

Strategic Affiliation Monthly Newsletter

November 2025

Fort Hays Tech Affiliation plays key role in successful Ellis County Career Expo

On October 29th, the Ellis County Career Expo brought together more than 900 high school students from across Ellis County for a dynamic day of career exploration and community engagement. Hosted at the new Hays High School and sponsored by The Chamber in Hays, along with premier sponsor Hess Services, the event featured over 30 local businesses and organizations eager to share post-secondary pathways and employment opportunities with students in grades 10 through 12.

Among the standout contributors was the Fort Hays Tech Affiliation, whose member schools showcased a wide array of technical and career-focused programs designed to prepare students for the evolving workforce in Western Kansas. Their presence underscored a shared commitment to building a robust talent pipeline and supporting rural vitality through education and workforce development. of shared collaboration and purpose.

Ben Schears, Vice President for Economic and Workforce Development at Fort Hays State University, attended the event and praised the collaborative spirit on display. "It's inspiring to see our affiliated schools working hand-in-hand with local businesses and community leaders," Schears said.



"Together, we're creating real opportunities for students to envision their futures right here in Ellis County, and that's how we keep our communities strong."

The Fort Hays Tech Affiliation's involvement exemplifies how educational institutions can play a pivotal role in regional workforce development. By connecting students with hands-on learning and career pathways, they are helping to shape a future where Ellis County thrives.



Fort Hays Tech | NW transfer students work on creating materials for the upcoming Fred P. Ruda Teaming up for Tots event Dec. 6. The project, assembling monster trucks, will be open to the community. Jackson Yost is pictured on the left and Ella Wolf and Zach Pixler are on the right. The students are taking part in Zach's fall semester class: Materials, Processes and Production..



The Aspen Institute names
Fort Hays Tech | North Central
a Top 200 U.S. Community
College eligible for the 2027
Aspen Prize



The Aspen Institute named Fort Hays Tech | North Central as one of the 200 institutions eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation's premier recognition of high achievement and performance among two-year colleges.

The 200 colleges were selected based on their student outcomes data, including retention, completion, transfer, and bachelor's attainment rates. Started in 2010, this is the ninth cycle of the Aspen Prize.

"It is an honor and a blessing for Fort Hays Tech | North Central to be recognized as one of the top 2-year colleges in the United States," said Eric Burks, President of Fort Hays Tech | North Central. "This is a testament to the dedication and efforts of our faculty, staff, and students. We are all focused on helping students succeed, so it is very rewarding to know that our student success metrics are among the best in the nation."

Two-year colleges educate nearly six million students. Yet their student outcomes often fall short in both the rate at which students graduate and the percentage of students who achieve success after graduation. The Aspen Prize process identifies and celebrates two-year colleges that demonstrate that achieving stronger outcomes is possible, providing a roadmap of effective practices and strategies for other colleges to follow.

"The Aspen Prize rewards colleges that achieve the kind of outcomes that actually matter to students—completing college degree programs that, in turn, lead to lifelong success," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. "Aspen Prize winners offer a powerful message: Community (two-year) colleges can deliver the kind of life-changing education that makes the American Dream real."

Check out the new Construction Career Center
at Fort Hays Tech | North Central in Hays



This project is on schedule and will be open in time for the start of classes for the Spring 2026 semester. This expansion project stands two stories tall and will provide almost 30,000 square feet of instructional space.

The new facility will dramatically expand enrollment in Construction Technology, Plumbing, Heating, and Air Conditioning (PHAC), Electrical Technology, and Commercial Driver's License (CDL) programs, effectively doubling the number of students served.

Fort Hays Tech | Northwest has a new press box



On November 20, a Tiny House built by the talented Construction Technology and Electrical Technology programs team at Fort Hays Tech | Northwest was moved across campus to the softball fields to serve in its new role as Tech Tiger Softball Press Box.