

2026 SkillsUSA Tennessee College/Postsecondary National Leadership and Skills Conference (NLSC) Report



Tennessee College/Postsecondary Delegation at the 2026 SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Approximately 300 students, advisors, administrators and partners represented Tennessee while competing, leading, serving and engaging with industry partners from across the nation

Executive Summary

The 2026 SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference (NLSC) in Atlanta, Georgia, represented a historic milestone for SkillsUSA Tennessee College/Postsecondary and demonstrated the powerful impact of Career and Technical Education on workforce development, student success and economic growth. Bringing together more than 18,000 students, advisors, educators, administrators and industry partners from across the nation, NLSC serves as the premier national event for Career and Technical Education, providing opportunities for students to demonstrate technical excellence, develop leadership skills and connect directly with employers and workforce leaders.

Tennessee College/Postsecondary was represented by approximately 300 students, advisors, administrators, state officers and partners, making it the largest Tennessee College/Postsecondary delegation in state history. Students from Tennessee's community colleges, Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs) and university partners competed against the nation's best Career and Technical Education students while participating in leadership development, workforce engagement, industry networking and community service initiatives.

The results were exceptional.

Tennessee College/Postsecondary students earned 63 national medals, including 23 gold medals, 23 silver medals and 17 bronze medals, demonstrating the strength of Tennessee's workforce preparation programs and the quality of instruction occurring across the state's institutions. In addition, Tennessee students earned 68 Skill Point Certificates, recognizing competitors who achieved industry-defined standards of excellence within their respective contests. These achievements highlight Tennessee's ability to prepare students to compete successfully on a national stage while meeting the expectations of employers and industry professionals.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the conference was a historic achievement by TCAT Pulaski, which was named the national Models of Excellence Workplace Skills Champion. Models of Excellence is SkillsUSA's highest chapter recognition program, and only three national champions are selected annually, one each in Personal Skills, Workplace Skills and Technical Skills. The award is not divided by educational level, meaning secondary and postsecondary chapters compete together for national recognition. TCAT Pulaski's victory marks the first national Models of Excellence championship in Tennessee College/Postsecondary history and represents one of the most significant accomplishments ever achieved by a Tennessee College/Postsecondary chapter.

Beyond competition, Tennessee students participated in a wide range of leadership, workforce development and service opportunities designed to prepare them for long-term career success. More than 60 Tennessee participants took part in the SkillsUSA Champions of Service project in partnership with Sleep in Heavenly Peace, helping build beds for children in need while demonstrating leadership, teamwork and civic responsibility. These experiences reinforced SkillsUSA's commitment to developing not only skilled workers, but also responsible citizens and community leaders.

Tennessee was also selected to participate in several exclusive workforce development initiatives. Eight Tennessee students were chosen for the national Construction Immersion Experience, a specialized program that provided direct exposure to construction careers through industry engagement, workforce development activities, career exploration experiences and credential opportunities. Participants interacted directly with employers and construction professionals while gaining valuable insight into workforce needs and career pathways within one of the nation's most critical industries. Participants completed industry-recognized credential assessments at the conclusion of the three-day training experience.

Industry engagement remained a major focus throughout the conference. Tennessee students and advisors participated in SkillsUSA TECHSPO, one of the largest showcases of business and industry support for Career and Technical Education in the nation. Featuring more than 200 exhibitors, TECHSPO connected students directly with employers, manufacturers, trade associations, workforce organizations and technology providers. Students explored emerging technologies, learned about career opportunities and built professional networks with industry leaders from across the country.

Tennessee representatives also participated in the invitation-only SkillsUSA Workforce Development Summit, which convened educators, policymakers, workforce professionals and industry leaders to discuss workforce readiness, talent pipeline development, credential attainment and economic growth. The summit reinforced the importance of collaboration among education, industry and government partners in addressing workforce challenges and preparing students for high-demand careers.

Additional workforce engagement opportunities connected Tennessee students directly with major employers and industry partners. Tennessee College/Postsecondary welcomed participation from Nissan and Ford, providing students with exposure to advanced manufacturing and transportation careers. Commercial Roofing finalists attended the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) and Georgia-Pacific Building Products Finalist Dinner, where they interacted with industry executives and workforce leaders while exploring employment opportunities within the construction and roofing industries. These experiences exemplify the strong partnerships that exist between SkillsUSA and industry and demonstrate how Career and Technical Education serves as a direct pipeline to employment.

The impact of NLSC extends far beyond medals and awards. The conference provides students with opportunities to develop leadership skills, strengthen professional communication, build confidence, expand professional networks and engage directly with the industries they aspire to enter. Through competitions, leadership programs, workforce initiatives, community service and industry engagement, students gain experiences that cannot be replicated in a traditional classroom environment.

For Tennessee Board of Regents institutions, participation in SkillsUSA and NLSC directly supports priorities related to student success, workforce readiness, employer engagement, leadership development, credential attainment and economic growth. The conference serves as a powerful example of how education and industry can work together to prepare students for meaningful careers while addressing the workforce needs of Tennessee and the nation.

The accomplishments achieved by Tennessee College/Postsecondary students during the 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference demonstrate the value of continued investment in Career and Technical Education, student leadership development and workforce partnerships. As Tennessee continues to strengthen its talent pipeline and support economic development, SkillsUSA remains one of the state's most effective tools for preparing students to become skilled professionals, workplace leaders and responsible citizens.

By The Numbers:

Metric	Result
TN C/PS Delegation Size	300
TN C/PS National Medals	63
TN C/PS Gold Medals	23
TN C/PS Silver Medals	23
TN C/PS Bronze Medals	17
TN C/PS Skill Point Certificates	68
TN C/PS Top 5 Finishes	76
TN C/PS Top 10 Finishes	102
TN C/PS Models of Excellence Champions	1
TN C/PS Community Service Participants	60+
TN C/PS Construction Immersion Participants	8
TECHSPO Exhibitors	200+

Alignment to Tennessee Board of Regents Strategic Plan

The accomplishments of Tennessee College/Postsecondary students at the 2026 SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference directly support the Tennessee Board of Regents' commitment to student success, workforce development, employer engagement and economic opportunity. The conference provided students with opportunities to apply classroom learning in real-world environments while demonstrating the knowledge, skills and professionalism required by today's workforce.

