

# WESTERN DAKOTA TECH

800 Mickelson Dr. • Rapid City, SD 57703  
p. (800)544-8765 p. (605)394-4034 f. (605)394-1789

November 27, 2018

ATEA Silver Star of Excellence Award  
Letter of Endorsement

RE: Regional Health System

Dear ATEA Silver Star of Excellence Award Committee:

I am writing to nominate Regional Health System, headquartered in Rapid City, South Dakota, as the Silver Star of Excellence Award recipient. Regional Health is the primary health care provider in the Black Hills region of western South Dakota and has been an exemplary partner for Western Dakota Tech and technical education.

Regional Health is very generous in providing several medical programs at Western Dakota Tech with supplies, including surgical, laboratory, and medical simulation materials. These contributions save Western Dakota Tech money each year and shows Regional Health's clear commitment to health-related education. Recently, Western Dakota Tech built an 8,500 square foot medical simulation center to provide state-of-the-art training to students as well as community healthcare providers. Regional Health was integral in that project. In fact, the simulation center is designed to look like Regional Hospital, and Regional Health's leadership and staff were very generous in giving input and granting access to their facilities to ensure the simulation experiences at Western Dakota Tech closely mimic the actual look and feel of the largest healthcare facility in our region.

Regional Health has also provided training for Western Dakota Tech faculty and students at their facilities for no charge to the College—most recently an opportunity for the surgical technology students to learn about the Da Vinci Robotics operating technology. Regional Health routinely provides conference room space for large association meetings held by many of Western Dakota Tech's medical programs. In addition, they have provided HIPAA training and countless hours of clinical space and preceptor time for Western Dakota Tech's LPN, surgical technology, medical lab tech, phlebotomy, and paramedic program students at their sites. The medical director for Western Dakota Tech's paramedic program is the current Chief Emergency Officer at Regional Health.

As part of its commitment to health education, Regional Health provides facility space to two nursing schools, the South Dakota State University nursing school and the University of South Dakota nursing school. This facility allows training that otherwise would not be available in our community.

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Regional Health has also partnered with Western Dakota Tech, South Dakota State University, the University of South Dakota, and other community health groups to develop a regional Area Health Education Center (AHEC). This Center will provide resources for community health training and medical field “pipeline” development in western South Dakota. Regional Health’s staff members will be called upon to provide some of the important community training, as well as to partner with the region’s schools to encourage students to consider medical careers. While headquartered in Rapid City, Regional Health also has hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities in smaller communities that serve residents of rural western South Dakota. These facilities are critical to the AHEC program and the goal of sustaining quality healthcare in rural areas of our state.

Western Dakota Tech holds an interdisciplinary simulated mass casualty event each spring semester to give students an opportunity to practice their skills in conjunction with students from other programs. To carry out a training session this complex, many community volunteers assist. Over the past three years, Regional Health has sent employees from many different departments, including emergency doctors, to mentor students and carry out a variety of simulation roles.

Not only does Regional Health provide educational benefits to its employees to encourage them to upskill, often in Western Dakota Tech programs, but this year, Regional Health has stepped up to provide Build Dakota scholarship matching funds so that three of Western Dakota Tech’s LPN students can attend nursing school on a full-ride scholarship. Regional Health is also a major employer of Western Dakota Tech graduates. In fact, Regional Health alone employed just under 10% of Western Dakota Tech’s total graduating class of 2017.

Employees of Regional Health sit on several Western Dakota Tech advisory committees, including medically-related programs such as for the LPN, surgical technology, health information technology, paramedic, medical assisting, medical lab tech, phlebotomy, and Simulation Center. In addition, Regional Health employees sit on advisory boards for the business computer science programs, since the hospital system hires graduates from these programs as well. Currently, Regional Health has 20 employees from varying departments that participate in 10 different Western Dakota Tech advisory boards. Regional Health’s ties to Western Dakota Tech are such that Regional Health’s representatives on Western Dakota Tech advisory boards are often Western Dakota Tech graduates themselves, so their advice and insight are highly valued.

Representatives from Regional Health also sit on the College’s community-based “Skilled Workforce Advocacy Council” (SWAC) and on the College’s Foundation Board. Regional Health has provided ideas and feedback about potential future medical-field related programming including Diagnostic Medical Sonography and Physical Therapy Assisting most recently.

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The Rapid City Area School District has also benefited from the participation of Regional Health employees as the district has undertaken the development of a career pathways framework for the high school curriculum. Regional Hospital employees have been members of the

“STEAM2” taskforce, the district’s “Pathways Taskforce,” and the medical careers pathway work group. Regional Health was also a co-sponsor of the district’s 8<sup>th</sup> grade career fair, which was held on the Western Dakota Tech campus. Their participation in these efforts benefits students, employers, and our community.

Western Dakota Tech is very grateful to Regional Health for the multiple layers of support they provide to Western Dakota Tech, not just Western Dakota Tech’s medical-related fields. Regional Health System has earned every ounce of the recognition the ATEA Silver Star of Excellence Award bestows.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this proposal.

*Ann Bolman, Ed.D.*

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