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Gillette College Insider
A magazine for the Gillette area and friends of Gillette College

Volume Five
2016

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or visit GC online at: www.gillettecollege.org

Cover photo:
Rachael Zeiger (center) sets the pace for Gillette College as Sam Harmon, Joan Jelimo, and Lynnet Kosgei follow her lead. The Pronghorns swept the team and individual awards for the Region IX championship during their home race at Cam-Plex Park.

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From the Vice President & CEO

Dear Friends,

In a time of economic downturn, the value of a local community college is accentuated tenfold. You have often heard me discuss the value we add to our local economy; indeed, we consider ourselves an economic driver for our region. However, in our current challenging times this is truer than ever. The value added is hopefully realized with a generation of educationally prepared workers with transferable skills suitable to other local industries that exist or may develop.

While the College does not presume to be in a position to attract new business to our community, we are in a good enough position to re-tool or prepare our next generation of workers in what should become a more diverse economy. To do so, we must continue to work closely with our partners in industry, local economic development, and the municipalities to be certain our programs are adaptable and appropriate.

A vibrant economy is one which contains good, paying jobs in rich, diverse employment sectors. While working to build a strong transfer curriculum that allows students to matriculate into many professional areas, we have also maintained a strong career focus that has primarily supported our extraction industry. Our programs develop expanded skill sets that provide students with employment alternatives in other professions. One program that particularly comes to mind is our ability to prepare a generation of workers focused on advanced manufacturing. Diversifying our economy around such industries makes tremendous sense because it requires transferable skills that many of our students and existing workforce currently possess (and if they do not, would only require minimal re-tooling). They are well-paying jobs that are attractive to men and women, and they are jobs that, if the right businesses are grown or attracted to our area, provide for a stable workforce and our ability to sustain our great community.

We are a hard-working, resilient community. Even in the face of an economic downturn, we know we have all of the pieces in place to prepare a new workforce that provides for a more diversified economy. Those community leaders who have had the vision to invest in and grow a comprehensive community college, saw the importance a college could have in the ebb and flow of the economic tides.

Community sustainability is achieved through quality healthcare, strong social service, outstanding educational opportunities, diverse employment sectors with good paying jobs, and a creative and entrepreneurial spirit among our citizenry. We take our role in helping to create a vibrant community very seriously and encourage you to help us understand emergent needs as we prepare a dynamic workforce ready to take on the changing economic climate.

Yours in Education,

Mark Englert, PhD
Gillette College Vice President & CEO

Northern Wyoming Community College District prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, national origin, color, creed, religion, sex, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preference. The District also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to its facilities. Inquiries concerning Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, Section 504, and Americans with Disabilities Act may be referred to the Vice President for Administration, Cheryl Heath, NWCCD’s Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator, Human Rights Officer, (307) 674-6446. Inquiries also may be made to the Office of Civil Rights, U. S. Department of Education, Federal Building, Suite 310, 1244 Speer Boulevard, Denver, CO 80204-3582; 303-844-3417; or TDD 303-844-3417. This publication will be provided in an alternative format upon request.

To learn more about Gillette College and our offerings, visit us online at: www.gillettecollege.org
From trucks and buses to heavy-duty machine tools and mobile equipment, diesel is the workhorse that powers the nation. In Gillette College’s Diesel Technology program, students get hands-on training. They learn how to become service technicians to repair transportation equipment, mining equipment, modern trucks, and construction equipment.

“Diesel Tech covers almost anything you’d want to know about diesel systems,” explains Caleb Kohman, a second-year Diesel Tech student. “It includes how the engines work, how fuel systems flow, electronic controls, new technologies — everything.”

Caleb knows his systems. The former Marine worked on mechanical systems during his deployment at Al Asad Airforce Base in Iraq. “It was kind of a natural evolution for me,” he says of choosing to study Diesel Tech. “I was a lead scout machine gunner, but I was actually a mechanic when I started. So this just made sense.”

