



FOUNDATION AND ALUMNI 2024-25 ANNUAL REPORT



Western Nebraska
Community College



DEAR WNCC SUPPORTERS,

It is my honor to serve as Chair of the WNCC Foundation Board and to share in the celebration of a year filled with purpose, progress, and impact.

As you read through this annual report, I hope you see what I see—an inspiring mosaic of dreams realized, and futures shaped through education. Behind every scholarship awarded, every endowed fund, and every

memorial gift is a donor who chose to make a difference. This year alone, 388 scholarships totaling over \$326,000 were awarded to 296 students—each one carrying a story of hope and gratitude.

We’ve seen the incredible ripple effects of donor support. Whether through new Aviation Maintenance scholarships, heartfelt memorials, or general funds that meet urgent needs, your contributions are creating lasting legacies. As a board, we are continually inspired by

the stories of alumni who have gone on to become educators, leaders, and change makers across the region.

The Foundation’s mission is clear: to inspire investment in student success. Thanks to your generosity, that mission is alive in every classroom, every campus, and every community we serve.

On behalf of the entire Foundation Board, thank you for your trust, your partnership, and your belief in the students of Western Nebraska Community College. The impact we make together is not just seen today—it will be felt for generations.

With gratitude,

Judy Chaloupka
WNCC Foundation Board of Directors



DEAR FRIENDS,

As we close the 2024-2025 academic year, I want to express my sincere gratitude for your continued support of Western Nebraska Community College. Your generosity, commitment, and belief in the transformative power of education are evident in every success story highlighted in this year’s annual report.

This year, we saw remarkable achievements across our campuses. Our Adult Education

program was recognized as the top-performing program in Nebraska—a direct reflection of the dedication of our instructors and the determination of our students. We continue to exceed performance goals, and we’ve seen a 33% increase in the number of GED graduates enrolling at WNCC.

Stories like that of Tosha Schmunk, who began her journey in our Adult Education program and was accepted into our Practical Nursing program, represent the spirit of resilience and opportunity that defines WNCC. These milestones are made possible by a community that believes in the power of second chances and new beginnings.

From Aviation Maintenance to Education, our programs are equipping students with the skills they need to succeed and thrive. Thanks to our industry partnerships and a robust network of alumni, WNCC continues to prepare the workforce that will shape the future of our region.

Thank you for being an essential part of this mission. I look forward to continuing our work together to serve students, strengthen communities, and build a brighter future for the Panhandle.

Warmly,

Greg Dart
President, Western Nebraska Community College



In 2024-25,
1,599 gifts totaling
\$1,171,296

were given to the WNCC Foundation via grants, sponsorships, endowments, scholarships, one-time gifts, and unrestricted gifts. These gifts increase access to education, create opportunities for students, and positively impact the communities we serve.

\$78,672

record amount raised by the Monument Marathon, the WNCC Foundation's major annual fundraiser

\$10,000

matching gifts to double the impact

\$27,142.50

employee giving

\$15,260

performing arts sponsorships

\$58,018

athletic sponsorships and booster club support

\$254,508

recipient specified scholarships

\$26,661

gift-in-kind donations

\$65,300

program-specific grant support



wncc.edu/homecoming



"THANKS TO THE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM, I HAVE FOUND NOT ONLY AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEARNING, BUT DIGNITY, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND A PATHWAY TO A FUTURE I NEVER BELIEVED I COULD HAVE."

Deanna Ledbetter, Current GED Student

EMPOWERING SUCCESS: WNCC ADULT EDUCATION IMPACTING PANHANDLE COMMUNITIES

Rachel Gasseling, Adult Education Director

The WNCC Adult Education program is dedicated to serving Panhandle communities by helping individuals earn their GED, take English as Second Language (ESL) courses, and reach college readiness standards. The team consists of four administrative members and 10 instructors, with classrooms in Sidney, Alliance, Chadron, Kimball, and three locations in Scottsbluff.

During the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years, WNCC was proud to be recognized as the top-performing Adult Education program in Nebraska, surpassing both federally negotiated and state-required performance rates.

The current Post-Test rate stands at 78.7%, exceeding the state-required rate of 70.2%. Similarly, the Measurable Skill Gain is at 64%, surpassing the federally negotiated rate of 46.3% and the state goal of 57%.



