SkillsUSA students make a significant impact at the 2025 National Leadership and Skills Conference.



Students from Tennessee's College/Postsecondary (C/PS) Career and Technical Education programs proudly showcased their talents at the 2025 SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference (NLSC), held June 23–27 in Atlanta. This premier event included leadership training, community service activities, and competitive demonstrations of technical skill. Throughout the week, Tennessee students exemplified professionalism, determination, and excellence—both in leadership roles and in rigorous national competitions—highlighting the strength and quality of CTE programs across the state.

Leadership

Tennessee's SkillsUSA State Officers—Tori Meyers, Cassady Taylor, Kady Mitchell, Tanner Ashlock, and Kricket Jones—attended the 2025 **SkillsUSA Leverage Training**, held June 20–23 in Atlanta. This intensive pre-conference experience focused on developing leadership through the 17 Essential Elements of the SkillsUSA Framework. A special highlight came as **Tennessee C/PS Treasurer Tanner Ashlock** was elected as a **SkillsUSA National Officer**. Throughout the week, Tanner campaigned passionately, earning delegate support by pledging to represent Tennessee's college system and advocate for students on the national stage.

Additional professional development opportunities included the **SkillsUSA Academy of Excellence** and **SkillsUSA University**, where students engaged in hands-on learning and leadership growth. All participants earned certificates to add to their professional development portfolios—valuable credentials that align with SkillsUSA's mission of building personal, workplace, and technical skills grounded in academics.

At the heart of the conference is a unique tradition: **pin trading**. With over 18,000 attendees, students enthusiastically traded custom-designed pins with peers, advisors, and industry leaders. It's more than a game—it's a vibrant way to build connections. Tennessee's **Lauren Presley's Boot Pin** became one of the most sought-after designs, while even **Executive Director Chelle Travis** joined in the fun, using her signature pin to spark conversations. Pin trading creates lasting memories and friendships across the country.

Tennessee's presence was felt throughout the event, including the strong leadership of **Scott Mull**, the 2024–25 National Officer, who helped run the conference and represented CTE students nationwide with pride and professionalism.

SkillsUSA continues to shape the future of America's workforce—developing confident, skilled leaders who are ready to succeed in any career path

Community Service

On the final day of the conference, SkillsUSA members had the opportunity to give back through the impactful **"Complete the Cycle"** community service project. In just three hours, students came together to assemble **80 children's bicycles**, which were then donated to the **Boys & Girls Club of Metro Atlanta**. The event was a powerful reminder that leadership isn't just about achievement—it's also about service, compassion, and community impact.

This service initiative reflects one of the core values of SkillsUSA: **developing leaders with a heart for service**. It offers members a tangible way to make a difference in the lives of others while reinforcing essential personal and workplace skills like teamwork, responsibility, and communication.

Community service is a key pillar of SkillsUSA's **Framework** and is integrated into each chapter's **Program of Work**. Chapters that go above and beyond in service, leadership, and student engagement are recognized nationally through the prestigious **Models of Excellence** program, which celebrates outstanding achievement across SkillsUSA colleges and postsecondary institutions. Projects like "Complete the Cycle" exemplify how students can turn their technical skills and leadership training into meaningful, real-world impact—leaving not

only a lasting impression on the communities they serve, but also shaping the character and confidence of every student involved.

Championships

During the 2025 **SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference (NLSC)**, Tennessee's CTE students rose to the occasion, showcasing their technical and leadership talents in high-stakes, hands-on competitions. Tennessee College/ Post Secondary lead the nation in receiving the most medals in the college/post secondary division. Representing 24 colleges across the state, the **SkillsUSA Tennessee College/Postsecondary delegation** brought **255 members** to the national stage in Atlanta. Of those, **150 students competed in 84 of the 110 available technical, trade, and leadership events**—a powerful demonstration of Tennessee's commitment to excellence in Career and Technical Education (CTE).

Students competed in a wide range of occupational areas, including **electronics, computer-aided drafting, precision machining, medical assisting, and culinary arts**. These contests are designed and judged in collaboration with industry leaders, trade associations, and labor organizations, ensuring that all events reflect current, real-world standards. Leadership events also tested vital employability skills in areas like **extemporaneous speaking, job interviewing**, and **parliamentary procedure**.

The results were exceptional. Tennessee students earned a total of **52 national medals**—including **27 gold, 9 silver, and 16 bronze**—and placed in the **top 10 in 69 of the 84 contests** they entered. This means that Tennessee ranked in the top 10 in **82%** of all events entered and placed **in the top five in more than half**, underscoring the remarkable quality of Tennessee's CTE programs.

