

## Frequently Asked Questions



### Why is Build Dakota supporting full-ride scholarships?

Several workforce categories in South Dakota have been identified as high need. This means there is a shortage of skilled employees available to fill the workforce. The Build Dakota Scholarship was created to be a catalyst to solve this problem. By providing full-ride scholarships and creating industry partnerships, Build Dakota can get more skilled employees into the state's workforce. Build Dakota Scholars receive a free education, businesses gain employees, and South Dakota grows. We all win!

### What are Western Dakota Tech's requirements for the Build Dakota Scholarship?

A student must:

- Be accepted into one of Western Dakota Tech's 18 Build Dakota eligible programs.
- Be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national (Must meet citizenship eligibility requirements according to the federal financial aid regulations).
- Complete the FREE Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). **Please note that individuals at all income levels are encouraged to apply.**
- Agree to follow Western Dakota Tech's Build Dakota scholar expectations (see attached).

### When does the application open and close?

The application will be open from **January 1 through March 31** every year.

### Can I still apply after the application cycle has ended?

No. However, Western Dakota Tech's Foundation offers scholarships for every Western Dakota Tech program, every semester.

Application/Commitment/Selection

### How do I apply for the Build Dakota scholarship?

- First, apply for one of Western Dakota Tech's Build Dakota qualified programs by filling out the free application located on our website. [www.wdt.edu](http://www.wdt.edu).
- Next, go to the AwardSpring scholarship platform. Follow the AwardSpring instruction located on our website to login. AwardSpring will show a list of scholarships being offered to Western Dakota Tech's students. Click on the Build Dakota scholarship to fill out the application. [www.wdt.awardspring.com](http://www.wdt.awardspring.com).

The application allows you to upload current career certifications, if applicable, and share your

academic and work experiences. Just as in a job application, use the scholarship application to demonstrate your experience and skill and/or interest in the program area for which you apply.

**Note: Because the Build Dakota Scholarship is highly competitive, make sure to fill out the application completely and include all documents requested.**

## **Can I apply for Build Dakota before I apply for admission at Western Dakota Tech?**

No. You must fill out the free application for admissions to gain the credentials to login to AwardSpring. If you are a high school senior, graduating before July 15, 2021, you can still apply for admission at Western Dakota Tech and for the scholarship during the Build Dakota application period. You must have your high school diploma or GED prior to being “officially” awarded the scholarship.

## **What is the commitment if I accept the scholarship?**

Awarded scholars agree to:

- Enroll full-time in one of the 18 Build Dakota Scholarship-eligible programs.
- Maintain Western Dakota Tech’s expectations for Build Dakota scholars.
- Maintain a 2.5 cumulative grade point average.
- Complete the program on time.
  - Diploma programs typically require 1 to 1.5 years.
  - AAS degree programs require two years.
- Live and work full-time in South Dakota, in your field of study, for a minimum of three years, following graduation.
- Industry partner awardees must also meet any additional commitments to their industry sponsor.

## **How are Build Dakota recipients selected?**

Applications are reviewed by Western Dakota Tech’s Scholarship Committee. Applications are “blind” meaning committee members don’t see any identifying information about the applicant.

Considerations are given, but not limited to:

- Knowledge/interest in the area of study
- Industry partnerships (**Please see the next paragraph**)
- Work experience
- High school CTE coursework
- Awards and certifications
- GPA
- Program availability

## **What is an industry partnership?**

Because the Build Dakota Scholarship was created in response to a workforce need in South

Dakota, businesses are working closely with the scholarship program at Western Dakota Tech through our Have Your Pick, Industry Partnership program. This allows Western Dakota Tech to offer as many scholarships as possible to train skilled professionals for high demand careers. Employers, sponsor students, pay for a portion of the scholarship expenses, and the Build Dakota Scholarship pays the balance. Sponsored students agree to work for their Sponsor following graduation. This extends the employers' training dollars and they gain skilled employees.

## How do I obtain an industry sponsor?

There are two ways a Western Dakota Tech applicant can obtain a sponsor:

- Applicants who are either working for, or know of an employer willing to sponsor them, can contact the Assistant Director of Scholarships and she will work with the employer to get the required documentation completed.
- Applicants can indicate on their application that they would like Western Dakota Tech's industry partners to view their application. Industry partners can then choose whether or not they would like to interview the applicant for a possible sponsorship.

**Note:** Applicants do not need an industry sponsor to be awarded a Build Dakota Scholarship. However, sponsored students receive additional consideration during the awards process.

## When will I be notified if I have received a Build Dakota Scholarship?

If you are selected for a Build Dakota Scholarship, you will be notified by the Assistant Director of Scholarships with further instructions on how to complete the acceptance process. Most applicants will be notified before **June 1, 2021**.

## Commonly asked questions

### What expenses does the Build Dakota Scholarship cover?

The Build Dakota Scholarship covers any expenses directly related to program requirements. This includes tuition, fees, books, laptops, uniforms, equipment and tools. It does not include office supplies e.g. paper, notebooks, pencils, etc. If a scholar wishes to purchase additional or optional equipment, books, or tools, it is at his or her own expense. The Build Dakota Scholarship does not pay for any housing or living expenses.

### How do I get the required tools or computer for my program?

Each year the Build Dakota qualified programs submit a tool list to the Western Dakota Tech bookstore. The bookstore will order the necessary tools, uniforms, and computer prior to the start of the scholars first semester.

### What is considered full-time?

Students are considered full-time if they take enough classes to graduate in the allotted time.

