We are doing college-level work ... it's solid learning, and being able to have a literary journal that celebrates everyone who's here doing hard work," Luttich explains. "I think that's a beautiful thing."

Submissions for the next edition of *Illuminations* are open until June, Luttich says.

Come August, Luttich will read through all submissions to ensure they are appropriate. She then puts out a call to faculty and staff to see if they would be interested in being on the editorial team.

"I gather all the submissions, make them anonymous, and then I send a voting form to those editorial folks," she explains.

Luttich says she then looks at the scores to

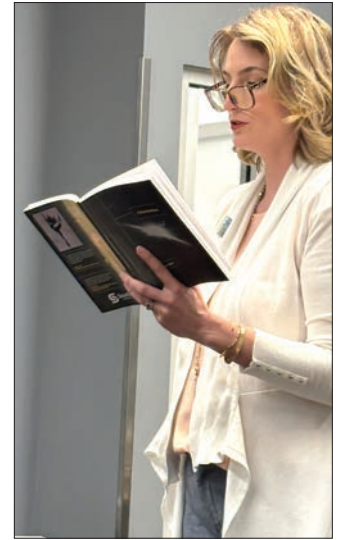


photo contributed

Illuminations editor, Cheney Luttich, above, reads during the launch party.

get a sense of things and ultimately makes the final decision on what gets published.

For anyone interested in joining the editorial team, Luttich suggests emailing her at Illuminations@southeast.edu with their reason for joining.

Luttich explains, "We've had former students on the team, and they were going into a field where this kind of work would be valuable on their resume."

She added that leadership and collaboration are important in any job.

"I argue that this kind of role is valuable on any resume," she says. "It's a leadership role, it's a collaborative role, and all of those skills are valued in any workplace."

Psych/Soc Club, continued

from page 17

teresting, eye-opening and has a lasting effect."

Awareness around mental health is also a very important factor for this club. In previous semesters, the group participated in events like a Mental Health Awareness Walk and the group has also created mindfulness sessions.

"It really depends on what the students are

interested in," said Trevena-Flores.

This club aims to create connections beyond an academic standpoint.

For many members, it's a place to meet other students who have shared interests that can then help create friendships that extend beyond the club.

"I've seen a lot of students become friends from the club," Trevena-Flores said.

During club meetings connecting with off-campus students is also very important to this club, which is why the club offers virtual meeting options.

Looking forward to the upcoming year, she says the Psychology and Sociology Club plans to include more tours at local universities to help their members to navigate transfer options more effectively.

Study Abroad leads four tours this summer

By Allie Anderson

The Study Abroad program at Southeast Community College has become an important academic experience for students, offering many different travel opportunities.

Since the beginning of the study abroad program, it has evolved from the beginning to now a whole department that not only has the students explore various cultures but also helps grow their academic and professional skills.

According to Nicole Trevena Flores, who is the one of the coordinators of the study abroad program, “Students are increasingly recognizing the importance of international experience”

“Research shows that participating in study abroad programs is one of the most impactful high-impact educational practices,” Trevena Flores stated.

“Students return with greater cultural awareness, confidence and resilience,” she said before adding that those qualities are valued in the workforce.

This summer, the college is offering four different trips with destinations to Costa Rica, Morocco, Paris and Ireland.

Each trip is tied into specific courses through either an eight-week class or a semester class which

provides students with research about where they are going and learns the ways of that culture.

Students also learn about navigation, understanding the cultural differences, and making sure that they know about personal safety when they are abroad.

“We’ve Created a curriculum that covers everything from airport navigation to currency exchange,” Trevena Flores explained. “This preparation is key to ensuring that students feel confident and supported during their travels.”

Ensuring that students follow the travel rules and understand their responsibilities when abroad is crucial.

Trevena Flores said, “Students are clearly informed ... about maintaining safety and respect while abroad.”

Feedback from students who have participated in previous trips has given overwhelming positive feedback, she said, with many expressing new confidence and a better appreciation for the diverse cultures.

The college is now seeing a higher number of students expressing interest in study abroad programs than ever before.

“This is the first time we’ve organized four different study abroad trips in a single summer, and



image contributed

One of the four Study Abroad trips is a trip to Paris.

we’ve even introduced opportunities for longer-term stays – allowing students to fully immerse themselves in a host country’s culture,” Trevena Flores said.

Financial knowledge is often a barrier to students’ participation, she said, but the program has learned to find ways to face these challenges.

For one, she said the program has increased its fundraising amount, which has led to awarding multiple scholarships, which creates a pathway for more students to access these life-changing experiences.

For students who are hesitant about studying abroad, Trevena Flores

suggests reaching out to the study abroad office.