TBR Strategic Priority	NLSC Outcome
Student Success	300 participants

Workforce Development	63 medals, 68 Skill Point Certificates
Industry Engagement	200+ TECHSPO exhibitors, Delta, Ford, Nissan, 3M, State Farm
Leadership Development	LEVERAGE, Delegates, State Officers
Civic Engagement	60+ Champions of Service participants

The accomplishments highlighted throughout this report demonstrate the Tennessee Board of Regents' strategic priorities in action. Through national competition, leadership development, workforce engagement, industry partnerships, service learning and credential attainment, Tennessee students gained experiences that support academic success, workforce readiness and economic opportunity. These outcomes reinforce the value of SkillsUSA as a statewide workforce development and student success initiative.

Conference Overview

The 2026 SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference (NLSC) was held June 1–5, 2026, in Atlanta, Georgia, bringing together more than 18,000 students, advisors, educators, administrators, business leaders and industry partners from across the United States. As the nation's premier showcase of Career and Technical Education (CTE), NLSC provides students with opportunities to demonstrate technical excellence, develop leadership skills, engage in workforce development activities and connect directly with employers and industry professionals.

Tennessee SkillsUSA College/Postsecondary was proudly represented by approximately 300 students, advisors, administrators, state officers and partners, making it the largest Tennessee Postsecondary delegation in state history. Students represented Tennessee's community colleges, Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs) and university partners while competing against the nation's top Career and Technical Education students in the SkillsUSA Championships.

The conference officially began for Tennessee with the College/Postsecondary Delegation Meeting on Monday evening, where students, advisors and guests gathered to receive conference information, celebrate their accomplishments and prepare for the week ahead. The meeting also served as an opportunity to reinforce Tennessee's commitment to professionalism, leadership and teamwork as members prepared to represent their institutions and the state on a national stage.

Tuesday marked the beginning of championship activities, delegate sessions and conference events. Tennessee members gathered for the annual delegation photograph at Centennial Olympic Park before attending the SkillsUSA Opening Ceremony at State Farm Arena. SkillsUSA National Officer from Tennessee College/ Postsecondary, Tanner Ashlock, participated in the ceremony, helping represent Tennessee and SkillsUSA members from across

the nation. Throughout the week, students attended contest orientations, leadership sessions, networking opportunities and workforce development activities while preparing for national competition.

The SkillsUSA Championships served as the centerpiece of the conference, featuring more than 100 technical, trade and leadership competitions designed and evaluated by industry professionals. Students competed in areas ranging from advanced manufacturing, construction and transportation to healthcare, information technology, hospitality, communications and leadership development. These contests provide authentic assessments of student knowledge and skills while aligning directly with industry expectations and workforce standards.

Beyond competition, NLSC offered extensive opportunities for leadership development, community service, workforce engagement and professional growth. Tennessee students participated in the SkillsUSA Champions of Service project, the Construction Immersion Experience, delegate activities, workforce development initiatives and networking events designed to strengthen workplace readiness and career awareness.

Students and advisors also explored SkillsUSA TECHSPO, one of the nation's largest showcases of business and industry support for Career and Technical Education. With more than 200 exhibitors, TECHSPO provided opportunities to engage directly with employers, manufacturers, trade associations, workforce organizations and technology providers while exploring career pathways and employment opportunities.

The conference also featured the SkillsUSA Workforce Development Summit, bringing together educators, industry leaders and policymakers to discuss workforce readiness, talent pipelines, credential attainment and economic development. Tennessee representatives participated alongside national leaders in conversations focused on strengthening the connection between education and workforce needs.

Additional conference highlights included the Champions Festival, networking opportunities with employers and industry partners, participation in national governance activities through the delegate process, and specialized workforce experiences such as the NRCA and Georgia-Pacific industry engagement event and the Construction Immersion Experience.

The week concluded with contest debriefs, community service activities, the SkillsUSA Awards Session and the Tennessee College/Postsecondary Awards and Recognition Banquet. Together, these events celebrated the accomplishments of Tennessee students while highlighting the impact of Career and Technical Education on workforce development, leadership preparation and student success.

More than a competition conference, NLSC serves as a comprehensive workforce development experience where students develop technical expertise, leadership capacity, professional networks and career readiness skills. The conference demonstrates how SkillsUSA connects education and industry while preparing students to become skilled professionals, leaders and contributors to Tennessee's economy and workforce.

Leadership Development

Leadership development remains one of the foundational pillars of SkillsUSA and a defining component of the National Leadership and Skills Conference. While the SkillsUSA Championships provide opportunities for students to demonstrate technical excellence, NLSC also serves as a national leadership laboratory where students strengthen communication, teamwork, professionalism, decision-making and organizational leadership skills.

Tennessee's leadership experience began before the official start of the conference through participation in LEVERAGE, SkillsUSA's premier leadership development program for state officers. Tennessee's State Officer Team joined student leaders from across the nation in intensive training focused on personal growth, servant leadership, team development, communication and the SkillsUSA Framework. Through workshops, team-building activities and strategic planning sessions, officers developed the skills necessary to lead Tennessee's membership throughout the coming year.

The conference also provided opportunities for Tennessee students to engage in leadership development through SkillsUSA University sessions, professional development activities, networking opportunities and interactions with students and industry professionals from across the nation. These experiences allowed students to build confidence, strengthen professional communication skills and expand their understanding of leadership in both educational and workplace settings.

Throughout the conference, students were challenged to step outside their comfort zones, collaborate with individuals from different backgrounds and represent Tennessee with professionalism and integrity. These experiences strengthened confidence, expanded professional networks and reinforced the interpersonal skills employers consistently identify as critical for workplace success.

Leadership development extended beyond formal training sessions. Throughout the week, students engaged in networking activities with peers from across the United States, exchanged ideas with industry professionals and participated in conference events designed to foster collaboration and professional growth. One of the most visible examples of this culture was the conference's longstanding tradition of pin trading, where students used custom-designed state pins to build relationships and connect with members from across the nation. These interactions often serve as the beginning of professional networks that continue long after the conference concludes.

For many students, the leadership experiences gained through SkillsUSA are as impactful as the technical competitions themselves. Tennessee College/Postsecondary State President and Tennessee Board of Regents Student of the Year Louis Rey Valenzuela II reflected on the influence of SkillsUSA on his personal and professional growth:

"SkillsUSA doesn't just build champions, it launches careers. After earning silver at Nationals last year, I'm more motivated than ever to return and chase gold while representing the skills and dedication that career and technical education develops."

Students consistently reported that the conference challenged them to step outside their comfort zones, develop new skills and embrace opportunities for growth. First-time national competitor Hayden Sherwood described the experience this way:

"SkillsUSA is such a great community and the fact that there are events that bring everyone together such as the national conference is amazing. This was my first national conference, and I was excited to meet leaders from around the nation, make new connections and represent Tennessee."