Tennessee's success extended beyond the podium. The state was recognized for having the for being the **largest college delegation in the nation**, boasting over **16,200 members statewide**. These accolades reflect not only Tennessee's growth but also its leadership in building a career-ready workforce.

Winners of each contest received **gold, silver, or bronze medallions**, and many also earned valuable **tools of their trade**, **scholarships**, and even **on-the-spot job offers**—making NLSC a launching pad for students' future careers.

In addition to medals, Tennessee students earned **58 Skills Point Certificates** through the **SkillsUSA Skill Point Certification Program**. These prestigious certificates are awarded to contestants who meet or exceed rigorous industry-defined standards in their competitions. Developed in partnership with employers and trade experts, these benchmarks reflect the technical and professional excellence expected in today's workforce. Earning a Skills Point Certificate signals that a student is not only competition-ready but **career-ready from day one**.

The SkillsUSA Championships serve as the nation's premier showcase of CTE talent, with thousands of middle school, high school, and college students from across all 50 states and U.S. territories competing. As a **student-led organization**, SkillsUSA champions the skilled trades, bridging the gap between education and industry. Tennessee's outstanding performance once again proves that its students are among the best-prepared in the nation—ready to lead, innovate, and build the future of America's workforce.

Tennessee Medal Results by College:

- *Principles of Engineering*-Technology-**Bronze**-David Perez-Chattanooga State
- *Emergency Medical Technician*-**Gold**-Aaron Gallegos and Dalton Nall-Motlow State

- *Collision Damage Appraisal*-**Silver**-Emmalee Johnson-Northeast State
- *Cyber Security*-**Bronze**-Austin Castle and Neal Fleck-Northeast State
- *Job Skill Demonstration A*-**Gold**-Ameris Bleckley- Northeast State
- *Audio Production*-**Gold**-Liam Cumesty and Madison Harris-Pellissippi State
- *Extemporaneous Speaking*-**Silver**-Louis Rey Valenzuela II-Pellissippi State
- *Graphic Communications*-**Bronze**-Maria Carraseo-Pellissippi State
- *Telecommunications Cabling*-**Silver**-Gabe Dunn-Pellissippi State
- *Video Production*-**Silver**-Luke Brown and Viola Miklos-Pellissippi State
- *Mechatronics*-**Bronze**-Evan Chow and James Sutherland-Roane State
- *Career Pathways-Human Services*-**Gold**- Taegen Beard, Caylin Fowler, and Emilee Rutledge-TCAT Chattanooga
- *Community Service*-**Bronze**-Nicholas Boyd, Derek Dunn, and Darrion Mason-TCAT Chattanooga
- *Employment Application Process*-**Gold**-Lucy Nicholson-TCAT Chattanooga
- *First Aid-CPR*-**Gold**-Takara Lawrence-TCAT Chattanooga
- *Job Interview*-**Bronze**-Natalie Garrett-TCAT Chattanooga
- *Job Skill Demonstration Open*-**Silver**-Yolaila Palacios-TCAT Chattanooga
- *Motorcycle Service Technology*-**Bronze**-Parker Barrett-TCAT Chattanooga
- *Graphic Imaging-Sublimation*-**Gold**-Skye Moffitt-TCAT Crump
- *Cosmetology*-**Bronze**-Dixie DeLoach-TCAT Dickson
- *Robotics-Urban Search and Rescue*-**Bronze**- Valaria Lohman and Jacob Rose-TCAT Dickson
- *Occupational Health and Safety-Single*-**Gold**-Cole Frye, James Goolsby, and Joshua Knight-TCAT Hartsville
- *Quiz Bowl*-**Gold**-Nicholas Abbott, Nathan Brown, Gavin Lindsey, Edward Morgan, Brantley Nanny, and Curtis Swafford TCAT Henry/Carroll
- *Engineering Technology Design*-**Gold**-Leo Kimball, Ayesha Mowell, and Jessie Ward-TCAT Morristown
- *Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration*-**Bronze**-Morgan Manning-TCAT Morristown
- *American Spirit*-**Gold**-Rachel Alley, Tori Myers, Cassidy Taylor, and Taylor Woody-TCAT Northwest
- *Career Pathways-Health Science*-**Silver**-Amanda Newton, Kristen Ray, and Marlene Sanchez-TCAT Pulaski
- *Practical Nursing*-**Bronze**-Benton Fowler-TCAT Upper Cumberland

Tennessee Delegation Meetings at NLSC

The excitement officially began on **Monday evening** with the opening of the **SkillsUSA Tennessee C/PS Delegation Meeting**. This high-energy kickoff event welcomed students,

advisors, and guests, providing essential information about the week ahead at the **National Leadership and Skills Conference (NLSC)**. College teams received conference schedules, key contacts for support, and helpful tips for navigating the massive event.