Like Caleb, many non-traditional students, including veterans, have practical knowledge of certain systems or machinery but don’t have the educational credentials to keep advancing up the career ladder. The Diesel program at Gillette College aims to help aspiring technicians learn to be flexible and adapt both to customers’ needs and to the new technologies changing every year.

“Technicians have to handle all kinds of repairs,” explains Jed Jensen, Dean of Technical Career Education. “One minute, you’re working on a vehicle’s electrical system; the next, you’re doing major engine repairs. We train our students on everything from general operations to the latest electronic components so that they’re set for whatever comes next.”

For Caleb, “whatever comes next” will hopefully be some sort of mechanical career. However, he’s well aware of the costs associated with starting up. In fact, it’s what drew him to Gillette College in the first place.

“Gillette College has top-of-the-line equipment, trucks, and — most importantly — tools, they are provided for you while you attend the college, they also have all of the popular tool sets available through the major tool companies” he explains excitedly. “The fact that you don’t have to buy your own tools is huge. Just a basic set of tools costs anywhere from $15,000 to $30,000. When you have to pay for that on top of classes, it keeps a lot of people away, I think. I’m hugely thankful I can learn my trade without having to pay that cost up front.”

Caleb is poised to finish his degree later this year. When he graduates, he stands an excellent chance at finding work quickly: 90% of Gillette College Diesel graduates find employment in their first year. This kind of excellent placement is one of the program’s main selling points.

“We’re lucky to have a lot of bright students and excellent faculty,” says Gillette College VP and CEO Mark Englert. “But we want the community to know just how stellar this program is. We’re quite proud to have such a high percentage of job placements, which owes to our investment in the program, and the dedication of our instructors. We’re helping pave the way for the next big development in Diesel Tech.”

“Program Highlight”
SkillsUSA Awards 2011-2015

Every year, students in Gillette College’s Technical Education Programs have the opportunity to test their skills and knowledge against students from the region. Event champions earn the right to compete nationally against thousands of their peers.

SkillsUSA is a career-technical student organization serving students in secondary and post-secondary technical, skilled, and service occupations. SkillsUSA helps prepare America’s high-performance workers and provides quality educational experiences for students in leadership, teamwork, citizenship, and character development.

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Taking Care of Business
with John McGuire, Director of Business Education

John McGuire was hired in August 2015 to be the Director of Business Education at Gillette College. The Indiana native is now bringing his expertise and entrepreneurial spirit to students while building cooperation between the College and the local business community.

Q: How did you get started in business and entrepreneurship?
A: I graduated from Indiana University-Bloomington with a degree in Economics. Afterwards, I hitchhiked out to New York City. I had one suit packed in my backpack with a promise from one of the banks that said, “If you come out to New York, we’ll interview you” — not even a job, but just an interview.

When I finally got to New York, I got into the city at two in the morning. It was dark and unfamiliar, and it was pouring rain. So I waited through the night at a 24-hour diner. In the morning, I changed into my suit and headed out for my interview.

So, I show up for the interview, and the lady I spoke with in HR says, “Well, we’ve already given that job to somebody else!”

Q: That must have been quite a setback!
A: Well, I had just spent a few days hitchhiking and been up all night sitting in a diner, so I wasn’t about to take no for an answer. So I said, “Hang on a second, you promised me that if I made it here, you’d give me an interview.” They asked me to wait a day.

When I went in the next day, I interviewed for what turned out to be a better job, a trainee for the bank’s treasury department. It was a unique job that gave me an overview of pretty much everything a bank’s internal treasury department does. I got the job, which led me to covering all the accounts for the Far East and Europe. That was my start.

Q: How did you then go from banking to teaching Business and Entrepreneurship?
A: Entrepreneurship runs in my family. My mother’s father ran a general store in southeast Indiana, and my father’s father had his own company that built roads for the coal mines. My own father was an architect, too, so I always thought that it’s very cool to build something.
After the Soviet Union started coming apart, I decided to move to Russia to help with their new investments. I ran a venture capital fund for new businesses and did some advising for their banks, which were all new to capitalism. I also started up my own company to make American-style houses. We built a model home, and it was like nothing the people there had ever seen. They called it “Сказочный дом,” which means “the Fairytale House.”