The impact of SkillsUSA leadership development is perhaps best summarized by Dr. Sharon Couch of Pellissippi State Community College, who noted:

"SkillsUSA prepares students not just for jobs, but for leadership and lasting impact. Students are building confidence, relationships and leadership skills that will influence their futures long after the competition ends."

These leadership experiences align directly with the Tennessee Board of Regents' commitment to student success and workforce readiness. Through leadership development, students gain the confidence, professionalism and interpersonal skills employers consistently identify as essential for workplace success. As a result, SkillsUSA continues to play a critical role in preparing Tennessee students to become effective leaders in their careers, communities and industries.

LEVERAGE: Preparing Tennessee's Student Leaders

The 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference began for Tennessee's State Officer Team with participation in LEVERAGE, SkillsUSA's national leadership development experience designed specifically for state officers and student leaders from across the country.

Held prior to the start of the National Leadership and Skills Conference, LEVERAGE provides intensive leadership training focused on developing the personal, workplace and leadership skills necessary to effectively serve SkillsUSA members at the local, state and national levels. The experience emphasizes the SkillsUSA Framework and challenges students to grow as communicators, collaborators, decision-makers and servant leaders.

Throughout the program, Tennessee's State Officer Team participated in leadership workshops, team-building exercises, strategic planning sessions and networking opportunities with state officers from across the nation. Students explored topics such as leadership styles, effective communication, professional presence, goal setting, organizational planning and member engagement while building relationships with peers who share a commitment to Career and Technical Education and student leadership.

LEVERAGE also provided officers with the opportunity to examine how SkillsUSA's mission connects to workforce development, student success and industry engagement. Through guided discussions and collaborative activities, participants developed a deeper understanding of their responsibilities as state officers and the impact they can have on members, chapters and communities throughout Tennessee.

The experience serves as the foundation for the officer year, equipping student leaders with the tools needed to support Tennessee chapters, promote SkillsUSA's mission and represent the organization with professionalism and integrity. Lessons learned through LEVERAGE are carried forward into state officer activities, chapter visits, leadership conferences, membership initiatives and statewide programming throughout the year.

Beyond formal leadership instruction, LEVERAGE fosters a national network of student leaders who learn from one another and share ideas for strengthening SkillsUSA programs in their respective states. These relationships provide valuable perspectives on leadership, organizational growth and member engagement while reinforcing the collaborative spirit that defines SkillsUSA.

By investing in leadership development through programs such as LEVERAGE, SkillsUSA ensures that students are not only prepared to excel in technical careers but are also equipped to lead teams, communicate effectively, solve problems and contribute positively to their workplaces and communities. The experience exemplifies SkillsUSA's commitment to developing well-rounded leaders who are prepared for success in both their careers and their lives.

Tennessee State Officer Team Leadership

The Tennessee College/Postsecondary State Officer Team played a critical role in the success of Tennessee's participation at the 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference. Throughout the year, these student leaders serve as ambassadors for SkillsUSA, representing members across the state while promoting leadership development, workforce readiness and student success. At NLSC, they represented Tennessee on the national stage while supporting students, advisors and delegates throughout the conference experience.

The officer team participated in LEVERAGE leadership training, leadership development activities, delegate functions, networking events and conference programming while serving as role models for Tennessee members. Their leadership extended beyond formal responsibilities as they welcomed first-time national competitors, assisted with delegation activities, supported conference events and represented Tennessee with professionalism and enthusiasm throughout the week.

Tennessee's officers demonstrated the SkillsUSA Framework in action through effective communication, teamwork, professionalism and servant leadership. Their commitment helped foster a positive conference experience for Tennessee students while strengthening connections among institutions from across the state.

A special highlight for Tennessee was the service of Tanner Ashlock, who represented both Tennessee and the nation as a SkillsUSA National Officer. During the Opening Session at State Farm Arena, Tanner helped welcome thousands of SkillsUSA members and guests while introducing two-time Indianapolis 500 champion Josef Newgarden as a featured speaker. His role on the national stage showcased Tennessee's tradition of student leadership excellence and demonstrated the opportunities SkillsUSA provides for students to lead beyond the state level.

The Tennessee State Officer Team's impact extends well beyond a single conference. Through chapter visits, leadership conferences, membership outreach, advocacy efforts and statewide programming, these students help advance SkillsUSA's mission while inspiring the next generation of student leaders. Their service reflects the Tennessee Board of Regents' commitment to developing graduates who are prepared not only for successful careers, but also for meaningful leadership roles within their workplaces, communities and industries.

Throughout the conference, Tennessee State Officers assisted with delegation communication, supported students and advisors, coordinated recognition activities, represented Tennessee during national events and helped foster a positive experience for participants from across the state. Their leadership behind the scenes contributed significantly to the success of Tennessee's largest college/postsecondary delegation in history.

Workforce Development and Industry Engagement

One of the defining strengths of the National Leadership and Skills Conference is its ability to connect education directly to workforce needs. Throughout the week, Tennessee students, advisors and administrators engaged with employers, industry leaders, workforce development professionals and policymakers through experiences designed to strengthen career readiness, expand professional networks and support talent pipeline development.

Students explored emerging technologies, career pathways and employment opportunities while interacting with representatives from a wide range of industries and workforce sectors. Tennessee participants gained valuable insight into industry expectations, workplace trends and career opportunities while strengthening the connection between classroom learning and workforce application.

In addition to student engagement, Tennessee College/Postsecondary leadership strengthened existing industry partnerships and established new business and industry connections. During the conference, direct conversations and networking opportunities were developed with representatives from Delta Air Lines, State Farm, Richelieu, 3M, Nissan, Magna, Ford, Georgia-Pacific and the National Roofing Contractors Association. These relationships create opportunities for future collaboration, sponsorship development, workforce engagement and student career exploration across Tennessee.

Together, these experiences demonstrate how SkillsUSA serves as a bridge between education and employment. By connecting students, educators and industry partners, the National Leadership and Skills Conference helps to prepare Tennessee students for high-skill, high-wage and high-demand careers while supporting the workforce needs of employers throughout Tennessee and the nation.

Workforce Development Summit

Tennessee College/Postsecondary representatives participated in the invitation-only SkillsUSA Workforce Development Summit, a national forum that convened educators, industry leaders, workforce development professionals and policymakers to discuss the future of America's skilled workforce. Held in conjunction with the National Leadership and Skills Conference, the summit

focused on strengthening workforce pipelines, increasing credential attainment, supporting economic growth and aligning Career and Technical Education with evolving industry needs.