“We are here to support students every step of the way,” she said. “Whether it is about addressing financial concerns or just answering simple questions about the travels, we’re dedicated to making their experience as smooth and enriching as possible.”

With a support system in place and a commitment to student development, Trevena Flores said the program is making way for a brighter, more connected future for their students – One that incorporates confidence, cultural awareness and personal growth.



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The Story of Berlin visit
DDR Museum visit

Day 4 Berlin--Dresden

Travel to Dresden via Leipzig
Leipzig guided sightseeing tour: Augustus Square, Old Town Hall, St. Thomas Church
Museum of Military History visit

Day 5 Dresden--Nuremberg

Dresden guided sightseeing tour: Church of Our Lady (Frauenkirche), Bruhlsche Terrasse, Fürstenzug mural
Travel to Nuremberg
Nuremberg city walk

Day 6 Nuremberg

War Crimes Trial Museum visit
Nazi Party Rally Grounds visit
Documentation Centre visit

Day 7 Nuremberg--Munich

Travel to Munich
Dachau Concentration Camp & Memorial visit
Bavarian bratwurst dinner

Day 8 Munich landmarks

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Relaxation Days offer a needed break

By Kenna Kolm

As the semester progresses students often find themselves feeling increasingly tired and stressed. To help alleviate this, SCC's Lincoln campus offers mid-semester relaxation days halfway through the semester, and then again right before finals.

These days are designed to provide students with a much-needed break, allowing them to take their mind off their worries for a moment. Helping reduce stress levels, ultimately enhances their overall well-being and academic performance.

Rachel Mason, the Student Activities Coordinator for the school, has been at SCC for 40 years. She said "It's mainly to give students a break from studying halfway through the semester. It helps get their mind off things for a little while."

During these relax-

ation days, therapy dogs are available, along with snacks and fun activities for students to participate in.

The first proposal to bring dogs in was in 2013. It ended up going so well that they have been reaching out to these organizations ever since.

Mason went on to explain how it has been beneficial for the college simply because of the reactions of the student body.

"It makes me smile being able to see their smiles, and also how they relate the interactions with the therapy dogs to their own dogs with stories of them, and how much they miss them," she says.

Mason finishes off by saying how they usually have more than 100 people in attendance.

The snack and activity options are decided by the college's student senate, which usually picks some kind of craft to get the

creativity flowing and base the snack options on what they think students would like.

In addition to that, they also follow themes if these days fall around holidays. The midterm relaxation days fell around St. Patrick's Day, so there were green-themed snacks and activities.

In relation to the therapy dogs, the school outsources from a couple different programs.

One of the programs they use is Healing Heart Therapy, an organization with trained therapy dogs which bring them to the school. It is a non-profit organization supported through annual membership dues.

The dogs and teams serve as a bridge to help develop a caring relationship with children and adults in many different settings. Their mission is to strengthen the human-companion animal

bond by allowing their dogs to heal people's hearts.

Along with that, their other main source is a program called Hearts United. This is a no-kill organization dedicated to relieving the suffering of domestic animals by providing quality shelter, sanctuary and adoptions.

The college has been hosting the mid-semester relaxation days for over 10 years now.

Mason's advice is to "Just come and enjoy it."

If students wish to participate all that is required is a student ID, but it's not necessary if they are just wishing to stop by and say hello to the dogs.

These breaks not only provide a chance for students to unwind, but they also help them return to their studies with renewed energy and focus.

Certificate now offered for Energy Generation Operations Program

By Tristin Chambers

Southeast Community College's Energy Generation Operations program, based at the Milford campus, has long prepared students for high-paying careers in the power industry by combining hands-on training with classroom instruction.

Now, the program is expanding with the addition of a new certificate designed to give students more flexible career entry points.

David Madcharo, instructor and program chair, explained that the new certificate option was added in fall 2024.

"This certificate allows

students to get into the workforce faster, while still covering key fundamentals of power generation," he said.

The certificate program focuses on core aspects of energy generation, including safety, plant operations and basic systems knowledge.

While it doesn't include

the internship built into the full associate degree, students still gain significant hands-on lab experience.

Unlike the full associate degree, which spans five semesters and includes an internship, the certificate can be completed in just two semesters, which

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Rupprecht, continued

from page 14

tion is supportive.”

Rupprecht also said she makes it a priority to maintain confidentiality in her dealings with students, fostering a safe and trusting environment for all students.

One of the challenging part of her job is staying on top of the influx of ad-

missions applications. She said she doesn't mind the challenge because it keeps her busy through out the day.

Rupprecht said she is appreciative of her colleagues who have helped her transition to her new role.

She said, “I look forward working with them each and every day.”

Cuandon, continued

from page 13

tor, Cuandon has been shadowing fellow faculty members and taking time to acclimate to the teaching environment. She expressed that one of the biggest challenges for students is self-doubt.

