

WESTERNCONNECT

THE ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCE | A publication for alumni & friends of Western Technical College



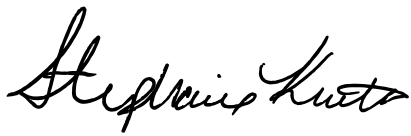
Moriah Cody, Western Alum
See Moriah's story on page 3

Hello, Western Alumni & Friends!

Year after year, the community impact Western students have continues to shine and we couldn't be prouder. Think about the last time you went to the clinic, who did you meet first? If you've been to one of our local hospitals or clinics, I am willing to bet you have encountered a Western graduate as one of your nurses or nursing assistants, or perhaps one of our respiratory therapists. If you need electrical, automotive, plumbing, or construction services, I would imagine you've come in contact with a Western alum. Did you know there are over 150 Western alumni owned businesses just in the La Crosse area?

In this edition of the *Western Connect*, you will see more examples of community impact from resilient students and alumni paying it forward. Please continue to share stories of your success—they are inspiring and motivating to our current students.

We sincerely hope you all had a wonderful holiday season with friends and family. We wish you health and happiness in this new year!



Stephanie Knutson
Alumni Relations Coordinator



Stephanie Knutson

Connect with us!



westerntc.edu/alumni

Western Connect is published twice a year for alumni and friends of Western Technical College.

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Thank you!

Giving Back!

Each year, the Western Alumni Association Board gathers to ring bells and raise funds for the Salvation Army, always having a great time. Giving back where possible and volunteering time to help raise money for those in need is something we can all do! Thank you to all who volunteered, and we look forward to doing this again next year!



Alumni board member: Kevin Knerzer and his son Sawyer



Alumni board president Anna Kramer (left) and Alumni board member Diedra Torgeson

Roots, resilience, community



secured an internship in Western’s Human Resources department, this move proved to be a game-changer. With school and daycare expenses covered and a modest scholarship, Moriah proudly graduated in 1997 with a degree in HR and Business Administration.

Reflecting on her alma mater, Moriah said, “I’m impressed with Western as it exists now, it’s gotten better and better over the years,” a sentiment we can all relate to when something improves with consistency and time, like a fine wine or cheese.

Equipped with a degree and ambition, fast forward a few years. After exploring different pursuits, Moriah found a home at American Express Financial Advisors, now Ameriprise.

“This community has always been supportive of me and my family. Helping others is part of our community culture.”

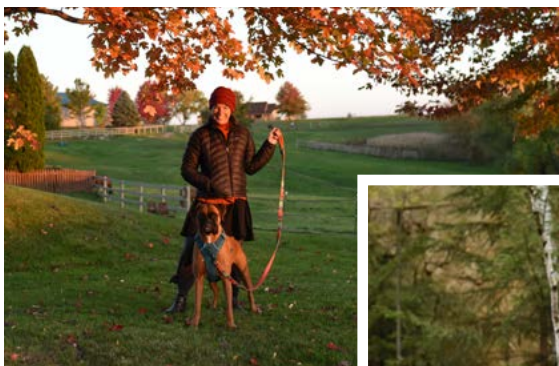
— Moriah Cody

Just outside of Spring Grove, Minnesota, **Moriah Cody** spent the best years of her childhood. Now, Moriah is not your average mother, daughter, musician, Western graduate, community volunteer, and busy professional. She is all that, and so much more! She has 23 years of finance experience and is currently the Vice President of Hanson & Associates, a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC here in La Crosse. So, how did she become the trusted, go-to woman at work—and in the community? Let’s get to it!

Moriah’s life experience began on the farm—her family roots run as deep as an aged Hickory tree. Her dad, a beloved local musician, and her mom, a local culinary chef whom many have—and still—enjoy her cuisine, shaped Moriah’s early years. Wholesome fun and creativity provided a stable and joyful foundation. (A fun fact you need to know: Rolling Ground, a nod to her father’s childhood family farm, is the name of the band her family would start years later—a labor of love that supplemented her college fund.)