The summit emphasized collaboration among education, business and government as a critical strategy for addressing workforce shortages and preparing students for high-demand careers. Participants engaged in discussions surrounding talent development, workforce readiness, employer engagement and the role Career and Technical Education plays in strengthening local, state and national economies.

For Tennessee, participation in the summit provided valuable opportunities to explore innovative workforce solutions, learn from national leaders and identify strategies that can further strengthen partnerships between education and industry. The experience reinforced the Tennessee Board of Regents' commitment to workforce development while highlighting SkillsUSA's role as a national leader in preparing students for successful careers.

SkillsUSA TECHSPO

SkillsUSA TECHSPO served as one of the largest workforce engagement experiences available during the National Leadership and Skills Conference. Featuring more than 200 exhibitors representing business, industry, trade associations, workforce organizations and technology providers, TECHSPO provided Tennessee students with direct access to employers and emerging career opportunities from across the nation.

Students explored new technologies, learned about industry trends, discovered internship and employment opportunities and engaged directly with professionals working in their chosen career fields. Exhibitors showcased cutting-edge equipment, innovative technologies and workforce solutions while providing students with valuable insight into industry expectations and future career pathways.

TECHSPO exemplifies the strong partnership between Career and Technical Education and industry by creating meaningful opportunities for students to connect classroom learning with real-world applications. For many Tennessee participants, these interactions expanded professional networks, increased career awareness and provided direct exposure to employers actively seeking skilled talent.

Industry Engagement: NRCA and Georgia-Pacific

Tennessee students earning finalist status in Commercial Roofing received a unique opportunity to participate in an exclusive industry engagement experience hosted by the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) and Georgia-Pacific Building Products. The event brought together top student competitors, industry executives, employers and workforce leaders to highlight career opportunities within the roofing and construction sectors.

Hosted at Georgia-Pacific's corporate headquarters in Atlanta, the experience provided students with direct access to industry professionals while offering valuable insight into workforce needs,

technological advancements and employment opportunities within the construction industry. Students participated in networking activities, engaged in discussions with business leaders and gained firsthand exposure to career pathways available within roofing, construction management and building products manufacturing.

The event demonstrated the strong investment employers make in SkillsUSA and reinforced the value industry places on students who have demonstrated technical excellence, professionalism and workforce readiness through competition.

Delegate Program: Student Leadership in Action

One of the most unique and impactful leadership opportunities available through SkillsUSA is participation in the National Delegate Program. Unlike many student organizations where governance is handled primarily by adults, SkillsUSA empowers students to actively participate in the decision-making process that guides the future of the organization.

34 Tennessee delegates represented the voice of the state's college/postsecondary membership during the 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference, participating in a series of required training sessions, caucus meetings and national business sessions designed to prepare them for their responsibilities.

Delegate activities began Tuesday with the Joint Executive Council Session, followed by Parliamentary Procedure Training and Delegate Training. These sessions introduced students to the structure of the national organization, parliamentary procedure, voting responsibilities and the business items that would come before the Delegate Assembly.

Throughout the week, Tennessee delegates participated in:

- Joint Executive Council Sessions
- Parliamentary Procedure Training
- Delegate Training
- State Caucus Meetings
- National Delegate Sessions
- National Officer Elections
- Voting on organizational business and governance matters

Delegates were responsible for reviewing organizational business, discussing proposed actions, considering national priorities and participating in votes that help shape the future direction of SkillsUSA. These responsibilities required students to analyze information, engage in professional discussion, collaborate with peers and make informed decisions on behalf of Tennessee members. Tennessee holds one of the highest delegate positions in the College/Postsecondary division due to our 16,000 members.

The Delegate Program provides students with practical experience in organizational governance and leadership that few college students encounter during their academic careers. Through active participation, delegates develop skills in communication, critical thinking, public speaking,

parliamentary procedure and professional decision-making. These experiences mirror many of the responsibilities students will encounter in professional associations, civic organizations, nonprofit boards and workplace leadership roles throughout their careers.

In addition to formal business sessions, delegates had opportunities to interact with student leaders from across the nation, exchange ideas and learn how other states are addressing challenges and opportunities within Career and Technical Education. These interactions broaden students' perspectives while reinforcing the value of collaboration and shared leadership.

The Delegate Program also serves as a pathway for future leadership opportunities within SkillsUSA. Many state and national student leaders first develop their understanding of the organization through delegate participation, making it one of the most important leadership development experiences offered at NLSC.

By placing students at the center of the governance process, SkillsUSA reinforces its commitment to student-led leadership and provides authentic opportunities for members to practice the communication, leadership and decision-making skills that employers consistently identify as essential workplace competencies. The experience exemplifies how SkillsUSA prepares students not only to enter the workforce, but also to become effective leaders within their professions, communities and industries.

Models of Excellence: Tennessee Earns Historic National Recognition

One of the most significant accomplishments for Tennessee at the 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference was the national recognition earned through SkillsUSA's Models of Excellence program.

Models of Excellence represents the highest level of chapter achievement within SkillsUSA and recognizes student-led programs that demonstrate the successful integration of the SkillsUSA Framework's Personal Skills, Workplace Skills and Technical Skills. Chapters selected as Models of Excellence finalists undergo a rigorous evaluation process that includes written applications, documentation of outcomes, presentations and interviews before panels of business and industry leaders.

Each year, SkillsUSA identifies the nation's most outstanding chapter programs and selects finalists to present their projects at the National Leadership and Skills Conference. Following interviews and evaluations, only three national champions are selected, one in Personal Skills, one in Workplace Skills and one in Technical Skills.

Unlike many SkillsUSA recognitions, Models of Excellence is not divided by educational level. Secondary and postsecondary chapters compete together for these national honors, making the recognition one of the most prestigious and competitive awards within the organization.

TCAT Pulaski Makes Tennessee History

Tennessee celebrated a historic milestone when TCAT Pulaski was named the national Models of Excellence Workplace Skills Champion, becoming the first Tennessee College/Postsecondary chapter to earn a national Models of Excellence title.

The Workplace Skills category recognizes programs that help students develop the professional competencies employers consistently identify as essential for success in today's workforce. These competencies include communication, teamwork, professionalism, leadership, responsibility, problem solving, adaptability and workplace readiness.

Earning a national Models of Excellence title requires students to demonstrate measurable impact, meaningful engagement and clear alignment with the SkillsUSA Framework. Finalists must show how their chapter activities support student development while addressing real needs within their schools, communities and industries.