Unfortunately, there wasn’t really much of a mortgage market, and we quickly realized we weren’t going to make the kind of money we were hoping. So, we sold the company, and then I came back to the U.S. For a few years, I wasn’t sure what I was going to do next. I thought I might go back to investment, or maybe I’d explore something else. In the meantime, I started teaching as an adjunct.

**Q: What brought you to Gillette?**

**A:** I was searching for a long time for the place that ended up being Gillette. I was looking for a place where I could take an entrepreneurial approach to education — in other words, get things done. And here in Gillette, they just kind of say, “Well, let’s try it!” We’re interested in changing for the better and not being tied to doing things in one single structured way.

My technique for teaching is, “Whatever we’re saying, let’s do it.” I’m making that the focus of our department. There should be a real connection between what we’re teaching and actual business practices in the community.

Gillette has a positive energy that I felt immediately. My goal is to help it blossom. Business has the advantage of relating to everything, so there’s really no limits to what we can do, how we can collaborate. We can be like apprentices trying out the skills and ideas. And when that happens, students benefit, faculty benefit, businesses benefit — the whole community gains.

John McGuire explains the steps in Rational Decision Making to his Introduction to Business class at Gillette College.
Gillette College is more than simply a place where people can earn certificates and degrees; it is a true member of the community. The College strives to reach out particularly to parts of the community that are often underserved.

One such group to which the College is reaching out is students with such learning disabilities as dyslexia. To help combat the stigma surrounding those for whom reading and learning is more of a challenge, Gillette College developed its first annual Learning Disabilities Summit in 2013. This conference, held in April, brings together local K-12 educators, school counselors and psychologists, and learning disabilities experts from around the nation to discuss ways to work with students with dyslexia and comorbid disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Tourette’s syndrome.

“We’ve had a very positive reaction from around the community,” said Gillette College Associate Dean of Academics Scott Engel, who has organized all three Learning Disabilities Summits. “We are very proud this year to bring in representatives from Tulane University in New Orleans and Middle Tennessee State University. It really is a great way to showcase how important these issues are nationwide, and how Gillette College is a leader in helping bring the community together to address best practices for students with disabilities.”

Another way the College is extending a hand to the community is through its partnership with Westwood High School. Westwood, which moved
into a new facility on the Gillette College campus in 2015, is the site of an exciting class taught by Gillette College Writing Center Coordinator Lauren Tompkins.

“I teach a class called ‘Gateway to Student Success,’” Tompkins explains. “The kids at Westwood have big ideas and dreams about their lives, but what they don’t have are the tools necessary to succeed beyond the high school level.”

What Tompkins has found is that many students simply have no way of understanding or preparing for college life — even though they desperately want to attend. In fact, they often cannot comprehend the notion of living outside the structured world of high school.

“It’s overwhelming for them,” Tompkins explains. “To learn, after spending so long in an environment where their every move is pretty much dictated, that teachers in college expect you to self-police — that’s a hard lesson to learn. It’s the difference between ‘rules’ in high school and ‘responsibilities’ in college — and in life.”

Tompkins strives to be a resource for her students. She strongly encourages the students to attend college beyond this singular course and is able to use her own life as an example. “I actually started at a community college when I was 16,” she notes, “so I have this tiny, little connection with the students I teach.”

Because this is often the Westwood students’ only chance at attending college, Tompkins emphasizes the need to develop good work habits and study skills. However, she also is careful to explain that a college major doesn’t necessarily determine a career. To help them understand, she often brings colleagues from Gillette College into the class in order to display the many possibilities that come with a higher degree. Most visitors, she says, have transitioned careers several times.