As a vibrant and optimistic young adult, Moriah traded the rustic charm of rural Minnesota for the busier life of La Crosse. She started work at Fayze’s during the height of the restaurant’s popularity. Around this time, she became a single parent to her son, Austyn. Determined to

create a career and give her son the best life possible, she turned to Western, and found support there. Seeking guidance from a counselor, Moriah explored various programs and classes hoping to find her answer.



Early in her tenure at Western, she enrolled in a program called Wisconsin Works, a state initiative that mandated ten hours of internship work in exchange for assistance with school and daycare costs—a generous experience that left an impression. Moriah

Her hard work and dedication paid off and today she is a leading financial advisor in the area and has recently stepped into the role of Vice President. Moriah’s diverse expertise includes women’s financial strategies, including ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) investing, retirement, and estate planning, insurance, and small business. Her finely honed skills position her as a trusted guide, ensuring that her clients effectively navigate the landscape and thrive.





working with Western’s foundation to set up a scholarship endowment as a legacy to the Women’s Alliance of La Crosse organization. Her community dedication extends to projects like the Midwest Music Festival and Habitat for Humanity. When supporting an organization, Moriah wants it to feel meaningful on both a personal and community level, with the goal of keeping the funds local.

Beyond the interconnected world of finance and community, Moriah finds joy in family, friends, her artist-musician-husband Matt, and her Boxer Penny. Alongside Penny, she embraces the physicality of hiking and the rejuvenation of yoga. Moriah and Matt actively support working musicians by hosting House Shows—intimate events where live music resonates in the cozy confines of people’s homes. An outdoors lover, she believes in the therapeutic power of nature, proving that sometimes, the best investment is a breath of fresh air—especially in the Driftless region.

Moriah Cody’s legacy is one of community harmony. Her knowledge, experience, and unwavering commitment make her a trusted source of financial advice and community leadership. Foundationally, investing in people is what matters.

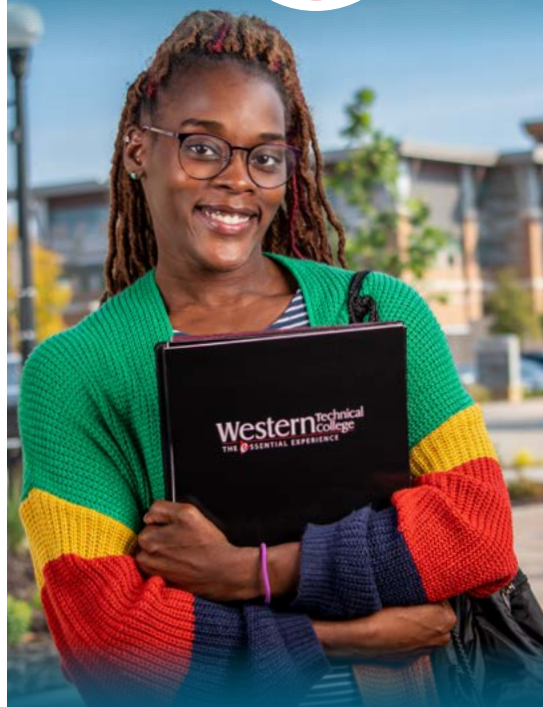
Moriah emphasizes,
Western will meet you where you

“Western aligns with my values of community strength and open access education—a place for everyone to grow and learn.”
— Moriah Cody

are—at the journey’s beginning. Moriah is actively involved in organizations like the Women’s Fund of La Crosse where she sits on the Events and Impact Committees. She is also currently



Stay Connected



We love to stay in touch and hear about your life events.