TCAT Pulaski's achievement represents the culmination of extensive planning, implementation, documentation and student leadership. The chapter's success reflects the dedication of its students, advisors, institution and community partners while showcasing the strength of Career and Technical Education programs across Tennessee.

A Legacy of Excellence

The 2026 national championship also continues a remarkable tradition of achievement for TCAT Pulaski. Since the creation of the Models of Excellence program, the chapter has appeared on the national stage six times as a Models of Excellence finalist, demonstrating sustained excellence and a long-term commitment to student leadership and chapter development.

This consistency highlights the culture of leadership, service and workforce preparation that has become a hallmark of the program. While reaching the national finalist stage is itself a significant accomplishment, earning the national title elevates TCAT Pulaski into a select group of SkillsUSA chapters recognized as the very best in the nation.

Why Models of Excellence Matters

While competition medals recognize individual and team technical achievement, Models of Excellence recognizes something broader; the ability of students to apply leadership, workplace and technical skills to create meaningful outcomes for their schools, communities and future careers.

The program emphasizes project management, teamwork, communication, community engagement, strategic planning and measurable results. These are the same competencies employers consistently rank among the most important workplace skills and are central to the Tennessee Board of Regents' commitment to student success and workforce readiness.

Models of Excellence demonstrates that SkillsUSA is more than a competition organization. It is a student-led leadership and workforce development organization that prepares students to become effective employees, leaders and citizens.

Statewide Impact

TCAT Pulaski's national championship serves as a source of pride not only for the institution but for the entire state of Tennessee. The achievement reflects the quality of instruction, student engagement and leadership development occurring throughout Tennessee's community colleges and Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology.

As Tennessee continues to invest in workforce development and Career and Technical Education, accomplishments such as the Models of Excellence national championship demonstrate the powerful impact that student leadership, industry engagement and experiential learning can have on preparing the next generation of skilled professionals.

The national title earned by TCAT Pulaski stands as one of the defining accomplishments of Tennessee's 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference experience and represents a historic milestone for Tennessee College/Postsecondary SkillsUSA.

Community Service: SkillsUSA Champions of Service and Sleep in Heavenly Peace

Service has always been a cornerstone of the SkillsUSA mission, reinforcing the belief that leadership extends beyond the classroom, workplace and competition arena. At the 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference, Tennessee students demonstrated this commitment through participation in the SkillsUSA Champions of Service Project in partnership with Sleep in Heavenly Peace.

Sleep in Heavenly Peace is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that no child sleeps on the floor. Through volunteer efforts across the country, the organization builds and delivers beds to children and families in need, providing a safe and comfortable place to sleep while improving quality of life for thousands of young people.

As part of this year's national service initiative, SkillsUSA members from across the country worked together to support the organization's mission through hands-on service activities. Tennessee College/Postsecondary students enthusiastically answered the call, with more than 60 Tennessee participants taking part in the project.

Students, advisors and volunteers worked alongside fellow SkillsUSA members from across the nation, contributing their time and talents to a project that directly impacts children and families. The experience provided an opportunity for participants to step away from competition and focus on serving others while demonstrating teamwork, responsibility and leadership.

The project reflected one of the most important aspects of the SkillsUSA Framework, the development of responsible citizens who understand the value of giving back to their communities. Through service-learning experiences such as this, students gain a deeper appreciation for the impact they can have on others while strengthening personal and workplace skills that are essential for success in both their careers and their communities.

Participation in the Champions of Service project also allowed students to work alongside peers from different states, career pathways and backgrounds, reinforcing the collaborative nature of SkillsUSA and the shared commitment that members are making a positive difference.

For many students, the experience served as a reminder that success is measured not only by medals and awards but also by the ability to use one's skills, talents and leadership abilities to improve the lives of others. The project demonstrated that the technical and workplace skills developed through Career and Technical Education can be applied in meaningful ways to address real community needs.

Community service experiences such as Sleep in Heavenly Peace align closely with the Tennessee Board of Regents' emphasis on civic engagement, student development and community impact. They provide students with opportunities to practice leadership in authentic settings while strengthening the sense of responsibility and service that employers, communities and educational institutions value.

While Tennessee students achieved remarkable success in competition throughout the week, their participation in the SkillsUSA Champions of Service project demonstrated another important measure of achievement, the willingness to serve others and make a lasting difference beyond the competition floor. Through projects such as Sleep in Heavenly Peace, SkillsUSA continues to develop students who are not only technically skilled and career ready but also committed to improving their communities and helping those in need.

Construction Immersion Experience

One of the most unique workforce development opportunities available during the 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference was the SkillsUSA Construction Immersion Experience, a specialized national program designed to provide students with direct exposure to careers, employers and opportunities within the construction industry.

Unlike many conference activities that are open to all attendees, participation in the Construction Immersion Experience is limited and highly selective. Tennessee was proud to have eight students selected to participate in this national workforce development initiative.

The program was designed to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and industry application by allowing students to engage directly with construction professionals, employers and workforce leaders. Throughout the experience, participants explored the many career pathways available within the construction sector while gaining a deeper understanding of the skills, technologies and workforce demands shaping the industry.

Students participated in a series of workforce-focused experiences that included industry engagement, career exploration activities, employer interactions and exposure to real-world construction environments. These opportunities allowed participants to learn directly from professionals working in the field while developing a clearer understanding of the education, training and credentials needed to succeed within the construction industry.

A major component of the program focused on helping students understand the breadth of opportunities available within the skilled trades and construction workforce. Participants were exposed to various sectors of the industry and learned how occupations in construction contribute to infrastructure development, economic growth and community advancement throughout the nation.

The experience also provided students with opportunities to earn valuable credentials and engage in professional development activities that strengthened their workforce readiness. Through direct interaction with employers and industry representatives, students gained insight into hiring expectations, workplace culture, career advancement opportunities and emerging trends affecting the construction industry.

Beyond technical knowledge, the Construction Immersion Experience emphasized the importance of professionalism, communication, teamwork and leadership; skills that employers consistently identify as essential for long-term career success. By engaging with industry professionals and workforce leaders, students developed a stronger understanding of how these competencies contribute to success in both construction and other high-demand career fields.

Programs such as the Construction Immersion Experience are particularly important because they allow students to move beyond learning about careers and instead experience them firsthand. The opportunity to engage directly with employers, observe industry operations and participate in workforce development activities helps students make informed decisions about their future educational and career pathways.