## **If I have already earned credits that prevent me from being full-time for a given semester, can I still receive the scholarship?**

Entering a program with credits that apply toward graduation and/or testing out of a required course will not prevent you from receiving and maintaining a Build Dakota Scholarship. Build Dakota scholars are required to be “as full-time as possible”.

## **Will Build Dakota pay for test-out fees?**

Yes. Any cost for fees associated with testing out of classes will be paid by Build Dakota.

## **Does the scholarship cover remedial, preparatory coursework, or other classes that are not part of my program?**

If remedial or preparatory courses are required prior to the start of a Build Dakota eligible program, they are covered by the scholarship, but the need for these courses must be determined and recommended by Western Dakota Tech.

## **I’ve already graduated from a technical college. Do I qualify for this scholarship?**

This depends on your individual circumstances. If you currently have a degree in a field that has not been designated as high-need and you wish to get a degree in a high-need area, you may qualify for this scholarship. If you currently have a degree in a high-need field and wish to move to a different high-need field, contact the Assistant Director of Scholarships.

## **If I’m not planning to start my classes until the spring can I still qualify for the scholarship?**

Yes, however, because so many technical programs are cohort-based, spring term starts may not be available.

**Note: LPN graduates applying for the RN program CAN receive a Build Dakota scholarship if they have an Industry Partner.**

## **Why do I have to apply for financial aid?**

Completing the FAFSA is a requirement to qualify for the scholarship. It is beneficial to complete the FAFSA to determine eligibility for grants that can be used for living expenses. The FAFSA should be completed every year you are in school.

## **If I receive a Pell Grant, how does that affect my Build Dakota Scholarship?**

Pell grants do not affect the amount awarded for Build Dakota Scholarships and can be used for living expenses while attending school.

## **Can I qualify for the scholarship if I am in default on a federal student loan or owe a financial aid overpayment?**

This is considered a disqualifying event; feel free to apply once the default has been made current.

## **Can I receive other financial aid and scholarships if I receive this scholarship?**

Yes, however, because there are regulations tied to certain types of funds, it is recommended you contact the Assistant Director of Scholarships for questions regarding your individual situation.

## **Why doesn't every program offered at Western Dakota Tech qualify for the Build Dakota Scholarship?**

Each year, the Build Dakota Administrative Board, SD Technical Colleges, and Department of Education work closely with the Department of Labor and Regulation to determine which industries have the highest need for skilled professionals in South Dakota.

## **Can I transfer my Build Dakota Scholarship to another technical college or university?**

No. If a scholar is awarded a Build Dakota Scholarship from Western Dakota Tech, the scholarship will only be available at Western Dakota Tech.

## **How will I know what to do after I graduate?**

The Build Dakota administrative staff will visit Western Dakota Tech to meet with Build Dakota scholars prior to graduation to make sure graduates understand how to comply with the employment requirements. It is the responsibility of the scholar to make sure they attend this meeting.

## **What type of job is required after graduation?**

Scholars must work in the field the Build Dakota Scholarship paid for.

## **How long do I have to secure a job after graduation?**

Scholars who haven't secured an industry sponsored have 6 months after graduation to begin employment. Scholars who are sponsored will work with their sponsor to determine when they begin employment.

## **How is the three-year employment commitment tracked?**

The Build Dakota administrative staff will conduct yearly employment verification with Build Dakota Scholars, the SD Department of Labor and Regulation, and the employers of Build Dakota scholars.

## **Can I be self-employed?**

Self-employment will be approved in some circumstances; however, the scholar must be prepared to submit legal documentation of self-employment on a full-time basis.

## **What if I can't find a job after graduation?**

Build Dakota Scholarship programs have been specifically chosen to fill high-need areas in South Dakota and open positions usually exceed the number of applicants. Western Dakota Tech has a very high placement rate and most scholars will be employed prior to graduation. Students can work with Western Dakota Tech's Career Services office, the Build Dakota website has a list of industry partners looking to employ skilled scholars, and the Department of Labor offices have

remarkable resources for helping job seekers secure employment. A list of local offices can be found here: <http://dlr.sd.gov/localoffices/default.aspx>

### **What if I don't fulfill the three-year work commitment?**

The requirements of the work commitment are outlined in the student agreement. If the scholar does not complete the terms of the agreement, the scholarship will convert to a loan. If the scholar completes a portion of the work commitment, the loan amount will be pro-rated based on the amount of time worked.

## **Debt Conversion**

### **Under what circumstances would the scholarship convert to a loan?**

If a scholar does not complete the terms of his or her Build Dakota student agreement or their industry sponsorship agreement, it will be converted to a loan and the funds allocated for that scholar will be used to provide a scholarship to a new scholar.

### **What if I quit school during the first month of enrollment?**

Any items paid for by the scholarship will be converted to a loan. This includes any tuition, fees, tools, uniforms, computer and any other expenses paid for on behalf of the Build Dakota Scholarship. Because all the tools required to complete the program are purchased prior to a scholar's first semester, the scholar will be responsible for re-payment of those items.

### **What is the interest rate if my scholarship converts to a loan?**

Scholarships converted to loans through June 30, 2021, will have a 4% annual interest rate. A copy of the loan promissory note can be found on our website.

### **Can I appeal the decision to convert the scholarship to a loan?**

All scholars have the right to request an appeal by the Build Dakota administrative board. Requests must be submitted within the 10 days following the date the scholar was notified of the decision to convert the scholarship to a loan. Contact the program manager for questions regarding an appeal.

For additional information visit the Western Dakota Tech website at [www.wdt.edu](http://www.wdt.edu)

Or contact the Assistant Director of Scholarships:

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