Visit:
www.westerntc.edu/stay-connected

Email:
Alumni@westerntc.edu

Make sure to follow us on our social media channels:
[@westerntcalumni](https://www.instagram.com/westerntcalumni)





Employer spotlights

Western continues to host employer spotlight events on campus multiple times a year. These gatherings offer local employers an excellent opportunity to directly engage with an enthusiastic audience of students. The lunch-and-learn format allows employers to present a 30-minute showcase of their organization, highlighting employment opportunities. Following this, students have a dedicated 15-minute question-and-answer session. This format provides a unique and valuable opportunity for both employers and students.

To learn more about participating in an Employer Spotlight, reach out to John Zimprich at zimprichj@westerntc.edu.



Western automotive students spark interest in sustainable transportation

This fall, Western's Automotive Facility buzzed with energy as student automotive technicians hosted an Electric Vehicle (EV) inspection event. From 11:00 a.m. to noon, the facility welcomed community members interested in having their electric vehicles examined by the skilled hands of Western students.

The event offered attendees a chance to ensure the health of their EVs while student technicians gained valuable hands-on experience with emerging EV technology in a real-world setting. Precision with purpose was on display as students thoroughly inspected each vehicle to diagnose and address any issues.

After the morning car drop off, the students worked to assess and provide insights into the maintenance practices that keep these green machines running smoothly. A scheduled pickup time is established and a debrief discussion between student and client followed.

More than a routine inspection, this event marks a commitment to sustainable practices. Through active community engagement, Western students honed their skills while contributing to a greater understanding and normalizing of electric vehicles—sparking awareness in the community.



Western announces new program for fall 2024

Western Technical College announces the addition of a new **IT-Data and Analytic Specialist program** beginning with the fall 2024 term.

The new program focuses on building proficiency in statistical tools and problem-solving to reveal data insights, build databases, and craft reports. The curriculum places emphasis on cultivating software skills, spanning data-specific programming languages, artificial intelligence, and Big Data. The program will be offered in a face-to-face, online, or hybrid format, depending on the student's need.

A prime example of Western's community responsiveness: when considering new programs, the college conducts a deep analysis process called Developing a Curriculum, or DACUM. The process brings local employers together to determine major duties and related tasks of the occupation, look at trends in job opportunities and living wages, and then

develop curriculum in response to the findings, leading to the creation of successful programs. Other factors include labor specific market data, student interest, and the college's resources and personnel. Following this process, the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) must approve the new program.

"Businesses and organizations continue to collect and amass large amounts of data, and they are asking for more employees who can manage it all," said Josh Gamer, dean of the Integrated Technology Division at Western. "The demand for these positions is growing, and Western is at the forefront to providing the appropriate training."



Scan for more information.

Welcome to the Alumni Association Board

Welcome Carla Lundeen



I am excited to introduce myself as the newest Western Technical College Alumni Association Board member! My name is **Carla Lundeen**, and I look forward to serving the

school, its alums, and current and prospective students. I believe in the alumni association's vision of supporting Western as the college of first choice in the region. I am thrilled to be a part of its mission to build traditions and promote high-quality education for learners.

My learning experience at Western was essential in preparing me for a career I love. I earned an associate degree in nursing from Western in 2001. Since then, I completed my bachelor's degree in nursing at the University

of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and received a master's degree in nursing from Southern New Hampshire University. The knowledge, skills, and abilities I first gained at Western have been foundational to my personal and professional growth as a nurse, leader, and community member.

I am the director of Great Rivers 211, a community service of Gundersen Health System. I am reminded daily of the gift I have been given to "never have to work a day in my life" because I love and believe in what we do at Great Rivers 211. I previously worked in direct care nursing in both nursing home and hospital settings. I then had the privilege to work for more than 20 years as a nurse care manager and Quality manager in Family Care, supporting people with disabilities and elders to live a life of their choosing and live in a home that they prefer.