The Construction Immersion Experience also reflects SkillsUSA's commitment to connecting education and industry. By bringing together students, employers and workforce partners, the program creates meaningful opportunities for career exploration while helping employers engage with the next generation of skilled professionals.

For Tennessee students, participation in the Construction Immersion Experience represented far more than a conference activity. It was an investment in workforce readiness, career exploration and professional growth that will continue to influence participants long after the conference concludes. The experience demonstrated how SkillsUSA prepares students not only to compete successfully, but also to enter the workforce with confidence, industry awareness and a clear understanding of the opportunities available within the skilled trades.

As Tennessee continues to address workforce needs across construction and other high-demand sectors, opportunities such as the Construction Immersion Experience play a vital role in strengthening talent pipelines and connecting students to meaningful careers. The selection of eight Tennessee students for this prestigious program reflects both the quality of Tennessee's Career and Technical Education programs and the state's commitment to preparing students for success in the workforce.

Building Professional Networks and Lifelong Connections

One of the most valuable aspects of the National Leadership and Skills Conference is the opportunity for students to build relationships with peers, advisors, industry partners and future colleagues from across the United States. Throughout the week, Tennessee students connected with thousands of SkillsUSA members representing every state and a wide variety of career pathways.

A longstanding SkillsUSA tradition is pin trading, where students exchange custom-designed state pins as a way to meet new people, learn about different states and begin conversations with fellow members. What starts as a simple exchange often becomes an opportunity to discuss career goals, leadership experiences, educational pathways and future aspirations.

Tennessee students also had the opportunity to attend a Major League Baseball game featuring the Atlanta Braves. While recreational in nature, experiences such as these provide valuable opportunities for students from different institutions to connect outside of competition and formal conference activities. Students spent time building relationships, sharing experiences and strengthening the sense of community that defines the Tennessee College/Postsecondary delegation. These informal interactions often help foster collaboration among institutions while creating memories and friendships that continue long after the conference concludes.

For many Tennessee students, pin trading became much more than collecting memorabilia. It served as a catalyst for networking, relationship building and cultural exchange. Students developed communication skills, expanded their professional networks and learned how to confidently engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds and career interests.

Throughout the conference, Tennessee members formed friendships with students from across the nation while building connections that often continue long after the conference ends. Many students exchanged contact information, connected through professional networking platforms and developed relationships that may lead to future educational, professional and leadership opportunities.

These experiences reinforce an important lesson: workforce success is not determined solely by technical skill. The ability to communicate, collaborate, build relationships and develop professional networks is equally important. SkillsUSA provides students with authentic opportunities to practice these skills in a supportive environment while developing confidence and professionalism.

For many participants, the medals, contests and awards are significant accomplishments. However, the friendships formed, mentors discovered and professional relationships established during the conference often become the most lasting and meaningful outcomes of the National Leadership and Skills Conference experience.

The connections made through SkillsUSA create a nationwide network of future professionals who share a commitment to leadership, service, technical excellence and career success. These relationships represent one of the most powerful and enduring benefits of participation in SkillsUSA.

Championships Overview

The SkillsUSA Championships serve as the centerpiece of the National Leadership and Skills Conference and represent the largest showcase of Career and Technical Education students in the nation. Designed and evaluated by business and industry professionals, the championships assess technical knowledge, workplace readiness and leadership skills using industry-driven standards. Students compete in more than 100 contest areas spanning advanced manufacturing, construction, transportation, information technology, healthcare, communications, hospitality, public safety and leadership development.

Tennessee College/Postsecondary students delivered one of the strongest performances in state history at the 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference. Competing against the nation's top Career and Technical Education students, Tennessee earned 63 national medals, including 23 Gold Medals, 23 Silver Medals and 17 Bronze Medals. These results reflect the quality of instruction, student preparation and workforce-focused education occurring throughout Tennessee's community colleges, Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology and university partners.

Tennessee's performance positioned the state as the largest medal-winning College/Postsecondary delegation in the nation, earning more medals than any other state in the College/Postsecondary division. Across all educational divisions combined, Tennessee finished as the second-highest medal-earning state in the nation, demonstrating the strength of Career and Technical Education programs throughout the state.

The depth of Tennessee's success extended well beyond medal placements. Of Tennessee's 123 College/Postsecondary competitors, 76 competitors (61.8%) earned Top 5 finishes nationally, while 102 competitors (82.9%) placed in the Top 10 nationally. These statistics demonstrate consistent excellence across a broad range of technical, leadership and occupational areas and reflect Tennessee's ability to prepare students for success at the highest levels of national competition.

Tennessee students earned national recognition in fields including healthcare, information technology, construction, robotics, manufacturing, communications, customer service, leadership development, public safety and skilled trades. Gold Medal performances were achieved in contests such as Masonry, Web Design and Development, Employment Application Process, Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Robotics and Automation Technology, Robotics Urban Search and Rescue, Occupational Health and Safety, Customer Service, Health Occupations Professional Portfolio, Internetworking and Sheet Metal.

The championships provide more than recognition for technical excellence. Each contest is designed in partnership with industry leaders to evaluate the skills, knowledge and professional competencies employers expect in today's workforce. As a result, success in the SkillsUSA Championships serves as a powerful validation of workforce readiness and career preparation.

These accomplishments reinforce Tennessee's reputation as a national leader in Career and Technical Education and demonstrate the effectiveness of the Tennessee Board of Regents'

commitment to student success, workforce development and employer engagement. The results achieved at the 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference reflect not only competitive success, but also the preparation of highly skilled professionals who are ready to contribute to Tennessee's economy and workforce upon graduation.

Student Success and Engagement

The Tennessee Board of Regents emphasizes creating meaningful student experiences that increase engagement, confidence, leadership capacity and career readiness. Participation in the National Leadership and Skills Conference provided approximately 300 Tennessee students with experiential learning opportunities that extended well beyond traditional classroom instruction.

Students represented Tennessee in national competitions, leadership development programs, community service initiatives, industry engagement activities and governance processes. Through LEVERAGE, the Delegate Program, networking activities and professional development experiences, students strengthened communication, leadership, critical thinking and teamwork skills while building confidence and expanding professional networks. These experiences support student persistence, engagement and personal growth while preparing students for success beyond graduation.

Leadership Development and Civic Responsibility

The Tennessee Board of Regents recognizes leadership development as an essential component of student success. SkillsUSA provides students with opportunities to practice leadership through authentic experiences that mirror workplace and community responsibilities.