“Almost all of them tell the students, ‘This is not the career I thought I was going to be in [when I picked my major],’” Tompkins says. “But then they say, ‘Even though I never expected this career path, I’m very, very happy.’ I think that’s really reassuring for the students. And that, ultimately, is the end goal.”
Have you ever wondered what a day in the life of the average Gillette College student is? Well, the truth is, there isn’t one single type of GC student. In fact, our students vary widely in age, family status, and background.

Take Welding major Mercedes O’Dell for example. Mercedes has all the look of your typical college student — except that she’s in a field in which women are typically underrepresented. But in most ways, she is every college student you’ve ever known.

“I like to sleep in a lot,” she laughs. “But that’s really because my classes all start in the afternoon. I’m in class Monday through Thursday from 1 p.m. until about 5 p.m.” But far from being all classroom-based lectures, most of Mercedes’s classes are done in the Welding lab in the Technical Education Center (TEC). “My first classes are lab classes,” she explains, “TIG [tungsten inert gas] Welding and Flux Core Welding.” She also takes practical courses like Metallurgy, through which she learns purification methods to make the strongest metals available.

In addition to her classes, Mercedes works quite a bit as a clerk at the Pronghorn Café coffee shop in the GC Main Building. “I like working at the Café because it gives me the chance to interact with a lot of people,” she explains. “Lots of people might not know my name, but they know me by my face, which is pretty cool.”

Many students find themselves balancing schoolwork with part-time jobs. Nursing major Heather Bronson works 16 hours per week in the Student Life Office as well as having duties as a Resident Advisor (RA) in the GC residence halls.

“My lectures on Mondays and Fridays run from 8 a.m. until noon,” she says, “after which I head to work until 5 p.m. After studying, I’m on duty as an RA from 8 p.m. till midnight once a week. I also have to work three weekends a semester as an RA, usually from about 5 p.m. on Friday until someone relieves me on Sunday.”

Heather’s busy schedule also includes 12 to 14 hours of clinical work at the hospital each week. It’s exhausting, she says, but well worth it. “I like being busy,” she smiles. “I’m a little bit older than most of my fellow students – 24 – so I know the value of working hard, especially because it’s going to pay off in the end.”

That sentiment is shared by Business major Tony Chapman. Tony transferred to GC from Mississippi State University after several friends raved about the college. Now, he juggles several roles as a leader within the Gillette College community.

“On Mondays and Wednesdays,” he says, laying out his schedule, “I have classes throughout the morning, then get to studying and working as a peer mentor at TRiO Student Support Services. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, my schedule starts with a morning class, followed by lunch, and then a couple
of classes in the afternoon. I try to fit in as much work as I can to make sure students who need some help are getting it.”

When he’s not in the TRiO office or in class, you can usually find Tony with the basketball team. “I’m the Assistant Manager and filmographer for the Men’s basketball team that just went to the national tournament,” he says proudly. “It’s a lot of work, making sure there’s game film to break down, cutting it up, editing it, and making sure the players have enough to work with so they can see their opponents. I like to think I was a part of helping them get to the Final Four this year!”

Hard work is a recurring theme for students, but few face the challenges of Nursing major Keely Ammerman. Keely is a cancer survivor who now is balancing her studies with her family life. Her husband is often on the road, meaning Keely has had to rely on her mother’s help to care for her two sons while she’s in class.

“I have my Monday and Friday classes, plus clinical work every week,” she says. “But depending on the time of the month, I also may have Nursing Club meetings, or meetings with the Nursing Club Executive Board, of which I’m a member.”

While the last couple of years have been difficult, Keely is very excited to be in her fourth and final semester, and she’s very proud of what she’s accomplished. Now, she’s looking forward to helping others the way she has experienced such help. “During my cancer treatment,” she remembers, “I was blown away by how much personal care my nurse practitioner was able to give me. I really was inspired to become a nurse because of her. I want to give others the same kind of care I received.”
Dear Friends,

The Gillette College Foundation (GCF) continues to focus on student success at Gillette College. We are excited that the Rodeo/Ag Complex and the Pronghorn Center construction projects will be completed this year. In addition to the capital campaigns, the Foundation has updated its website and it will soon be mobile friendly and easily searchable. We sponsored our first alumni event at the basketball games on February 20. More than 35 people signed up for the Gillette College Alumni Association!

