



## NEWS RELEASE

For additional information, please contact David Jespersen by phone (402-471-4537) or email ([david.jespersen@nebraska.gov](mailto:david.jespersen@nebraska.gov))

JUNE 18, 2025

### 2025 Nebraska Career and Technical Education (CTE) Conference

The Nebraska Department of Education More than 500 Career and Technical Education (CTE) educators and administrators from across the state came together for the 2025 Nebraska Career Education (NCE) Conference hosted in Kearney, Nebraska June 9-11. The 51st annual conference was themed "Forward Together, Stronger Together". The speakers and sessions highlighted the theme by focusing on the future opportunities of Nebraskans through CTE.

Nebraska Commissioner of Education, Dr. Brian Maher, kicked off the conference with greetings and honored the work of CTE Educators, School Counselors and Administrators. Dr. Katie Graham, the Nebraska State Director for CTE, and Dr. Josie Shafer, Director for the University of Nebraska-Omaha's Center for Public Affairs Research, shared the impact and outcomes of Nebraska CTE as well as insights into Nebraska's economy and workforce needs. Kelly Barnes closed out the opening session by encouraging educators to be fully present, embrace the moment, and bring out the best in themselves and their students throughout the conference. The next day kicked off with an energetic message from Eddie Slowikowski, who inspired educators to recognize the profound and lasting impact they have on students' lives.

New this year was the CTE Best Practices Showcase, highlighting innovative programs and strategies from across the state all focusing on Nebraska CTE's strategic priorities. Presentations featured how districts and organizations are aligning CTE programs, implementing systemic career development and work-based learning, focusing on student achievement, providing sustained professional development, recruiting and retaining CTE educators, and expanding middle school CTE opportunities.

Over the course of the conference, participants selected from more than 150 rotational breakout sessions where they had the opportunity to collaborate, engage, learn, and reconnect with CTE colleagues to advance their CTE programs. Participants heard from local, state, and national leaders share best practices and strategies to provide all students access to high-quality CTE programs.

The Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education honored several award recipients during the conference, recognizing Excellence in Career and Technical Education. These awards celebrated outstanding Nebraska CTE programs and exemplary business partnerships. More information about each award can be found at <https://www.education.ne.gov/nce/nebraska-career-education-conference/awards/>. The Following awards were presented at this year's conference:

NCE Outstanding Business Partnership Award  
The Nebraska Manufacturing Advisory Council, (NeMAC)

NCE Distinguished Partner Award  
The Office of Public Information & Communication, Nebraska Department of Education

The Elaine Stuhr Leadership and Advocacy Award  
Dr. Cory Epler, TNTP

Outstanding CTE Administrator Award  
Justin DeWitt, Principal Cross County Public Schools

Outstanding Postsecondary CTE Administrator Award  
Dr. Leah Barrett, President of Northeast Community College

Outstanding Middle School CTE Program  
Lincoln Public Schools

Outstanding Secondary CTE Programs Award  
Kearney Public Schools

Outstanding Postsecondary CTE Programs Award  
Southeast Community College

Outstanding Rule 47 Career Academy Program Award  
Bryan Urban Agriculture College and Career Academy, Omaha Public Schools

The 2026 Nebraska Career and Technical Education Conference will take place in Kearney, Nebraska, on June 8-10, 2026.

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*David Jespersen*  
*Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Education*  
*402-471-4537*  
*david.jespersen@nebraska.gov*  
*@NDE\_News*