To foster team spirit and make Tennessee's presence unmistakable, all members received a **swag bundle** that included conference t-shirts and polos, state pins for trading, branded conference bags, and black light-up hats—perfect for standing out during opening ceremonies at **State Farm Arena**. The room buzzed with enthusiasm as students connected, posed for photos, and prepared to represent their schools and state with pride.

The conference concluded in grand fashion with the **SkillsUSA Tennessee C/PS Celebration Banquet** on **Friday evening**. Held in a packed ballroom, the event was filled with pride, energy, and heartfelt recognition. **State Director Daphne Brown**, along with the **Tennessee State Officer Team** and **state staff**, led the evening by announcing competition results, celebrating medalists, and honoring those who contributed to Tennessee's incredible success.

The dedication of SkillsUSA advisors was highlighted in a special moment of appreciation, as over **100 advisors** were acknowledged for their tireless support, mentorship, and leadership throughout the year. Their commitment was evident not only in student performance but in the overall growth and strength of Tennessee's delegation.

Special guests in attendance included **college presidents**, **Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR)** staff, and **Assistant Vice Chancellor Michael Tinsley**, whose presence underscored the state's commitment to excellence in Career and Technical Education.

A major highlight of the evening was the presentation of the **Outstanding Advisor of the Year Award**, given to **Donald Drinkard** of **TCAT Henry/Carroll**. In recognition of his achievements—including mentoring a state officer who was elected to the national officer team—Mr. Drinkard received a **complete set of state trading pins**, symbolizing his unwavering support, service, and dedication to SkillsUSA Tennessee.

The banquet also honored the valuable contributions of alumni who returned to support this year's conference. Recognized alumni included **Darrell Chambers**, **Kristan Odom**, **Lollie Brown**, and **Dane Norman**. Kristan Odom received **special recognition** for her outstanding leadership as **Partnership Director**, playing a key role in building industry relationships that strengthen SkillsUSA Tennessee's reach and impact. **Dane Norman** was also honored for his vital contributions in coordinating the **voting delegate process**, ensuring that Tennessee's student voice was well-represented at the national level.

A special moment of appreciation was reserved for **sixteen representatives from Nissan**, who were in attendance and recognized for their **unwavering support and commitment** to SkillsUSA Tennessee College/Postsecondary. As a valued industry partner, **Nissan's dedication to workforce development, mentorship, and career readiness** has left a lasting mark on the program. The room erupted in applause in gratitude for all that the **Nissan team** continues to do to support Tennessee's students, educators, and the future skilled workforce.

From the opening delegation meeting to the closing banquet, the week was a celebration of talent, leadership, teamwork, and Tennessee pride. Students, advisors, alumni, and partners left inspired—ready to carry the momentum of SkillsUSA forward into classrooms, communities, and careers across the state.

Workforce Development Opportunities

The 2025 SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference offered numerous opportunities for engagement with business and industry partners, far beyond the annual TECHSPO, which featured hundreds of companies supporting Career and Technical Education (CTE).

One standout event was the Sunday night rooftop networking reception, where state directors connected with industry leaders from John Deere, Kiewit, NEIEP, and the American Red Cross. Additionally, SkillsUSA hosted its first-ever **Workforce Development Summit**, attended by Daphne Brown and Michael Tinsley. This landmark event brought together industry leaders, educators, and policymakers to address urgent workforce challenges and explore strategies for collaborative impact.

The Summit featured expert panels that focused on key goals:

- Strengthening industry-education alignment
- Advancing workforce readiness and retention
- Shaping effective workforce development policies
- Expanding career opportunities for students
- Amplifying SkillsUSA's national impact

Highlights included presentations from Bharani Rajakumar, founder and CEO of Transfer Inc., and DJ Jordan of Aerotek, who both spoke on the growing urgency of closing the skills gap. Another standout session, **"Investing in the Nation's Infrastructure,"** focused on long-term workforce sustainability and readiness.

Global Perspectives were also explored in "Global Insights: Innovations in Skills Development," featuring David Hoey, CEO of WorldSkills International, who offered a forward-looking view on the evolution of global talent pipelines.