We are looking forward to our “Night at the Theatre” fundraising event on April 30 and our golf tournament on August 19. Both of these events raise mission critical operations funding.

The GCF is guided by a group of dedicated, volunteer Board of Directors who are driven to support students. The philanthropic nature of Campbell County community members make our work possible. We have a variety of opportunities for donors to make a difference, ranging from our capital campaigns to funding scholarships, and programs. The Foundation provides thousands of dollars each year in scholarships, helping students pursue higher education at low costs. We celebrate the success of these students, along with their donors, at our annual scholarship dinner each year.

If you are interested in donating to the Foundation, please contact me at (307) 686-0254, ext. 1304. Your gifts contribute to the success of Campbell County students! We truly appreciate your support and interest.

Sincerely,

Heidi Gross
Executive Director,
Gillette College Foundation

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www.gillettecollegefoundation.org

The Gillette College Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Gillette College Alumni Association

The Gillette College Alumni Association set up shop at our last home basketball games against Casper College. Larry Reznicek, Susan McKay, and Heidi Gross handed out information and asked all GC Alums to sign up for email updates and newsletters. David Bowles, last year’s Distinguished Alumni recipient, Gregg Blikre, Maggi McCreery, M.D., and Cody Friedlan also helped with the event.

The Alumni Association will honor this year’s Distinguished Alumni recipient at a reception for all Gillette College graduates on May 11.
Understanding Planned Gifts and their Benefits

Planned giving is a way for you to integrate your personal, financial, and estate planning by making lifetime or testamentary charitable gifts. Below are some common types of planned gifts and their benefits. Call or visit our website for more information.

**BEQUEST**
A bequest is a gift made through your will or trust. A bequest is the simplest type of planned gift for you to make and one of the easiest to implement.

**BENEFITS OF BEQUEST**
You may desire to support charity but are unable to make gifts during your lifetime. For example, you may have property that is needed during life to cover your living expenses or health care costs.

**CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST (CRT)**
You transfer your cash or property to fund a trust that makes payments for your lifetime or a number of years and then passes what remains to our organization.

**BENEFITS OF CRT**
You own appreciated property that produces little or no income and would like to sell without paying capital gains tax. You may be desiring income for retirement.

**LIFE ESTATE RESERVED**
You transfer your personal residence or farm to us and retain the right to use the property for your lifetime.

**BENEFITS OF LIFE ESTATE**
You want to remain living in your home and desire a current income tax deduction.

**CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY (CGA)**
You make a gift of cash or property to us and we agree to make fixed payments for one or two lives.

**BENEFITS OF CGA**
You want to make a gift to our organization and receive fixed income for the future. This plan works well with your gift of cash or appreciated stock that is providing little or no income.

**FAMILY LEAD TRUST**
You transfer your cash or property to a trust that makes payments to our organization for a number of years and then passes the trust property to your family with no additional tax.

**BENEFITS OF CLT**
You own appreciated property that produces little or no income and would like to sell without paying capital gains tax. You may be desiring income for retirement.

**BARGAIN SALE**
We purchase your property for less than fair market value. You receive cash or debt relief and a charitable deduction.

**BENEFITS OF BARGAIN SALE**
You own appreciated property and want to help our organization, but need a benefit in return (either cash or debt relief).
The 2015-2016 season has been an absolutely brilliant one across the board for the Gillette College Pronghorns! All five athletic teams — Men’s Basketball, Women’s Basketball, Cross Country, and Men’s & Women’s Rodeo — have met with unbelievable success, which, in turn, has brought the community together in support of their hometown heroes.