The team served 120 students, with 20 GED graduates in the 2024-25 academic year. The Adult Education staff have been actively assisting students in achieving their goals and preparing for their next steps. There has been a 33% increase in the matriculation rate from the GED program to WNCC. Students are able to speak with Admissions representatives to discuss various opportunities at WNCC, including degrees, trade certificates, and more. Additionally, students who attend WNCC receive scholarships based on their GED scores, alleviating some of the financial barriers to college attendance.

These achievements are a testament to the hard work of the administrative team and the instructors. The program is committed to helping students reach their goals while meeting performance requirements. Beyond these major highlights, daily achievements in the classrooms include students overcoming test anxiety, mastering challenging subjects, seeking help, forming friendships, and working diligently to achieve their aspirations. These daily successes are just as significant as the major milestones, reflecting the positive changes witnessed every day in Adult Education.



ADULT EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT: TOSHA SCHMUNK

Tosha Schmunk has been accepted into the WNCC Practical Nursing Program for the 2025-26 academic year. Her educational journey began with earning her GED through the WNCC Adult Education Program and completing her nursing prerequisites at the Sidney Campus. "It is never too late to get your GED," Tosha said. "WNCC is a great college to work with, they help you complete your goals. Staff and the instructors really care about your end goals." Tosha is a two-time recipient of the Abe and Letha Dick Retired Teacher Endowed Scholarship, which has provided over \$18,500 to post-GED students at WNCC since 2008.

**AVIATION MAINTENANCE SCHOLARSHIPS
CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WNCC STUDENTS**

In 2021, the **Aviation Maintenance Memorial Scholarship** was established with a lead gift from Duncan Aviation. Dozens of individuals contributed to this scholarship, so that it could be endowed for the benefit of WNCC Aviation Maintenance students. After a period of growth, the scholarship will be awarded to the first recipients in the fall of 2025.

The **Jane and Chet Fliesbach Scholarship** was established by Gail Fliesbach in memory of her parents. Jane and Chet graduated from Scottsbluff High School, and both went on to become World War II aviators. Jane was a civilian pilot with the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), and Chet joined the Navy and flew missions off aircraft carriers. Established in 2015, this endowed scholarship gives multiple \$1,000 scholarships each year to Aviation Maintenance students at the WNCC Sidney Campus.

The **Duncan Aviation Scholarship**, established by the Duncan Family Trust awards a \$2,500 scholarship to a second semester freshman each year. The recipient receives \$500 for the spring semester and \$1,000 for each semester of their sophomore year. The awardee is also invited to spend a half day touring and job shadowing at the Duncan Aviation headquarters in Lincoln, NE.

Nebraska Aviation Council Scholarship sponsors one or more scholarships annually to a Nebraska High School graduate attending the WNCC Aviation Maintenance program. Awards vary in amount up to \$2,500.

Students can apply for these and other WNCC Foundation scholarships by completing the general scholarship application at go.wncc.edu/scholarships

**A SOARING FUTURE: WNCC’S
AVIATION MAINTENANCE
PROGRAM**

Jennifer Reisig, WNCC Foundation Executive Director

At the Western Nebraska Community College Sidney Campus, the Aviation Maintenance program continues to soar—thanks in large part to the support of our generous donors and dedicated alumni.

With long-standing approval from the Federal Aviation Administration, this hands-on program has a proud history of preparing students for successful careers in aviation. From airframe systems to aircraft powerplants, students graduate ready to meet the growing demand for aviation maintenance technicians across Nebraska and beyond.

One of the program’s inspiring alumni is Owen Grimm, Class of 1989. Raised in Ravenna, Nebraska, Owen originally visited campus to explore the automotive program. But when he spotted a Cessna 150 parked between buildings and learned about the Aviation Maintenance program, his path changed forever. “That’s when I knew what I wanted to do,” he recalls.

