



Southwest Wisconsin
TECHNICAL COLLEGE

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH PROFILE

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The Opportunity

Presidential Role and Leadership Traits



Southwest Wisconsin Technical College stands at a defining moment shaped by both tradition and triumph. Fresh from earning the nation's highest honor for community colleges—the 2025 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence—our college is ready to welcome a president who leads with heart, vision, and purpose.

We are a rural college with a powerful reach, where students come from different backgrounds, experiences, and goals but share one important thing in common: a desire to improve their lives through education. Some are exploring college for the first time, others are returning to sharpen their skills or change careers. Many balance classes with full-time jobs or families, and all bring a deep commitment to their futures. Together, they form a learning community defined by perseverance, care, and hope.

The leader we seek will not simply direct operations from an office—they will walk our halls, share conversations in our labs and classrooms, and listen to the voices of students who are building better lives for themselves and their families. They will shake hands with the manufacturers, healthcare professionals, small business owners, and farmers who rely on Southwest Tech to educate the workforce that keeps our region strong. They will honor the wisdom of experienced faculty and staff while inspiring bold ideas and new approaches.

Most of all, our next president will believe, as we do, that opportunity is the greatest force for change—and that when one of our students succeeds, an entire region moves forward.

College History & Legacy

Brief Institutional History, Aspen Recognition, and Legacy of Outgoing Leadership

Southwest Wisconsin Technical College began in 1967, inspired by the hopes of rural families who believed opportunity should not depend on geography. In a corner of Wisconsin defined by rolling hills and hardworking towns, a vision took shape: a college where education would be close to home, practical, and transformative.

Over the decades, Southwest Tech has become much more than a training ground. It is where students discover their capacity to lead industries, support their families, and strengthen their communities. Our campus in Fennimore has grown alongside the dreams of our neighbors—from a small technical institute to a nationally celebrated college serving thousands across five counties and thirty school districts.

The Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, awarded to us in 2025, affirmed what our region has always known—Southwest Tech is a place where students do more than earn credits. They gain confidence, skills, and a sense of belonging that lasts long after graduation.

Outgoing leadership leaves a legacy of innovation, fiscal strength, and deep commitment to students. The next president will inherit a community eager to write the next chapter together.



SWTC is the first Wisconsin institution to earn the Aspen Prize!

Strategic Directions Overview

Access 1.0, Completion 2.0, Post-College Success 3.0 with Measurable Goals

Southwest Tech's future is guided by three clear commitments: Access, Completion, and Post-College Success. These are not just words—they are promises to the students and communities we serve.

Access means every person in our district should know that we see their potential. Whether they are high school students exploring dual credit courses, adults considering a career change, or English language learners building new skills, we meet them where they are. Each program student develops a personalized Student Success Plan—a living document that maps career goals, academic pathways, financial strategies, and the supports needed to thrive.

Completion recognizes that dreams must reach the finish line. We set ambitious goals for on-time graduation because we know completing a credential changes everything: earning power rises, doors open, and confidence soars. Faculty embed work-based learning experiences into every program, ensuring graduates leave with real-world skills and strong employer connections.



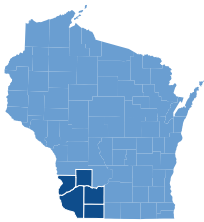
Before he even received his high school diploma, Jaxon Christianson earned a college credential through Southwest Tech's Building Trades - Carpentry program. A Dodgeville School District student, Jaxon completed 28 college credits while in high school through the Start College Now dual credit program—most at no cost to his family—and is now launching his career in the skilled trades. His story reflects the power of early college access to change lives and build futures.

Post-College Success reminds us our responsibility doesn't end at graduation. We measure impact not just in diplomas, but in the wages graduates earn and the lives they improve. New programs in IT-Software Development, Automation Systems Technology, and Radiologic Technology respond to regional workforce demand and offer high-wage opportunities. Participation in Aspen's Unlocking Opportunities Cohort demonstrates our commitment to building lasting economic mobility.

Together, these directions form more than a plan—they form a vision for the future. They invite a president who will celebrate our strengths, confront our challenges, and guide Southwest Tech into an even brighter tomorrow.