Basketball

The Men’s Basketball team had its most successful season to date, finishing the season at 13-1 in their division, 11-1 in Region IX, and an unbelievable regular season 29-1 mark overall. The Pronghorns were ranked as high as No. 3 in the nation and earned the top seed in the North at the Region IX Tournament. After winning the regional tournament, they went on to an incredible string of success in the NJCAA Men’s Tournament in Hutchinson, Kansas, making the Final Four and ultimately winning third place for the entire tournament (the best finish for a Region IX team since 1964). Their final record was 35-2, the highest win total of any college basketball team at any level this season.

“Our guys never quit, never give up, and always work hard,” said head coach Shawn Neary. “I’m really proud of how they persevered all season.”

Not to be outdone, the Lady Pronghorns, with a team featuring 10 freshmen, ended up tied with Casper College for tops in the region, which led to a coin flip to determine the conference champion — which the Pronghorns won. This allowed Gillette the honor of hosting the Region IX Women’s Basketball Tournament, which they won, earning a berth in the Round of 24 in the NJCAA Women’s Tournament in Lubbock, Texas.

“These young ladies have put in some tremendous work over the course of the season,” said head coach Will Rider. “I am beyond proud of everyone for how hard they’ve worked all year.”

“This year has been one for the books,” adds sophomore forward and team co-captain Beth Sutter. “We have lost three teammates and an assistant coach this season. None of us expected to go through what we have, but we have come together through it.”

Even more impressive than this unprecedented success is the fact that the Pronghorns have done so without a floor of their own. The brand-new Pronghorn Center is scheduled to open later in 2016. Thanks to partnerships with the local school district and the Rec Center, our Pronghorns haven’t been without a home temporarily.
The Gillette College Cross Country and Track team has been on an absolute roll. After finishing out the Half Marathon as national champions on the women’s side and second on the men’s, the men and women both triumphed on the track as well.

“My team has done a great job stepping up to the plate when the time comes,” raves sophomore distance runner Asher Catterall.

Unfortunately, an injury took down the top-ranked distance medley team, which derailed the hopes of a second major championship. But through all the obstacles, perseverance helped solidify some incredible performances. Festus Lagat won national titles for both the indoor track 1600m and 1000m races, eventually also being awarded Indoor Track Athlete of the Year. In addition, Rachael Zeiger won three All-American awards in a 90-minute span for the 800m, 1000m, and 1600m.

“We’re very proud of these kids,” said Chris Kozlowski, GC Cross Country/Track Coach. “Sports are always about hard work and determination, and our team has those qualities in spades.”

The spring season of Rodeo is going to be an exciting time. Following an immensely successful fall season, the Women’s Rodeo team was ranked first overall in the country, and the Men’s team finished up fourth.

So far this spring, the teams have continued their success. The Lady Pronghorns have won their first two events to remain atop the overall leaderboard, while the men won the Gillette College Rodeo March 18-20, vaulting them into second overall. Individually, Riley James Wakefield is currently ranked second in Men’s All-around, while Taylor Marie Engesser and Coralee Spratt are 1-2 in Women’s All-around. Gillette students also rank in the top 10 in seven events.

Asked what makes the Pronghorns athletic teams so successful, Athletic Director Jenni Winter is quick to note her coaching staffs. “We are very fortunate to have solid coaches in all our sports,” Winter explains. “And we’re only adding to that with Marvin Garrett, the four-time Bareback national champion, joining our Rodeo coaching staff next fall.”

With the new Pronghorn Center and Ag/Rodeo Complex set to open in the fall, Winter believes Gillette College is in for even greater success down the road. “While we are extremely grateful to our partners like Campbell County High School and the Campbell County Recreation Center for their generous assistance,” she says, “we are very excited to finally have our own home bases for all our athletic teams.”

Considering the amazing success Gillette College teams have had without such a base, it looks like the sky’s the limit for Pronghorns Athletics.

**Cross Country / Track**

**Rodeo**

Pronghorns team ropers compete at the Sheridan College rodeo in the fall of 2015.