While the housing —fondly referred to as “the barracks”—left something to be desired, Owen’s time at Western Nebraska Technical College (now WNCC) was filled with opportunity. He joined the Flying Club, served as its president, and even participated in intramural sports. After graduation, Owen launched a 35-year career in aviation, working for charter operators, managing maintenance shops, along with managing the O’Neill Airport, and spending almost a decade at Duncan Aviation. Since 2010, he has worked for the Federal Aviation Administration, first as an Aviation Safety Inspector and now as FAASTeam Program Manager, where he provides safety information and promotes aviation safety to pilots and mechanics through seminars, airshows, state fly-ins, pilot safety meetings, and small aviation maintenance shops across Nebraska.



Owen also gives back to the WNCC community, speaking to current students and serving on the Nebraska Aviation Council and the Nebraska Aviation Hall of Fame Board. He even helped nominate his former instructor, Jim Joyce, to the Hall of Fame in 2017. “You’ll never be bored in this career,” Owen says. “I learn something new every day.”

Owen’s journey is a testament to the program’s lasting impact. “There is no reason if you come to WNCC, with everything they have to offer in the Aviation Maintenance program, that you will not be a success in your career,” he said.

Thank you for investing in the future of our students and the strength of our community. To learn more, support the program, or explore enrollment, visit go.wncc.edu/aviation.

**“DONOR SUPPORT HELPS ME ACHIEVE MY DREAM OF
WORKING IN AVIATION, FINISHING MY PILOT TRAINING,
AND EVENTUALLY OWNING MY OWN MAINTENANCE SHOP!”**

Nathaniel Hulsey, Jane & Chet Fliesbach Scholarship Recipient



I am currently a stay-at-home mom of two and a full-time student. This scholarship means so much to me and my family. I can't wait to shape the future as an educator.

Caprice Garcia
Elementary Education
Scottsbluff, NE



I never expected to be starting over and returning to school at this stage in my life, especially after overcoming stage 4 cancer. Your generous support will help make it possible & for that I am truly grateful.

Jennifer Kinsey
Surgical Technology
Scottsbluff, NE

Scholarships allow me to focus on my studies and pursue an internship with a local power provider, furthering my growth. I am committed to making the most of the generous investment.

Ayden Branson
Powerline
Chadron, NE



As a mom, wife, and student, this scholarship helps to create a successful environment and ensure I am a prepared student. I hope one day I can pay forward all the financial help I have received and see other students thrive.

Mary Forrester
Nursing
Alliance, NE



You have no idea how much it means to me to receive scholarships, as my goal is to graduate without having financial burden on my parents.

Kye Crites
Aviation Maintenance
Cozad, NE

DONOR FUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS

Information based on the 2024-25 academic year.



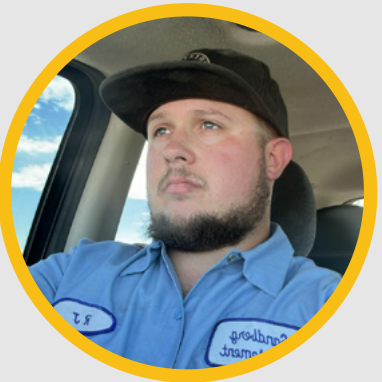
Scholarships help tremendously with my ongoing studies! I chose this program to make my dream a reality, and I am so grateful that I finally get to pursue it.

Yosdi Villela
Pre-Radiologic Technology
Brighton, CO



WNCC was an easy choice for me because I have family that went to this college and absolutely loved it! Thank you for giving me the opportunity to better my life and qualify for higher paying jobs.

Robert Miller
Diesel Technology
Morrill, NE



HONORING LEGACIES, EMPOWERING FUTURES

Every memorial donation tells a story—of love, remembrance, and hope. These heartfelt gifts honor those we’ve lost and open doors for students striving to build brighter futures. Whether funding scholarships, emergency assistance, or essential resources, memorial contributions create lasting legacies that uplift our students and strengthen our community. Here are a few examples of how memorials are impacting WNCC students.

CYNDI NEUWIRTH MEMORIAL

Cyndi and her husband Jim were long-time supporters of WNCC athletics and host parents for dozens of WNCC athletes. Cyndi was active in many Panhandle non-profit organizations and served on the WNCC Foundation Board from 2017 until her passing in 2020. Cyndi’s memorial purchased equipment for WNCC women’s volleyball and softball teams and a new clock for the scoreboard in Cougar Palace.