Students participated in the national Delegate Program, parliamentary procedure training, leadership development sessions and governance activities while representing Tennessee in national decision-making processes. More than 60 Tennessee participants also contributed to the Sleep in Heavenly Peace community service project, demonstrating civic engagement, teamwork and service leadership.

These experiences develop the leadership competencies employers seek while reinforcing the importance of responsible citizenship and community engagement.

Institutional Excellence and Recognition

The accomplishments achieved by Tennessee institutions at NLSC demonstrate the quality of education and workforce preparation occurring across the Tennessee Board of Regents system.

Tennessee College/Postsecondary earned the largest medal count in the College/Postsecondary division and ranked second nationally overall in total medals earned. More than 61% of Tennessee competitors finished in the Top 5 nationally, while nearly 83% placed in the Top 10. In addition, TCAT Pulaski earned Tennessee College/Postsecondary's first-ever national Models

of Excellence Championship in Workplace Skills, one of the highest honors awarded by SkillsUSA.

These outcomes provide measurable evidence that Tennessee institutions are successfully preparing students for leadership, employment and lifelong success.

Advancing Tennessee's Workforce and Economy

The National Leadership and Skills Conference serves as more than a student competition. It is a workforce development initiative that aligns directly with the Tennessee Board of Regents mission to prepare students for meaningful careers while supporting the workforce needs of Tennessee employers.

Through national competition, industry engagement, leadership development, service learning and workforce-focused experiences, Tennessee students demonstrated the knowledge, skills and professionalism needed to contribute to the state's economic growth and future prosperity. The accomplishments highlighted throughout this report represent tangible evidence of the Tennessee Board of Regents' strategic priorities in action and demonstrate the value of continued investment in Career and Technical Education, workforce partnerships and student leadership development.

Institutional Highlights

Chattanooga Masonry College

Chattanooga Masonry College earned national recognition through Louis Santos, who captured a Gold Medal in Masonry. His achievement highlights the importance of skilled trades education and the continued demand for highly trained craft professionals within Tennessee's construction workforce.

Chattanooga State Community College

Chattanooga State Community College earned eight Gold Medals, highlighted by a national championship performance in Opening and Closing Ceremonies and a Gold Medal in Employment Application Process. The institution demonstrated excellence in leadership, professionalism and career readiness. This is their first time to compete.

Motlow State Community College

Motlow State students earned three Silver Medals in Emergency Medical Technician and Mobile Electronics Installation, demonstrating strong technical preparation and workforce readiness in high-demand fields.

Northeast State Community College

Northeast State earned national recognition in Collision Damage Appraisal, Job Skills Demonstration A and Facility Leadership in Facility Management, producing multiple national medalists across diverse occupational areas.

Pellissippi State Community College

Pellissippi State earned national medals in Audio Production, Graphic Communications and Career and Technical Educator. Tennessee State President Louis Rey Valenzuela II also represented the institution while serving as a national student leader and competitor.

Southern Adventist University

Southern Adventist University earned two Gold Medals in Web Design and Development, demonstrating excellence in technology and digital communications.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Chattanooga

TCAT Chattanooga earned national medals across Human Services, Agriculture, Barbering, Job Skill Demonstration Open and Technical Computer Applications, highlighting the breadth of technical talent developed across the institution.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Crump

TCAT Crump earned a Gold Medal in HVAC along with Silver Medals in Interactive Application and Video Development, demonstrating strength in both skilled trades and technology programs.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Dickson

TCAT Dickson earned two Gold Medals in Robotics Urban Search and Rescue, showcasing excellence in automation, teamwork and technical problem solving.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Hartsville

TCAT Hartsville earned three Gold Medals in Occupational Health and Safety along with Silver Medal performances in T-Shirt Design and Internet of Things Smart Home, demonstrating excellence across multiple technical pathways.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Memphis

TCAT Memphis earned seven Bronze Medals as members of the national Quiz Bowl team competition, demonstrating strong professional knowledge and teamwork skills.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Morristown

TCAT Morristown earned two Gold Medals and three Silver Medals across Internetworking, Sheet Metal and Engineering Technology Design, making it one of Tennessee's strongest overall medal-producing institutions.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Murfreesboro

TCAT Murfreesboro earned two Gold Medals in Robotics and Automation Technology, reflecting excellence in advanced manufacturing and automation.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Nashville

TCAT Nashville earned national recognition with a Silver Medal in Cosmetology, demonstrating excellence in personal services and workforce preparation.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Northwest

TCAT Northwest earned two Gold Medals and one Silver Medal in Customer Service, Health Occupations Professional Portfolio and First Aid/CPR, reflecting strong preparation in healthcare and customer-focused industries.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Oneida/Huntsville

TCAT Oneida/Huntsville earned three Silver Medals in Promotional Bulletin Board, showcasing creativity, communication skills and effective marketing practices.

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

UTC earned two Bronze Medals in Career Pathways – Industrial and Engineering Technology, demonstrating student excellence in engineering and industrial career preparation.

Appendix A: Tennessee College/Postsecondary Contest Results

2026 SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference Finalists, Rankings and Medalists

Institution	Student	Contest	Medal
Chattanooga Masonry College	Louis Santos	Masonry	Gold
Chattanooga State Community College	Patricia Moreno	Employment Application Process	Gold

Institution	Student	Contest	Medal
Chattanooga State Community College	Kellee Armour	Opening & Closing Ceremonies	Gold
Chattanooga State Community College	Alexis Dube	Opening & Closing Ceremonies	Gold
Chattanooga State Community College	Amy Jimenez	Opening & Closing Ceremonies	Gold
Chattanooga State Community College	Jocelyn Rocha	Opening & Closing Ceremonies	Gold
Chattanooga State Community College	Abbi Salyers	Opening & Closing Ceremonies	Gold
Chattanooga State Community College	Casey Smith	Opening & Closing Ceremonies	Gold
Chattanooga State Community College	Alex Varner	Opening & Closing Ceremonies	Gold
Motlow State Community College	Emma Manwaring	Emergency Medical Technician	Silver
Motlow State Community College	Nicholas Tabbot	Emergency Medical Technician	Silver
Motlow State Community College	Dylan Dupree	Mobile Electronics Installation	Silver
Northeast State Community College	Emmalee Johnson	Collision Damage Appraisal	Silver
Northeast State Community College	Corey Green	Facility Leadership in Facility Management	Bronze
Northeast State Community College	Josie Tonies	Job Skills Demonstration A	Silver
Pellissippi State Community College	Hannah Almon	Audio Production	Silver
Pellissippi State Community College	Hannah Smith	Audio Production	Silver
Pellissippi State Community College	Louis Rey Valenzuela II	Career & Technical Educator	Bronze
Pellissippi State Community College	Nia Traore	Graphic Communication	Silver
Southern Adventist University	Logan Gardner	Web Design & Development	Gold
Southern Adventist University	Shinny No	Web Design & Development	Gold
TCAT Chattanooga	Joshua Barnes	Career Pathways – Human Services	Silver
TCAT Chattanooga	Solomon Williams	Career Pathways – Human Services	Silver
TCAT Chattanooga	Monchel Young	Career Pathways – Human Services	Silver
TCAT Chattanooga	Logan Cintron	Career Pathways Agricultural, Food, Natural Resources	Bronze