I was born and raised on a family dairy farm in Vernon County in Western Wisconsin. My parents taught me the value of hard work, compassion, and perseverance. I graduated from Brookwood High School in 1988, left for La Crosse to go to college, and have lived in

this city for most of my adult life. In my spare time, I love hanging out with my adult children, traveling, visiting my daughter in South Korea, hiking with my sweet but anxious rescue dog, and volunteering at Clearwater Farms.

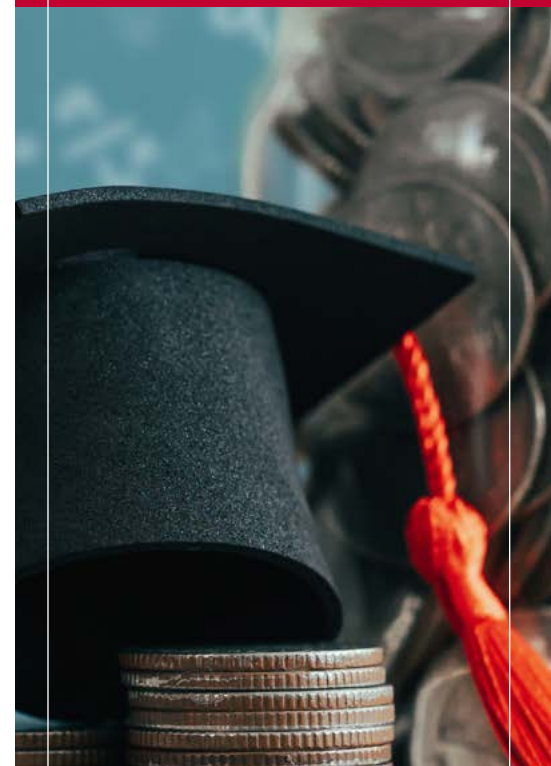
District Board Openings

Residents in the Western Technical College District are invited to apply for positions as board members. The District Board Appointment Committee welcomes interested applicants to submit their applications during February.

The board convenes regularly on the third Tuesday of each month at the district offices in La Crosse, with additional special meetings held when necessary. Board members serve voluntarily but are eligible for reimbursement of expenses incurred during official duties.

If you are interested in applying, you must submit an application with two letters of reference to support your nomination. Applicants are also required to attend a public meeting with the District Board Appointment Committee for an interview. There are three open positions available: a school district administrator, an employer member, and an employee member. These positions begin in July 2024 and end in June 2027.

The Wisconsin Technical College System encourages all board members to include minority representation. If you are interested in serving, stay tuned for upcoming news releases.



Are you or someone you know planning to attend Western?

Check out the Western Foundation scholarships:

westerntc.edu/scholarships

Many are available!



So long and thank you Dave Fish

In the bustling corridors and classrooms of the Student Success Center, an era quietly concludes as **Dave Fish**, admissions coach, bids farewell after an admirable 39 years of unwavering dedication. Dave's Western presence, a constant over four decades, leaves a noticeable void.

His commitment to the students of Western has been a guiding light throughout this extensive journey. Dave's career exemplifies a commitment to exceeding expectations, ensuring student success at every step. As a keeper of Western's history, he witnessed the college evolve through four presidents and three name changes, and the countless building transformations.

Beyond the office, Dave led Western's athletic department, leaving a lasting impact as a basketball coach and later as an athletic director. His mentorship extended beyond the court, shaping the lives of generations of student-athletes.

Dave's influence extends beyond campus boundaries, fostering

relationships with area high school counselors and advocating for the value of Western and technical education within the broader community.

The campus will miss the echoes of Dave's perfectly placed sarcasm, his quiet voice resonating with wisdom, and his particular brand of curmudgeonly humor that brightened even the toughest days. His passion for athletics and invaluable historical knowledge infused a distinct character into the college atmosphere.

"It's impossible to know the impact that Dave Fish had on the lives of so many Western students, but I know the impact that he had on mine: as my coach and as a co-worker. Dave cared about every student and made all feel welcome."