Demographics & Enrollment

Current Headcount, Credit Hours, Dual Enrollment Growth, Special Populations, Pell Completion, Graduate Wages



Southwest Wisconsin Technical College serves more than 7,000 students each year, representing learners from five counties and thirty school districts. Our students reflect the heart of rural Wisconsin—people from different backgrounds, experiences, and goals—united by a shared purpose: to improve their lives through education and meaningful work.

About 41.7% of program enrollees are identified by the Wisconsin Technical College System as belonging to a special population group, including Pell Grant recipients (31.6%), students of color (10.6%), students with disabilities (4.4%), veterans (2.3%), and dislocated workers (0.1%). These learners bring a wide range of lived experiences to the classroom, and our support structures are designed to meet each student where they are.

Enrollment remains strongest in programs leading directly to in-demand careers in healthcare, manufacturing, business, and transportation, with nursing, welding, criminal justice, and agribusiness among our top-enrolled programs. Investments in automation and cybersecurity reflect employer demand and the evolving nature of work.

High school students across the district earned more than 9,200 college credits in 2024, representing a 49% increase since 2019–20. Nearly three-quarters of 2024 graduates completed college credits before earning their diplomas—early successes that demonstrate our region's belief in access and affordability.

While our district remains largely rural, we continue to see growth among Hispanic students, both on campus and online, reflecting regional demographic shifts and our ongoing commitment to inclusion and opportunity.

Culture of Care

Values, Charger Respect Pledge, Inclusivity Examples, Continuous Improvement

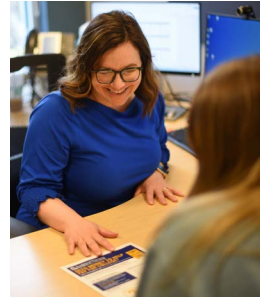
At Southwest Tech, caring is not just a value—it is the ground we walk on every day. We believe education transforms lives, and to do that, we must create spaces where students are seen, supported, and empowered.

Eight years ago, our college faced an accreditation warning: we were not doing enough to demonstrate student learning. Rather than let that moment define us, we turned toward it with determination. Our community—faculty, students, and staff—came together to revamp assessment practices, strengthen oversight, and ensure every program delivered on its promise.

This work transformed how we measure and support learning. Course outcomes are assessed regularly, feedback loops are open, and when gaps are found, faculty collaborate to close them. This “radical accountability” ensures no student is left behind.

We also hold our own work to the standard of dignity. When data showed that some programs led to low-wage jobs, we made difficult decisions to retire or redesign them. We introduced training aligned with employer needs and increased wages in on-campus roles and our child care center to model equity.

Students bring more than academic goals—they bring lives filled with determination, responsibility, and hope. We meet them as partners in learning, working side by side to remove barriers, build confidence, and turn goals into outcomes. Our supports are practical—emergency grants, food assistance, childcare, mental health services, and financial coaching—but our purpose runs deeper. We share their goals as our own, walking with them through challenges and celebrating each milestone along the way. At Southwest Tech, success is never one-sided; it’s a partnership built on trust, care, and the belief that together, we can change lives.



Sara Bahl, Program Advisor, is dedicated to supporting students every step of the way—working one-on-one to create a personalized plan that guides them from their very first day of college all the way to graduation.

Faculty & Staff

Composition, Professional Development, Shared Governance Participation

The heartbeat of Southwest Tech is its people—those who teach, those who support, and those who lead with quiet dedication or bold innovation. Faculty and staff are deeply committed to student success, not only as learners but as people whose growth will ripple through families and communities.



Animal Science Instructor Ryan Weigel actively participates in several agriculture-related organizations beyond the classroom. This hands-on involvement allows him to bring current, real-world insights into a comprehensive learning experience for his students.

Many faculty bring years of real-world experience into the classroom. Skilled tradespeople, healthcare professionals, IT experts, and business leaders share both the theory and practice of their fields, making learning relevant and hands-on.

Professional growth is continuous. Faculty and staff engage in development, peer learning, and collaboration, always refining instruction to ensure excellence.

Our governance model is collaborative and transparent. The Executive Team provides direction, while the Student Success Council drives strategies to expand access and the Academic Council leads efforts to improve completion and post-college success. Together, these councils ensure leadership includes every voice that shapes a student's journey—from instructors to advisors to community partners.

Faculty and staff embody the college's values daily—through mentorship, community service, and innovation. In moments of success, laughter fills the labs and hallways. At Southwest Tech, people don't just work here—they believe in this place, its mission, and its people.