Institution	Student	Contest	Medal
TCAT Chattanooga	Ronald Hill	Career Pathways Agricultural, Food, Natural Resources	Bronze
TCAT Chattanooga	Zachary Wilson	Career Pathways Agricultural, Food, Natural Resources	Bronze
TCAT Chattanooga	Juan Robledo	Barbering	Bronze
TCAT Chattanooga	Sara Hansen	Job Skill Demonstration Open	Bronze
TCAT Chattanooga	Joel Dieguez	Technical Computer Applications	Bronze
TCAT Crump	Jeff Fienderg	HVAC	Gold
TCAT Crump	Benjamin Cromwell	Interactive Application & Video Development	Silver
TCAT Crump	Skye Moffitt	Interactive Application & Video Development	Silver
TCAT Dickson	Elijah Buckner	Robotics Urban Search & Rescue	Gold
TCAT Dickson	Reuben Brown	Robotics Urban Search & Rescue	Gold
TCAT Hartsville	Thomas Boner	Occupational Health & Safety	Gold
TCAT Hartsville	Wendell Carver	Occupational Health & Safety	Gold
TCAT Hartsville	Angelito Gonzalez	Occupational Health & Safety	Gold
TCAT Hartsville	Mason Adcock	T-Shirt Design	Silver
TCAT Hartsville	James Stenski	Internet of Things (IoT) Smart Home	Silver
TCAT Memphis	Ava Benitez	Quiz Bowl	Bronze
TCAT Memphis	Jakela Davis	Quiz Bowl	Bronze
TCAT Memphis	Kayla Johnson	Quiz Bowl	Bronze
TCAT Memphis	Zachary Kemp	Quiz Bowl	Bronze
TCAT Memphis	Saniyah Maynard	Quiz Bowl	Bronze
TCAT Memphis	Shelissa McNeal	Quiz Bowl	Bronze
TCAT Memphis	Dylan Thompson	Quiz Bowl	Bronze
TCAT Morristown	William Loftis	Internetworking	Gold
TCAT Morristown	Noah Lindsey	Sheet Metal	Gold
TCAT Morristown	Craig Cook	Engineering Technology – Design	Silver
TCAT Morristown	Joshua Murphy	Engineering Technology – Design	Silver
TCAT Morristown	Samuel Nichols	Engineering Technology – Design	Silver
TCAT Murfreesboro	Jared Eshelman	Robotics & Automation Technology	Gold
TCAT Murfreesboro	Adrian Najar	Robotics & Automation Technology	Gold
TCAT Nashville	Riley Russell	Cosmetology	Silver
TCAT Northwest	Adreana Gammon	Customer Service	Gold
TCAT Northwest	Tymarshea Miller	Health Occupations Professional Portfolio	Gold
TCAT Northwest	Nicholas Adams	First Aid/CPR	Silver
TCAT Oneida/Huntsville	Ryan Householder	Promotional Bulletin Board	Silver
TCAT Oneida/Huntsville	Dakota McBride	Promotional Bulletin Board	Silver
TCAT Oneida/Huntsville	Shaya Smith	Promotional Bulletin Board	Silver

Institution	Student	Contest	Medal
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga	Trey Mastin	Career Pathways – Industrial & Engineering Technology	Bronze
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga	Jayden Washington	Career Pathways – Industrial & Engineering Technology	Bronze

Tennessee Medal Totals

- Gold: 23
- Silver: 23
- Bronze: 17
- Total Medals: 63

Skill Point Certificates

- 68 Skill Point Certificates Earned by Tennessee College/Postsecondary Competitors

"The College System of Tennessee is dedicated to student success and workforce development, preparing Tennesseans for high-skill, high-wage and high-demand careers that strengthen our communities and economy."

— **Dr. Flora W. Tydings, Chancellor, Tennessee Board of Regents**

State Director Reflection

As I reflect on Tennessee's participation in the 2026 National Leadership and Skills Conference, I am filled with gratitude and pride. While the medals, championships and national recognition are certainly worthy of celebration, they tell only part of the story. What impressed me most was the character, professionalism and determination demonstrated by our students throughout the week.

I watched students step outside their comfort zones, compete against the best in the nation, engage with industry leaders, serve their communities, build new friendships and grow as leaders. I saw students support one another in victory and defeat, represent their institutions with integrity and embrace opportunities that will shape their futures for years to come. Those moments are the true measure of success.

This year's delegation represented the very best of Tennessee. From our national medalists and Models of Excellence champions to our delegates, state officers, community service participants and first-time competitors, every student contributed to a legacy of excellence that extends far beyond competition results. Together, they demonstrated the value of Career and Technical Education and the transformative impact of SkillsUSA.

I am equally proud of the advisors, instructors, administrators and industry partners who invested countless hours preparing students for this opportunity. Their commitment to student success made these accomplishments possible and continues to strengthen the workforce and communities we serve.

Most importantly, I am proud of the way our students represented Tennessee. They returned home with medals, certifications, professional connections and unforgettable experiences, but they also returned with increased confidence, leadership skills and a clearer vision for their future. Those outcomes will continue to create value long after the conference has ended.

The success of Tennessee's delegation is not measured solely by the 63 medals earned, the 68 Skill Point Certificates awarded, or the national championship titles achieved. It is measured by the lives changed, the careers launched, the leaders developed and the opportunities created for students across our state.

Thank you to every student, advisor, administrator, institution decision-maker, partner and our Chancellor who helped make this historic year possible. Your dedication, hard work and belief in the mission of SkillsUSA continue to make Tennessee a national leader in workforce development, student success and Career and Technical Education.

I could not be more proud of what Tennessee accomplished, but even more importantly, I could not be more proud of the people who accomplished it.

— **Daphne Brown**

State Director, SkillsUSA Tennessee College/Postsecondary Division
Tennessee Board of Regents