—Sharon Burchardt

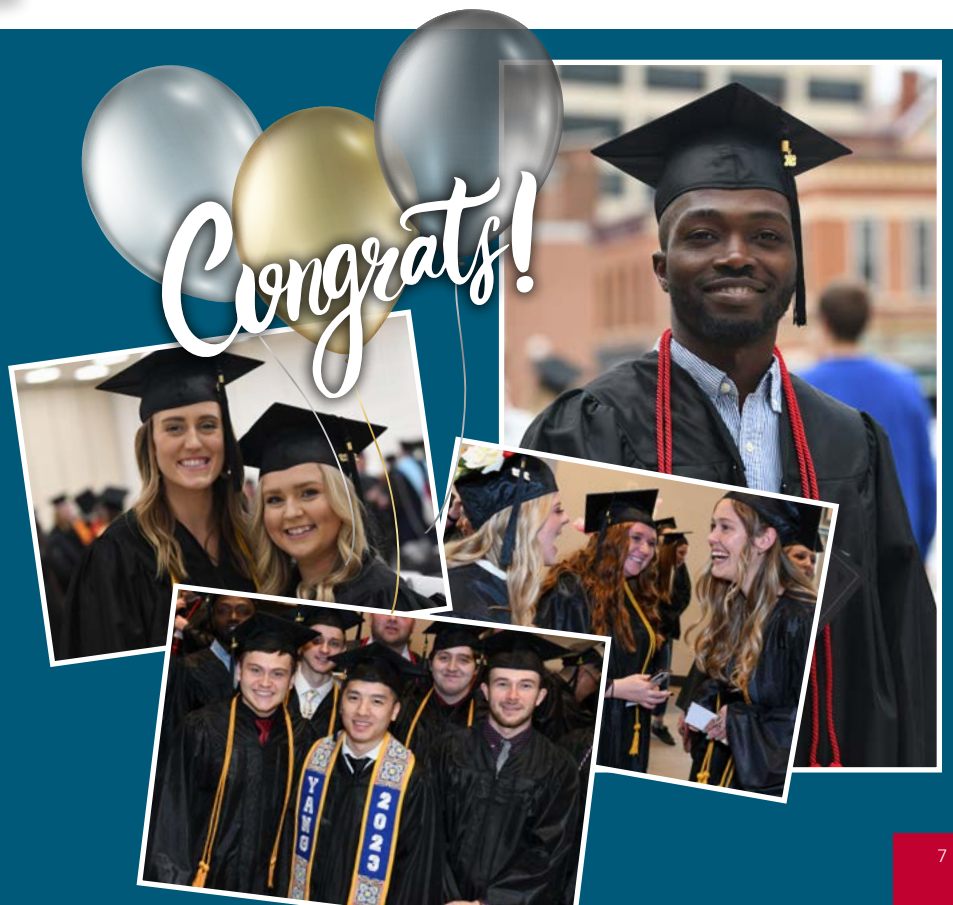
Recognizing Dave's unwavering commitment, Western Technical College expresses its deepest appreciation. As Dave embarks on a new chapter, Western extends heartfelt wishes for many happy and satisfying years in his well-deserved retirement. Dave Fish, a true cornerstone of the institution, leaves behind a legacy that will be remembered and cherished for years to come.

Congratulations Western graduates!

Congratulations to our December graduates. Let this be a formal and welcoming invitation to the Alumni Association. We look forward to celebrating with you at the April 27, 2024, commencement ceremony!

As a Western alum, you have several benefits available, including career resources, shopping discounts, athletic event admission, and more! We are proud of your accomplishments and look forward to seeing you succeed. Please keep us updated.

Visit www.westerntc.edu/services-and-benefits to learn more.





Western adopts 7-week course schedule for enhanced student success

This marks a pivotal moment in academics as we announce a significant transition—a shift from our traditional 15-week trimester schedule to a 7-week format beginning in Summer 2024. This evolution is a testament to Western’s commitment to the success and well-being of our students.