Two featured panel discussions added tremendous value:

1. **The Workforce Exchange | A Conversation on Talent, Training, and Policy** – Experts in policy, apprenticeships, and pipeline development discussed systemic challenges and opportunities in upskilling America's workforce.
2. **Bridging the Skills Gap | Aligning Education, Industry, and Policy for Workforce Success** – This session emphasized the power of cross-sector collaboration in building the skilled labor force of tomorrow.

Attendees also participated in **Roundtable Discussions** led by subject-matter experts, fostering small-group conversations on workforce challenges and real-time solutions. These interactive discussions encouraged shared insights and collaborative problem-solving.

Another notable event was an exclusive dinner hosted by **Georgia Pacific** and the **National Roofing Contractors Association**, where state directors and special guests explored partnership opportunities and curriculum development. Advisors were invited to engage directly with national employers and discuss how industry can better support the evolving needs of CTE programs.

Together, these events created a unique and valuable network of support for state directors and stakeholders working in the CTE and workforce development space—highlighting SkillsUSA's role as a national leader in connecting education with real-world industry needs.

NLSC Photos are available on Memento:
https://albums.memento.com/NLSC2025?sortBy=random&order=asc

More About SkillsUSA

SkillsUSA is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1965 through a partnership between education and industry to strengthen America's skilled workforce. Nashville, Tennessee, is SkillsUSA's birthplace. Responding directly to employer demand, SkillsUSA equips students with the **personal, workplace, and technical skills** needed for success—skills rooted in both academics and real-world application. This mission is supported by a network of dedicated industry partners who invest in student success through local, state, and national programming.

The **SkillsUSA Framework** empowers every student to succeed in both work and life, helping to close the national skills gap that leaves millions of jobs unfilled. Through **SkillsUSA's Championships Program**, **employer-aligned curricula**, and a growing **credentialing process**, industry leaders can now both guide what schools teach and evaluate how ready students are for the workforce.
Today, SkillsUSA serves **students in middle schools, high schools, and colleges across the country**, covering over **130 skilled trades, technical, and service occupations**. Recognized by the **U.S. Departments of Education and Labor** as an integral part of career and technical education, SkillsUSA has reached more than **13.9 million members since its founding**—and with the continued support of industry leaders like Nissan, its impact on America's workforce continues to grow. For more information: *www.skilllusatnps.org* or *www.skillsusa.org.*

SkillsUSA TN C/PS 2025-26 Schedule

AUGUST 2025

1 | Member Registration Opens

1 | Registration Opens: SkillsUSA - Washington Leadership Training Institute (WLTI)

SEPTEMBER 2025

10 | SkillsUSA Chapter Jumpstart Training West Region-Learn and improve all things SkillsUSA, Local Chapter, Chapter of Excellence, etc.

11 | SkillsUSA Chapter Jumpstart Training Middle Region-Learn and improve all things SkillsUSA, Local Chapter, Chapter of Excellence, etc.

12 | SkillsUSA Chapter Jumpstart Training East Region-Learn and improve all things SkillsUSA, Local Chapter, Chapter of Excellence, etc.

19-24 | SkillsUSA - Washington Leadership Training Institute (WLTI)

29 | Application Opens for SkillsUSA State Officer Applications

OCTOBER 2025

6 | Application Deadline for SkillsUSA State Officer Applications

29-30 | SkillsUSA Tennessee Leadership Training Institute (TLTI)

NOVEMBER 2025

15 | SkillsUSA Fall Early Membership Deadline Due

JANUARY 2026

12 | Registration Opens SkillsUSA Day on the Hill Activities

12 | SkillsUSA State Conference Registration Opens

16 | SkillsUSA Technical Chair Meeting Chattanooga

30 | SkillsUSA Pin Design Contest Submission Due

FEBRUARY 2026

2-6 | SkillsUSA Week

13 | SkillsUSA T-Shirt Contest Design Due

13 | Day on the Hill Registration Opens

13 | SkillsUSA State Conference Registration Deadline

13 | SkillsUSA Chapter of Excellence Deadline

13 | SkillsUSA Membership Deadline
13 | SkillsUSA Outstanding Advisor of the Year Due

MARCH 2026

1 | SkillsUSA Membership Deadline

4 | Day on the Hill Registration Due
15-18 | State Leadership and Skills Conference

MAY 2026

5 | SkillsUSA National Signing Day

JUNE 2026

1-5 | SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference | Atlanta, GA

Note: Visit the High School Division's website for Dual Enrollment Students' Dates.