“In this field, we're here to help others, but many students struggle with accepting feedback, especially in a supportive role,” she explained.

Cuandon's own career path in human services was shaped by a desire for change and a commitment to making a difference. She worked with homeless populations, survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, immigrants, case managers and social workers before entering teaching.

“I've always been passionate about helping people. I wanted to take what I knew from non-profit work and teach others

how to do the same,” she said.

Outside the classroom, Cuandon enjoys spending time with her six-year-old son and two dogs. She also enjoys being outdoors, traveling and spending time at Branched Oak Lake.

Cuandon's advice to students considering a career in human services?

“It's rewarding, but it's also tough,” she said. “You need to be patient with yourself and practice self-care. The work can be draining, but it's incredibly fulfilling knowing that you're making a difference in people's lives.”

Her passion for teaching and commitment to student success is evident.

“Being here feels like I'm exactly where I need to be,” Cuandon said. “It's about helping students develop the skills they need to go out and empower others.”

Roberson, continued

from page 14

sciences until a year after starting her mathematics degree.

Graduating in 1988, Roberson went to work for the Nebraska Book Company, which specialized in marketing used textbooks around the country to college bookstores.

After working as a software developer there for 30 years to help create software for college bookstores, Roberson was offered a position in system management. She then spent five years leading teams to help the wholesale division develop software so their material was available digitally.

Roberson enjoys helping people solve problems, especially when it is logical.

She states, “I like logical because there needs to be a clear answer, obviously not all the time, but I like clear answers.”

With computer software, Roberson enjoys the problem-solving nature of the job.

Something else Roberson enjoys is team building and collaboration.

She states, “I had a leader (at the Nebraska Book Company) who was really good at leading. I learned so much from

them, how to lead and how to grow.”

Roberson believes that leadership should be about allowing the team to make professional decisions together, learning from mistakes and expanding their understanding.

“I've dived into growth leadership (and) getting people to make decisions for themselves. If it's not you, who is it supposed to be?” Roberson says.

After the Book Company closed, through her connections there, she found a position at SCC as an Information Systems Analyst/Programmer.

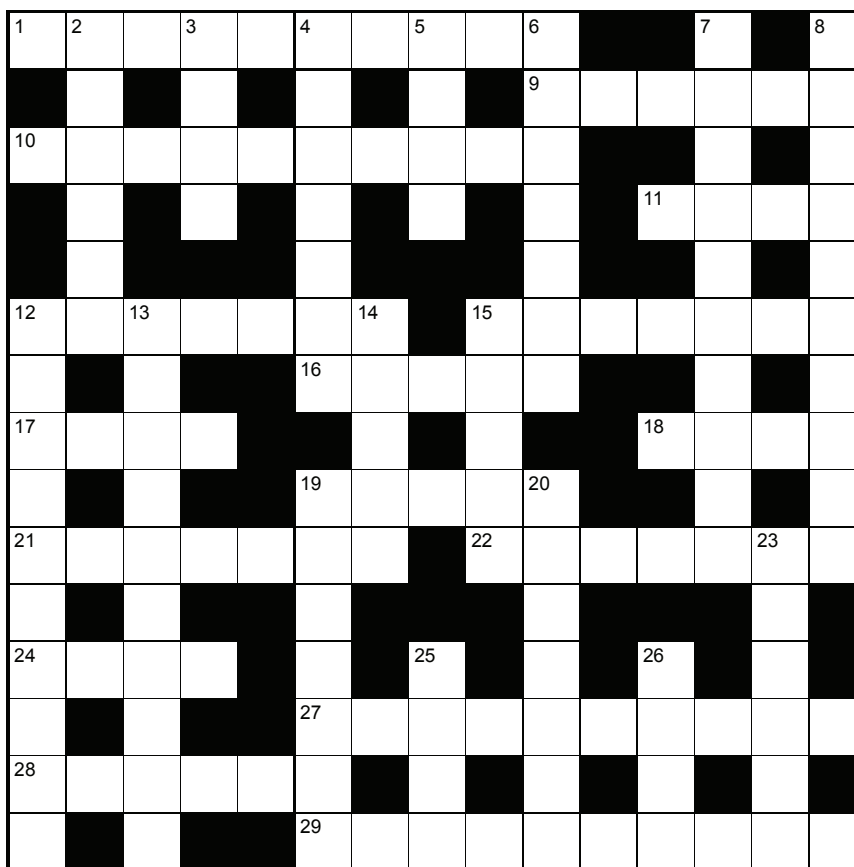
Roberson explains, “I worked for the software division for 30 years, then was leadership for IT problems.”

She added, “I love that environment, building a team together and facilitating. That is the direction I want to go, but part of me also wanted to go back to programming.”