In this revamped structure, each academic year will include six 7-week sessions: two in fall term, two in spring term, and two in summer term. The rationale behind this decision stems from a comprehensive analysis of national, state, and internal data, which reveals that shorter course periods contribute to sustained academic success.

President Roger Stanford states, “Our commitment to academic excellence led us to this strategic shift. Part-time students can now focus on one to two courses at a time, allowing for a more concentrated, focused, and fruitful learning experience. Full-time students can distribute their workload evenly, fostering a conducive environment for deeper comprehension.”

For two years, our faculty and academic leaders have diligently worked to enhance our program curriculum, adapting it to this new holistic approach. President Stanford explains, “This transition isn’t merely a compression of existing courses. It involves a meticulous examination of program outcomes, teaching methods, and the integration of support services to create an optimal learning environment.”

Furthermore, Western collaborates closely with employers to align skills and training with workforce demands. The move to shorter terms accelerates student academic progression while facilitating a smooth integration into the workforce.

While most courses are transitioning to this format, some will remain in their current structure due to clinical labs or accreditation requirements. For more visit www.westernnc.edu/7-weeks.

Western Scholarship Golf Outing

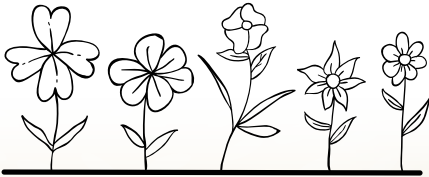
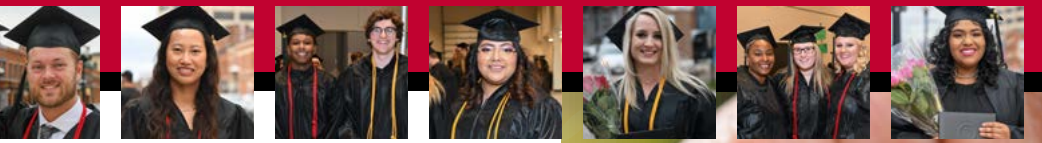


Spring is right around the corner, so dust off your golf clubs and get ready to support students by spending the day golfing! Western’s Scholarship Golf Outing is scheduled for May 22, 2024, at Cedar Creek Country Club in Onalaska, Wisconsin. Visit westernnc.edu/golf to register your team or sponsor this event. All proceeds go directly to students.



May 22, 2024
Cedar Creek Country Club
Onalaska, Wisconsin

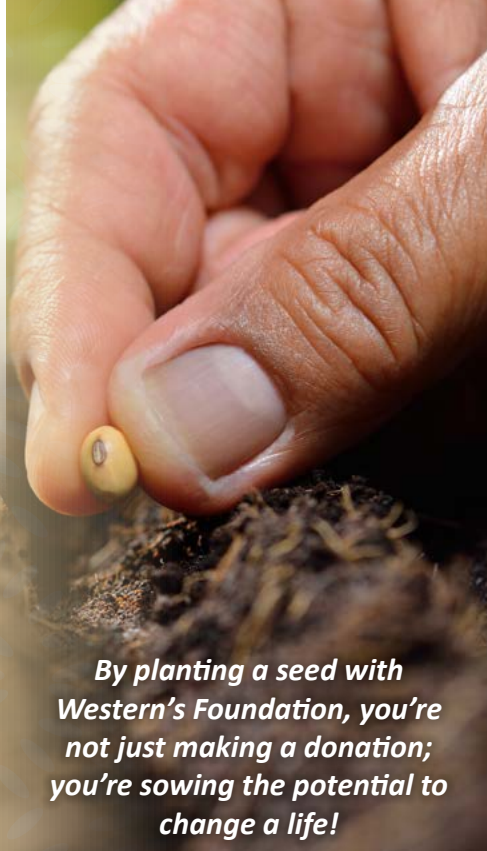




PLANT A SEED CHANGE A LIFE

How can I make a difference? Where will my contribution have the most impact? How can we build a stronger community?
These are questions many of us ponder and strive to answer.