Academic Innovation

Program Additions, (IT-Software Developer, Automation, Radiology Tech, AI Data Analytics), Transfer Pathways, Teaching Excellence

Innovation at Southwest Tech is more than a goal—it's a commitment woven into how we teach, design programs, and respond to our region's needs. When technology changes or industries evolve, we adapt quickly and purposefully.

Our academic master plan reflects this agility. Programs that no longer led to strong outcomes were retired. In their place, we launched IT-Software Development, Automation Systems Technology, and advanced healthcare programs such as Radiologic Technology and Sonography/Respiratory Therapy—built in partnership with local employers and informed by faculty expertise.

Faculty design labs that mirror professional environments, from construction students building campus housing to agronomy students piloting drones in precision agriculture. Welding students train on industry-grade equipment through employer partnerships that keep instruction current and relevant.



Southwest Tech agronomy students, Maggie Horsfall and Connor Raisbeck, participate in work-based learning through an eight-week pesticide applicator course and hands-on drone instruction led by Precision Agronomy Instructor Andrew Dal Santo. These experiences are part of the college's efforts to integrate precision agriculture skills into the curriculum and help students prepare for in-demand careers in the field.

Innovation extends to transfer pathways and flexibility. Articulation agreements with universities ensure graduates can transfer seamlessly with junior standing. Working adults benefit from evening, hybrid, and online options that make education possible alongside careers and families.

At Southwest Tech, innovation is measured not by the number of programs launched, but by outcomes—graduates earning strong wages, employers finding talent, and communities gaining leaders. Change for us is never about novelty; it's about creating futures worthy of our students' trust.

Community Profile

Fennimore and District Highlights, Regional Economy, Cultural Amenities

Southwest Wisconsin's Driftless Region is a place of quiet beauty and deep roots. Spanning Grant, Iowa, Lafayette, Crawford, and Richland counties, the area covers more than 3,800 square miles of rolling hills, winding rivers, and fertile valleys untouched by glaciers. The landscape defines daily life here—offering trout streams, hiking and biking trails, and scenic bluffs that draw residents outdoors in every season.

At the heart of the district is Fennimore, a welcoming town known for small-town warmth, community pride, and entrepreneurial spirit. Fennimore offers affordable housing, strong K–12 schools, and a family-centered lifestyle, all within easy reach of Dubuque, Iowa (35 miles) and Madison, Wisconsin (80 miles). Residents enjoy the balance of peaceful rural living with access to the cultural and economic opportunities of nearby cities.

The district's 125,675 residents reflect the character of rural Wisconsin—hard work, self-reliance, and community pride. The economy is anchored by advanced manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, business, and agriculture, supported by small and family-owned enterprises. Employers value loyalty, craftsmanship, and skill—qualities deeply embedded in the region's people.

Life here moves at an intentional pace. Weekends bring local festivals, high school competitions, and volunteer gatherings that unite families and neighbors. It's a place where people still wave on country roads and lend a hand when help is needed.

The beauty of the Driftless landscape and the strength of its people make southwest Wisconsin an exceptional place to live and work. It is a community grounded in connection—to place, to purpose, and to one another—offering a way of life that is both simple and deeply fulfilling.

For the next president, this region offers more than a place to lead—it offers a place to belong. Surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a community that values education, hard work, and service, southwest Wisconsin provides the ideal setting for a leader who wants to make a lasting difference while enjoying an extraordinary quality of life. became a national leader—and inspire students, donors, and partners to dream even bigger. This is a moment for courageous leadership, deep listening, and visionary action. The future of our students, our workforce, and our communities depends on it.



Each fall, students in the Electrical Power Distribution program assist the Richland Center Rotary Club with setting up the community's holiday light display—a tradition that reflects Southwest Tech's commitment to community service and teaches students the value of volunteerism and connection to the communities they will one day serve.

Leadership Attributes, Skills and Experiences



“As the K–12 representative on the SWTC Board of Directors, it’s incredibly rewarding to see the strong partnerships between our schools and the college supporting student career exploration. SWTC continues to lead the region in aligning programs with the needs of Southwest Wisconsin’s workforce. The growth in dual enrollment and graduates reflects our shared commitment to student success in college and career.”

