

## Tips for Applicants

At Lake Area Technical College, most scholars receive a Build Dakota Scholarship through an industry partnership; our industry program is called Stretch-the-Million (STM). The company pays for a portion of the scholarship and the student commits to fulfill their 3-year work commitment with that company.

### Tip #1 **It's never too early to start looking for a STM partner**

Ask about job shadowing or internship opportunities that could provide an inside look at the job duties and work environment. If you have time, consider doing this with a few different companies.

### Tip #2 **Choose the right STM partner for you**

It is not possible to switch companies at any time during your education or work commitment. Be sure to vet the company as much as they are vetting you, and only accept an offer from the company that feels like the best fit for you.

### Tip #3 **Determine any preferences for location after graduation**

Are you open to going anywhere in the state, or do you have a community specifically in mind, such as your hometown area? Knowing your preference will be helpful to you and future interviewers to maximize your time and efforts in this process.

### Tip #4 **If you currently work for a company you'd like to stay with...**

Ask if they would consider a Build Dakota/STM partnership with you. We have seen companies of all sizes and locations find value in this program. (See Tip #6)

### Tip #5 **If you are looking for companies in your industry...**

Feel free to start with the Industry Partner webpages which feature current/recent companies that have worked with the Build Dakota Scholarship program.

✓ **Lake Area Tech STM Partners –**

Logo links to company website for more details and contact information

[LakeAreaTech.edu/Connections/Foundation/Scholarships/Build-Dakota-Scholarships/Build-Dakota-Stretch-the-Million-Partners/](https://LakeAreaTech.edu/Connections/Foundation/Scholarships/Build-Dakota-Scholarships/Build-Dakota-Stretch-the-Million-Partners/)

✓ **Build Dakota Industry Partners (statewide) –**

[BuildDakotaScholarships.com/Industry-Partners/](https://BuildDakotaScholarships.com/Industry-Partners/)

Search “(robotics) jobs South Dakota” to see who hires for these types of positions.

✓ **LATC Career Opportunities** [LakeAreaTech.edu/About-Us/Jobs](https://LakeAreaTech.edu/About-Us/Jobs)

✓ **SD Department of Labor** [SouthDakotaWorks.org](https://SouthDakotaWorks.org)

### Tip #6 **Industry partnerships are not limited to “the list.”**

All companies are welcome to participate as long as they have a location in South Dakota where the student can work full-time using their degree for three years following graduation. The company must commit to covering a portion of the scholarship as well -- \$11,000 for a 2-yr AAS degree, or \$5,500 for a 1-yr Diploma.

### Tip #7 **Typical Timeline**

Oct. 1 - May 1	Students complete the FAFSA form (FAFSA.gov)
Jan. 1 - Mar. 31	Students complete online application for Build Dakota Scholarship
April	Interview phase for students/companies still seeking a partnership
May	Companies provide final decision to LATC on who they wish to sponsor
June	New Student Orientation + Deadline for partnership documents
July	Companies invoiced in preparation for first semester
August	Classes begin
December	Grade report sent to company

## Tips for a Successful Meet & Greet / Interview

- Remember that interviewers have a **job** to do. They are not the enemy. Their goal is to ensure the right person is selected for the role needed by the company.
- **Be yourself.** It is impossible to pretend to be someone you think they need. Help the interviewer assess your skills and abilities by pointing out your strengths.
- Keep your answers **short and to-the-point**. We recommend 30 seconds (use the 30 Second Message, a proven success strategy). Don't ramble; yet, avoid only responding with 'yes' or 'no.' Directly answer the question and hope they ask a follow-up question to elaborate further. Ask if you answered their question.
- Sell yourself. Refer to your **training and experience** in your answer. They usually have a list of qualities and skills to seek, so help them find these in you.
- **Dress for success.** Clean clothes, clean you. Wear what makes you feel confident and professional.
- **Eye contact.** Look the interviewer in the eye and sit up straight to demonstrate confidence.
- Do not hesitate to ask your own questions! Remember that this meeting is also an **opportunity for you to interview the company** as well to determine if it will be a good fit for you. Focus on 'workplace' questions. Avoid asking about salary/benefits until after they offer to partner with you, and even then, be prepared with research about the typical salary range for the company/industry. When formulating your questions, you may consider the following topics:
  - Key qualities of the type of person they are seeking
  - Job duties
  - Skills needed
  - Training provided
  - Advancement opportunities
  - Uniform/dress code
  - Tools required
  - Working hours
  - Location / travel
  - Supervision
  - Safety procedures in place
  - What are the company's standards for success?
  - Company policies for new hires (such as probationary period)
  - Expectations for summer between 1st/2nd years of education
  - **Next steps** – how will I be notified of an offer?
- **Turn off your cell phone ringer** prior to entering the building (or leave it in the vehicle). If you wear a smartwatch, avoid looking at it during your visit.
- It's okay to talk about mistakes from **previous work experiences** if you have learned from them.
- Arrive 10 minutes **early**. Punctuality demonstrates that they can count on you and affirms your interest in the opportunity. On the same note, know where you are going (map the address, note construction, and ask about parking/entrance to use). If you run into an issue, call.
- **Attitude** – be enthusiastic and positive. Many companies dismiss candidates who are clearly not interested.
- **Prepare and practice!** Consider an interview the 'front door' to success.
- Be thoroughly prepared to answer questions from your **Build Dakota Scholarship application**.
- Speak clearly; **listen** carefully.

**Remember, you are interviewing for a full-ride scholarship and employment upon graduation.** Help yourself by being prepared and presenting yourself in a professional manner. Good luck!

## Nursing Applicants

We receive a number of questions each year regarding the Build Dakota Scholarship and Stretch-the-Million (STM) Industry Partnership program for the Practical Nursing (LPN) and Registered Nursing (RN) programs at Lake Area Technical College (LATC).



### Tip #1 **When to apply for Build Dakota**

Each year, Build Dakota's application window is January 1 - March 31.

Human Services Academics (HSA) is not currently approved by the Build Dakota board, so HSA students do not need to apply until the January application window prior to starting the LPN program. (i.e. students accepted into the Fall 2024 LPN program should apply for Build Dakota between 1/1/24 - 3/31/24.)

Build Dakota will pay for those general courses when the student is enrolled in the LPN program, but it is up to the student on how much of a credit load they want to take at a time.

### Tip #2 **LPN and RN and two separate programs**

It is important to be aware that RN program acceptance is NOT automatic. LPN and RN are two separate programs. The RN program has a competitive application and interviewing process with limited spots available.

LATC's Build Dakota team meets with LPN students early in the spring semester to walk through the process for those interested in RN as well as review post-graduation requirements for LPN.

Some students are successful in their goal of being accepted into the RN program immediately following LPN, while others begin fulfilling their LPN work commitment while they reapply for RN.

### Tip #3 **Communicate early and research options**

Typically, a person is only eligible to receive one Build Dakota Scholarship in their lifetime. Nursing is the only exception to this, but there are some rules that come with it, including staying with the same STM industry partner.

If you have an interest in RN in the future, make sure you have that conversation during initial interviews so neither you -- nor your STM partner -- is surprised later on. It is not possible to switch STM partners at any time.

## Questions

Please feel free to reach out to us with questions.

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