Perhaps consider helping a student graduate from college. Contributions made to Western's Foundation not only support students in achieving their educational goals, but also profoundly transform lives and fortify our communities. Remarkably, 75% of Western's students live and work in the very communities that Western serves.



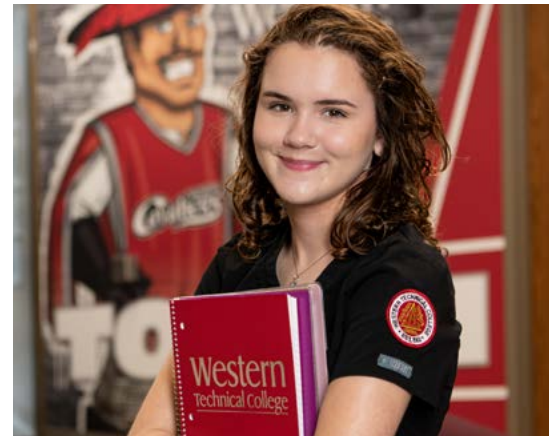
By planting a seed with Western's Foundation, you're not just making a donation; you're sowing the potential to change a life!

To learn more or donate, please visit:
westerntc.edu/seeds



Western
Technical College
FOUNDATION

Earn a degree in Tomah



Save time, and money too, by earning your degree close to home. Western offers two great programs that start and finish in Tomah: **Medical Assistant** and **Human Services Associate**. You can enter the program in either spring or fall. Turn your compassion into a career you love!

The **Medical Assistant** program prepares you for a rewarding career in the medical field. The **Human Services Associate** program nurtures your potential and harnesses your lived experiences to guide you toward a meaningful career in the field of human services!

Learn more about Tomah programs
www.westerntc.edu/tomah
or contact an admissions coach at:
admissionscoach@westerntc.edu
608-785-9200.

Refer a student to Western

Do you know someone looking to pursue an education? We'd love your help identifying the next generation of Cavaliers.



Refer a student by clicking "Request Info" at www.westerntc.edu.

Indicate you're filling out the form for someone else by checking the box at the top of the form. After submitting the form, one of our admissions coaches will reach out to the student.



Connect opt-in

In a world where costs only keep rising, we are asking our audience if you prefer an online version of the **Western Connect**, or if you would prefer receiving the printed version.

Your feedback is very important to us!
Please visit: westerntc.edu/connect to let us know your preference.

In Memoriam

David M. Bakkestuen 8/29/2023
1979 Feed, Seed & Farm Supply
1979 Farm, Business & Production Management

Sheri L. Birkeland 8/31/2023
1982 Marketing
1983 Retail Management

Michael Blokhuis 10/9/2023
1988 Police Science Technology

Christopher G. Faas 7/14/2023
2016 Welding
2015 Basic Welding

Charles J. Forer 10/31/2023
1973 Graphics - Printing & Publishing

Dennis J. Frappier 11/21/2023
1981 Mechanical Design Technology

Gene W. Gonia 9/10/2023
1982 Welding

Neil B. Horstman 10/24/2023
2005 Farm, Business & Production Management

Jeff S. Howland 7/30/2023
1976 Welding

Raymond R. Kratche 7/4/2023
1977 Welding

Debra J. Krenzke 1/8/2024
1988 Finance

Cynthia A. Manske 9/22/2023
1976 Legal Secretary

Robyn A. Marcoux 11/20/2023
1986 Clinical Lab Technician

Ruth A. McDonah 8/9/2023
1981 Personnel Technician

Patricia R. Niemeier 12/30/2023
1988 Nursing

Larry D. Norby 8/15/2023
1984 Diesel & Heavy Equipment Technician
1994 Visual Communications