*– Jill Wonderling,
District Administrator,
Fennimore Community
Schools; SWTC Board
Member*

The next President of Southwest Tech will be a visionary, transparent, collaborative leader who reports directly to the Southwest Tech Board of Trustees. The President will be student-centered; committed to the college’s mission; and have a deep understanding of a rural demographic and community needs. The next President will honor the successes of Southwest Tech while embracing future opportunities to advance student success and meet educational and training needs of the communities it serves.

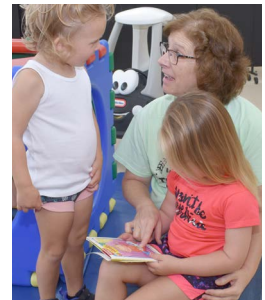
The ideal candidates will demonstrate a proven record of successful leadership in higher education. Candidates should hold a master’s degree from an accredited institution with a minimum of seven (7) years of senior-level administrative experience in higher education, or a terminal degree from an accredited institution with at least five (5) years of comparable leadership experience.

Community college or technical college experience is preferred; and teaching or student services experience at the postsecondary level is preferred.

Additional leadership attributes, skills, and experiences include:

- Understanding and navigating the changing landscape of higher education, particularly in community and technical colleges in the State of Wisconsin.
- Demonstrated experience in leading innovation and program development to meet the current and emerging educational needs of diverse populations within a rural community.
- Proven skill in strategic planning and the capacity to create strong collaborations and shared goal setting across all organizational units and with key external partners in the community.
- Track record of increasing enrollment, student retention and success, and college completion while maintaining academic excellence.
- Demonstrated experience in financial planning and stewardship; the ability to lead effective solutions that optimize resource allocations, foster financial transparency, and advance long-term fiscal stability, and sustainability of an institution.
- Proven record of successful and collegial working relationships with a Board of Trustees or a similar governing body.
- Deep knowledge and experience in developing productive working relationships with faculty and staff to support collaborative decision-making and effective communication across the college.

- Exceptional skill in building strong teams to achieve institutional success and in holding individuals accountable for their respective areas.
- High emotional intelligence and compassion for colleagues to support the institution's organizational health and development, collaboration and positive engagement among colleagues, and the resolution of conflicts and issues.
- Collaborative, inspirational leadership style, demonstrated through the ability to be visible, and actively engage with all stakeholders to build trust and create a stronger sense of community.
- Effective and clear oral and written communication skills, including the ability to listen to different groups and communicate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and the ability to make well-informed decisions with the support of quantitative and qualitative data.
- Capacity to support, develop, and recognize faculty and staff to enhance individual growth potential and a positive work environment.
- Evidence of a commitment to an inclusive learning environment to support the educational success of a diverse student population.
- Demonstrated experience in advocacy for an educational institution to elevate a given institution's presence and garner resource support from elected officials, government entities, and the community at large.
- Track record of working with Foundations and developing relationships with donors to advance major gifts and fundraising.
- Exceptional skill in building successful partnerships with community organizations, other educational institutions, and business and industry to create sustainable support for diverse student populations, workforce development program offerings, and the overall college mission.
- A working knowledge of technology and infrastructure to support academic, student learning, and administrative functions sufficiently.
- Professional and personal integrity and ethical conduct.



Paula Timmerman, Lab Assistant in Child Care Services, embodies Southwest Tech's values through kindness, honesty, and professionalism. Her quiet leadership and compassion inspire growth in everyone she teaches.