Roberson has some prior history at SCC, having one of her children be an alumnus at the TCA program SCC provides.

“My son went to TCA, and I love the mission of SCC,” she said. “Everything about this place feels good. I love working here, lots of creative energy.”

Fun and Games



ACROSS

- 1 Seize conflicting factions in church (10)
- 9 European sophistication (6)
- 10 Is a climate change causing disasters? (10)
- 11 Writer keeps ring for labourer (4)
- 12 British team's touring Spain in addition (7)
- 15 Converted democrat has no time for friend (7)
- 16 Road damaged by nitrogen gas (5)
- 17 Fellow gets to have a meal – that's an achievement (4)
- 18 Money is essential to amateur ornithologist (4)
- 19 Annoyance when old car doesn't start (5)
- 21 Withdraw religious education pamphlet (7)
- 22 Note, garment provides compensation (7)
- 24 Writer not unknown to be difficult (4)
- 27 Urbane exec unusually displaying high spirits (10)
- 28 Grandmother has setback in French city (6)
- 29 The tears we shed, darling (10)

DOWN

- 2 Old stove's colour (6)
- 3 Supporter keeps pound for tart (4)
- 4 Captain provides opening for sound sleeper (7)
- 5 Dry run requiring outside help (4)
- 6 One slip spoiled foreign letter (7)
- 7 Rare title circulates around university as reading matter (10)
- 8 You keep below – shouting's beginning to get noisy (10)
- 12 Be needing tennis stroke in advance (10)
- 13 A little knowledge of Swedish initially being important (10)
- 14 Was model embracing popular and good person? (5)
- 15 In credit, need to pay shrink (5)
- 19 A bit of a shock involving Chelsea's top player (7)
- 20 Soldiers negotiate for shelter (7)
- 23 Score freely, netting century in game (6)
- 25 Copper needs to be 27 perhaps (4)
- 26 Reasonable-sounding price (4)

Tricky

7		2			4			
4					2		9	
		8		5				
8	7				6	9		
1				4				8
		9	5				1	7
				9		5		
	3		2					4
			7			8		9

Fiendish

6		2	3				9	
				2			5	
4	7							
1				4				9
	3						8	
2				9				3
							1	6
	8			6				
	4				1	3		2

sudoku puzzles courtesy of sudokuoftheday.com

For solution, see bottom of page 29

Weist, continued

from page 13

“Vehicles are getting more and more electrical, and it’s important for students to understand how to diagnose and repair electrical circuits,” he said. “That’s the future of automotive technology.”

Along with his technical knowledge, Weist also tries to teach patience and perseverance to his students.

“Don’t get discouraged,” he advises. “There’s a lot to take in, and you won’t know everything right away. It’s a long process, but the hands-on experience you get here will prepare you for the real world.”

Outside of education, Weist is a big motor sports enthusiast with an interest in circle track racing and boating.

“Everything I do seems to involve some kind of motor,” he laughed. “I’m a big Dodge fan and love working on old cars, especially the Superbird.”

Looking to the future, Weist is hopeful for the expansion of SCC’s automotive program.

“I hope we get more students and stay current with the new technology,” he said. “The more we can expose them to, the better because the industry continues to evolve.”

Energy Generation Operations certificate, continued

from page 27

works well for students who may already be working in the industry, want to upskill quickly or aren’t ready to commit to a full degree.

“We wanted to create a shorter pathway for students who are eager to start working, especially given the industry’s need for new talent,” Madcharo said.

Madcharo emphasized that the certificate can also serve as a stepping stone.

“A lot of students might earn the certificate first and then come back later to complete the degree,” he said. “It gives them options.”

Graduates with the certificate can pursue entry-level roles at utilities and power generation facilities across the region. These include companies like Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), Lincoln Electric System (LES) and Omaha Public Power District (OPPD).

While some of the more advanced roles may require the full degree, certificate holders are qualified for positions such as auxiliary operators, equipment technicians and control room assistants.

“Even with just the certificate, students can be looking at starting wages in the \$25 to \$30 per hour range, depending on the employer,” Madcharo noted.

The Energy Generation Operations program has been running since 2007 and currently serves about 40 students.

According to Madcharo, demand for workers remains high due to an aging workforce and increasing electricity needs.

“The workforce in this industry is aging. We’re seeing a lot of retirements, and we need younger people to come in and take those roles,” he said.

With interest in renewable energy also on the rise, the program—including the new certificate—has been updated to

include training in solar, battery storage and wind energy systems.

“It’s all about making our students more versatile,” Madcharo also added.

For students who are hands-on learners and looking for job security, he said the certificate in Energy Generation Operations presents a fast, focused path into an essential and growing field.

“You’re working with your hands, solving problems, and contributing to something vital—keeping the lights on,” Madcharo said.



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