Mark C. Peterson 12/6/2023
2003 Carpentry - Construction - Apprentice

Wilma L. Robertson 10/22/2023
1991 Accounting

Michael J. Schultz 10/13/2023
1976 Welding
1977 Bio-Medical Electronics

Phyllis J. Seufzer 7/28/2023
1987 Health Unit Clerk

Larry Springer 9/20/2023
1972 Auto Mechanics

Arthur Stein 10/6/2023
1983 Automotive Servicing Mechanic

Charles L. Symicek 10/18/2023
1998 Supervisory Management

Barbara A. Thiel 12/10/2023
1972 Data Processing Machine Operations

Roger Tollefson 8/2/2023
1974 Diesel & Heavy Equipment Technician

Paul A. VonWald 9/27/2023
1967 Auto Body

Lars A. Wold 8/28/2023
1999 Marketing

Western Staff

Norman E. Ellefson 12/13/2023

Donna M. Haggard 9/20/2023

Michael Szczepanski 9/17/2023

April application drive!

Gear up to make your mark during April's application drive!

With the arrival of April, and Spring just around the corner, Western is gearing up for its annual application season, and here's the exciting part— **we're waiving the \$30 application fee throughout the month!** High school juniors can get a head start by applying early for the Fall of 2025.

*Plus, here's an extra incentive:
everyone who applies during this drive
will be entered into a
\$500 drawing!*

For more info, go to: westerntc.edu/apply

**YOU
BELONG
HERE**

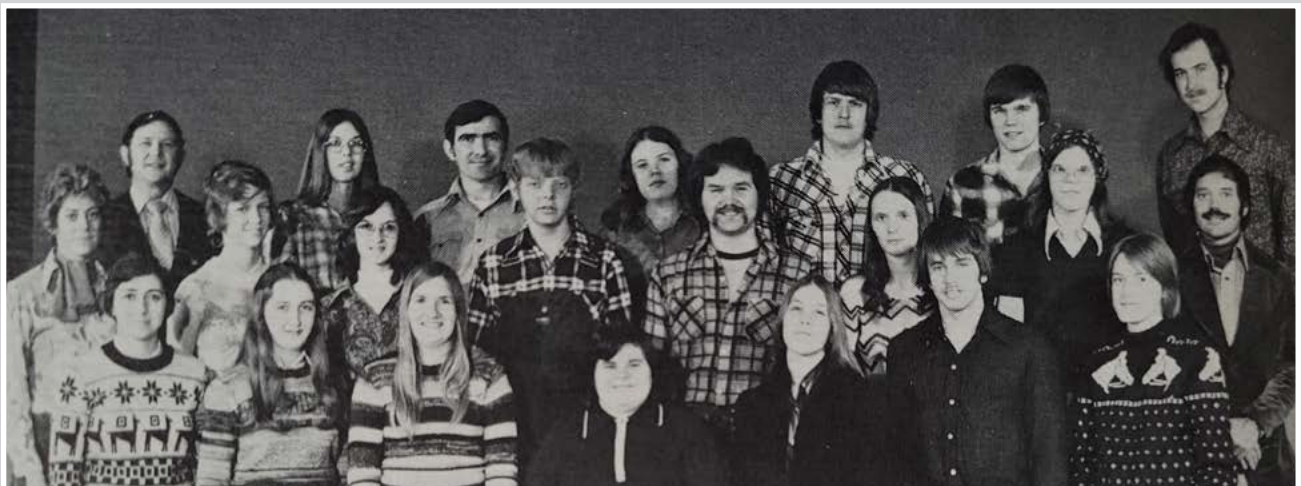
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Remember When...

Do you recognize anyone from this photo of the 1974 Cavalcade magazine team? The magazine was published monthly by Western journalism and graphics students. We would love to hear from you!



Do you have a photo to share?
Contact the Alumni Office at 608-789-6083 or alumni@westerntc.edu