The Leadership Agenda

- **The Aspen Prize** – The Aspen Prize presents Southwest Tech and the new president with an extraordinary opportunity to build on national recognition. This honor shines a light on the college’s excellence and provides a platform to further share our story of innovation, care, and results. The next president will partner with the District Board of Directors, faculty, staff, students, and the community to amplify the impact of this achievement—connecting the meaning of the Aspen Prize to our continued commitment to student success and regional vitality.
- **Academic Quality** – Southwest Tech’s strength is grounded in academic excellence and student learning outcomes—key factors that led to the Aspen Prize. The next president will champion teaching and learning innovation, celebrating the work of faculty who prepare students to transfer, earn family-sustaining wages, and lead in their fields.
- **Enrollment**
 - **Enrollment and Opportunity** – Southwest Tech serves a vibrant and diverse region that is continually evolving. The next president will guide creative strategies to grow enrollment among traditional, dual credit, adult, and underrepresented students by expanding program options, enhancing partnerships, and strengthening outreach. As our communities change, Southwest Tech will continue to meet learners where they are—ensuring that every student can see a pathway to success.
 - **Student Success and Completion** – The college’s graduation rate is nearly twenty percentage points above the national average—a testament to the strength of our faculty, staff, and support systems. The next president will build on this success by further embedding the Student Success Plan across all programs and services, ensuring that every student has the tools and encouragement needed to complete their journey and thrive after graduation.
- **Governmental and Policy Engagement** – The higher education environment is evolving rapidly. The next president will represent Southwest Tech’s interests with policymakers and system leaders, ensuring that rural voices and technical education remain central to state and national conversations. Proactive engagement will position the college as a trusted partner and advocate for students, employers, and communities.
- **A New Chapter of Inspiration** – Across higher education, leaders are being called to reimagine what is possible. At Southwest Tech, this is a moment to inspire confidence, renew energy, and celebrate purpose. The next president will lead a caring and committed team that is ready to move boldly toward the future together.



Hired before graduating from the Welding program, Haley Shanks joined Astec in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, where they design, engineer, and manufacture equipment and components for the road-building and infrastructure industry.

- **Strategic Planning** – Southwest Tech is executing a three-year set of aggressive and aspirational goals that require focused alignment and clear accountability. The next president will sustain campus-wide momentum by reinforcing shared targets, establishing a disciplined operating cadence (with transparent metrics, dashboards, and regular progress reviews), and engaging employees, students, and partners in an inclusive planning rhythm that keeps everyone moving in the same direction.
- **Fundraising and Philanthropy** – The Southwest Tech Foundation is poised for significant growth, with an ambitious plan to double support for students and programs by 2029–30. The new president will play a key role in cultivating relationships and inspiring investment in scholarships, innovation, and facilities that enhance learning and community impact.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration** – Southwest Tech’s partnerships with employers, K–12 school districts, universities, and community organizations are central to its success. The next president will strengthen these relationships and expand collaboration to meet emerging workforce needs, promote lifelong learning, and drive regional prosperity.
- **Shared Governance** –The next president will build upon existing collaborative structures and explore opportunities to further formalize shared governance—ensuring that decision-making is transparent, inclusive, and grounded in the college’s values of accountability and continuous improvement.
- **Authentic Communication and Culture** – Communication built on transparency, empathy, and mutual respect defines Southwest Tech’s culture. The next president will model authentic communication and reinforce the strong sense of community that distinguishes the college. Here, relationships matter—students, faculty, and staff know and care for one another. That spirit will remain the heart of our college as we write the next chapter together.



Southwest Tech celebrates business and individual donors each year, recognizing their commitment to education and providing opportunities to connect with the scholarship recipients whose futures they help shape.

Nominations and Applications

Submission Details and Confidentiality Statement

The Southwest Tech Presidential Search Committee invites nominations and applications from individuals who are inspired by the opportunity to lead a vibrant institution with a proud record of achievement and an exciting future ahead. The Search Committee will begin reviewing applications immediately.

To ensure full consideration, applications must be received by **December 12, 2025**. Application materials should be submitted through the Southwest Tech Presidential Search Portal and must include the following:

- A letter of interest addressing the strategic objectives and qualifications identified in the profile;
- A curriculum vitae; and
- The contact information for five professional references, including email address, phone number, and relationship to the candidate. No references will be contacted without prior explicit approval.



The Southwest Tech College Presidential Search Portal can also be accessed directly at: [Southwest Tech Presidential Search Portal](#)

The Southwest Wisconsin Technical College Presidential Search is being assisted by AGB Search. Nominations and confidential inquiries should be sent to SouthwestTechPres@agbsearch.com or one of the AGB Search consultants listed below.

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Southwest Tech does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Officer has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies. Call 800-362-3322, Ext. 2315 (TDD: 608-822-2072) or write Southwest Tech, 1800 Bronson Blvd., Fennimore, WI 53809.



College Mission

Southwest Wisconsin Technical College provides education and training opportunities responsive to students, employers, and communities.

College Vision

Southwest Wisconsin Technical College will be a preferred provider of education, source of talent, and place of employment in the region. We at the College change lives by providing opportunities for success.