JOANNE ROBERTS, MD MEMORIAL

“It is amazing to me that while I was only in Scottsbluff for two years, those were the most profound two years – both at the college and living in the community.” As Joanne (John) Roberts neared the end of her life, she wanted to leave a legacy through this unrestricted endowment in thanks for her time spent at Nebraska Western College (now WNCC) for giving her the confidence that led her from healthcare journalism to medical school and eventually a 25-year career as a chief medical officer.

JEFF PIPPITT MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Jeff retired in 2009 after directing the WNCC Cosmetology program on the Sidney Campus for 30 years. His scholarship helps WNCC Basic Nursing Assistant (BNA) students earn their training to become compassionate care givers in many healthcare settings. At the end of his life, Jeff benefited from the care of BNAs, many of whom had received their training at WNCC.

LEE DICK MEMORIAL

Lee was a cherished educator in Scotts Bluff County and a dedicated tutor in the WNCC Math Lab. Over his 43-year career, he served students and families as a math teacher, coach, and activities director. His passion for teaching and unwavering commitment to prioritizing students’ best interests were evident throughout his career. This memorial helps purchase graphing calculators for the WNCC Math Lab.

KENT HARVEY MEMORIAL

Kent began his 38-year teaching career at the Nebraska Western College building at 20th Street and 4th Avenue in Scottsbluff. He experienced many changes during his tenure including a move in 1969 to the new (and current) location and a name change in 1988 to Western Nebraska Community College. Kent had a passion for helping all students succeed. His memorial continues that legacy by supporting students through the General Scholarship Fund.

DAVID FITZGIBBON MEMORIAL

David began his photography and journalism career as editor-in-chief of the school newspapers at both Scottsbluff High School and Western Nebraska Community College (Class of 1985). David’s talent for telling stories in video took him to Lincoln where he first worked in TV news then built a 25-year career at the University of Nebraska’s Communication Department. David’s memorial at WNCC helps students through the Greatest Need Fund, which assists with urgent need and faculty & staff grants.

KIM MARCY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Kim grew up in Omaha but easily transitioned to country life after marrying her husband, Tom. Together they raised cattle and two boys. Kim’s love for rural Nebraska and serving others led her to become involved in many boards, included the Western Area Community College Board of Governors at WNCC. This endowment will award one scholarship each year to students residing from Valentine, Nebraska, to Eastern Wyoming and Northeastern Colorado.

IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, MEMORIAL DONATIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN IN TRIBUTE TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:

To support named scholarships or endowments:

Beth Chain
Byrle R. & Helen L. Hopkins
Cara Perkins
Doneta Paz
Dr. Gerhard T. Schmunk
Gregory Crowe
H. Kaywood Johnson
Imogene Roberts
Jeff Pippitt
Jerimiah Marchington
Jim Parker
Joanne Roberts, MD
Kenneth “Lee” Maiwald
Kim Marcy
Marsha Faye Schmall
Melaney Thomas
Melvin E. Kella
Michael F. Ferguson
Norma McClure
Norman Ott
Robert M. Vooge
Robert Poppen
Robyn Leigh Holyoke
Russell & Edythe Lovell
SPC James R. Wolf
Sue Ellen Kandel
Thomas Cooper
Tyler John Holyoke
Udell Hughes

To support the Greatest Need Fund:

David Fitzgibbon
George Crews
Jim Bornschlegl
Larry Yarnall
Loren D. Studt
Loretta Uhrich
Lorna Anderson
Mary Alice Packard
Sheila Stumph
Susie Haberman
Tim Tanis

To support the General Scholarship Fund:

Barbara Croft
Don Smith
Donna Block
Elizabeth Kay Almond Cook
Gerald Bacon
J. Carr Trumbull
Jason Haslow
Judy Schnell
Judy Smith
Kent Harvey
Laura Asslein
Loren Bell
M. Jane Hunter
Nancy Berry
Phyllis Aspinall
Richard Woodard
Ruthanne Hooper
Wes Channell

To support a WNCC Program:

Bob Stephenson
Cyndi Neuwirth
Gary Narjes
Jim Joyce
Jo Anne Brennan
John Rein
Lee Dick
Loretta Uhrich
Lorna Anderson
Lyle D. Larson
Peter Culhane
Sydney Ann Brester

For more information about memorials, donor recognition, and ways to honor a loved one, visit wnccfoundation.org



FROM CRAWFORD TO CRETE: DR. ROGER HUGHES' JOURNEY FROM ATHLETE TO UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Alena Haun, Foundation Development Director

Dr. Roger Hughes, the 13th President of Doane University in Crete, Nebraska, has roots deeply embedded in Crawford, Nebraska, where work ethic was paramount. Raised in a nurturing environment, his parents owned an auto parts store, and his grandfather managed a cattle ranch. When offered a basketball scholarship to Nebraska Western College, now Western

Nebraska Community College, Roger's choice to stay close to home was an easy one. He played for the Cougars during the 1978-79 season.

Roger's year at NWC was a pivotal time for personal growth. He recalls working hard and having a lot of fun, and he remains in touch with friends from that period. Being part of the basketball team broadened his horizons, exposing him to the vast world beyond Western Nebraska. The experience of playing and traveling with teammates from diverse backgrounds proved invaluable when he transferred to Doane University in 1979.

After graduating from Doane in 1982, Roger pursued his master's and doctorate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. During this time, he had the chance to research exercise science and join the tenure track at the University of Chicago. However, his desire to positively impact young lives, inspired by his professors and coaches, led him to continue at UNL, where he joined the Husker football coaching staff under Tom Osborne.

Roger's coaching journey took him from Nebraska to the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Dartmouth University, Princeton University, and Stetson University, where he was tasked with building the football program from scratch. After 57 years without a team, Dr. Hughes spent a decade working with the university administration to support 135 players and elevate the program to D-1 success.

Becoming president of Doane University was always in the back of Roger's mind. His experiences at prestigious institutions and his decade of work at Stetson prepared him well for the role. What has become a rewarding journey from football coach to university president began at a small-town junior college that provided a strong foundation for success.

WNCC ALUMNI: SHAPING FUTURE GENERATIONS THRU EDUCATION



David and Tonya Atencio Castle, education majors from the Class of 2010, showcased their athletic talents on the WNCC Baseball and Softball Teams. After graduating from the University of Wyoming, they pursued careers in education. David is now a counselor at Bluffs Middle School in Scottsbluff, while Tonya teaches 4th grade at Northfield Elementary School in Gering.



Lukas Benzel, principal at Longfellow Elementary in Scottsbluff, graduated from WNCC in 2005 on a vocal music scholarship. He earned his BS in education and master's in administration from Chadron State College. Lukas taught music at Westmoor Elementary for 10 years and was assistant principal for four years before his current role in 2022.



Mario Chavez, a first-generation college student, graduated from WNCC in 2003 with a business degree. He worked as an Admissions Specialist at WNCC and later joined Reconnect in Scottsbluff, aiding teens at risk of not graduating. Mario has earned two bachelor's and two master's degrees and is now the principal of Gering High School.



Sarah Cardona, Class of 2012, worked as a para for ESU 13 before joining Chadron State College's Paraprogram in 2020. She earned her Special Education K-12 degree and praised WNCC's welcoming environment. Sarah is now the special education teacher at Morrill High School.



Erin Meyer Reisig, Class of 2001, is in her seventh year at Mitchell Elementary, currently teaching 3rd grade. She previously substituted while raising her family. Erin loved WNCC's small classes and one-on-one faculty interaction, calling it a great experience. She completed her education degree at Chadron State College.

Congratulations TO THE 2024 WNCC ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS



Outstanding Young Alumnus Award
Trevor Aguirre Class of 2011



Cara Perkins Meritorious Service Award
Carr-Trumbull Lumber



Lifetime Achievement Award
Jean Ahrens



Friend of the College Award
Fred and Carol Lockwood



Outstanding Alumnus Award
George Holthus Class of 1987



Family Pride Award
Winkler Family

Explore pictures and brief biographies of award winners and nominate deserving individuals or businesses for the 2025 Alumni Awards at go.wncc.edu/alumni by August 15, 2025. Any nominations received after that date will be considered for the 2026 Alumni Awards.

2024-25 WNCC FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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