Pronghorn Center to be completed in the fall of 2016.
It’s difficult for students to work hard enough to earn a 4.0 GPA. But imagine trying to maintain a perfect grade-point average in two majors and a certificate program, serve as a club president, attend conferences, and volunteer in the community — all while raising six children and battling post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This kind of incredible effort comes from Gillette College’s own Gaylene Spence, a sophomore readying to graduate this spring.

AN UNORTHODOX ROAD

Gaylene, an East Coast native who came to the West in her early 20s, isn’t your typical student. She began her college career in 1997 as an Accounting major, but found herself unable to finish. Instead, she says, she bounced around from South Dakota to Nebraska, starting school again — this time majoring in Business — but never completing her degree. When she and her family moved to Gillette, she thought the College would be a perfect place to continue her education.

“With my experience in helping my children through their K-12 schooling,” she explains, “I decided that I would like to work in a school setting, preferably in the offices rather than teaching. So I decided to start with a Secondary Education degree, followed up with finishing the Business degree that I started years ago, and supplementing that with the Administrative Assistant Certificate.”

After she enrolled in classes at GC, Gaylene’s passion and dedication quickly became apparent. Though nearly twice the age of the youngest students at Gillette College, she found a great balance.
between peer and role model. She has consistently displayed an inclusive style, ensuring each voice would be heard in any given circumstance. After finding a knack for math courses, she started mentoring other students in the Math Center, which she worked hard to earn and maintain.

And her hard work certainly paid off: in 2015, she was elected to the Executive Committee of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society (which she then helped to earn a five-star rating, the highest possible) and was selected to serve as the Student Marshal for the 2015 Gillette College commencement ceremony, a prestigious honor reserved for exemplary student role models. She was also the recipient of multiple community and college scholarships this past year, including the 2016 Coca-Cola New Century Scholar Award, given to one student from Wyoming each year.

“Gaylene’s work, especially for Phi Theta Kappa, has been incredible,” says Rachel Kohman, GC Director of Housing and Student Life. “She has attended both the International and Regional Phi Theta Kappa Conferences, redesigned and reorganized Phi Theta Kappa advising cards, forms, pamphlets, and folders, and has served as Vice-President of the Chapter. She’s now the interim President of the Chapter, and she never fails to help set up and staff the Phi Theta Kappa information booths for new student orientations.”

THE WORKING STUDENT

Gaylene brings the same kind of tireless spirit to her job in the Gillette College Business and Admissions offices. As a student worker, she has worked to improve information processes for parents at orientation. She also, revamped, and reorganized the entire Admissions filing system. In addition to all this, Gaylene somehow finds time to volunteer in the community, working with Relay for Life, and volunteering at Campbell County Memorial Hospital’s Cancer Center.

While her perseverance is incredible viewed on its own, Gaylene’s personal story lends her even greater admiration around the Gillette College community. A survivor of childhood trauma and other challenges, she has battled — and continues to battle — PTSD related anxieties. In the past, this has affected her so greatly that even completing a semester of work would often lead her to needing to take extended time out of the classroom. However, since coming to Gillette, she has worked hard to get herself into a more comfortable place and finish her degrees.

Gaylene credits GC’s staff and faculty for her recent success. “Of all the colleges I have attended up to today,” she says, “Gillette College has the most supportive and understanding staff and faculty of any other institution I have attended thus far. They help you up when you need it, and kick you in the butt when you need that. They are first to accept, and even suggest, any accommodations that might help — but without compromising their academic expectations. There is no way I would have accomplished everything I have without the Gillette College faculty and staff.”

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP

Asked what her next step is, Gaylene smiles knowingly. “Graduation,” she grins. Long-term, however, she is looking to expand on the impressive work she has done at Gillette College. “What comes next is hopefully employment in a school office,” she explains. “I also want to continue my education and start working towards my Bachelor’s degree — maybe even continue on to my Master’s someday. I [also] have made many good friends since I began at Gillette College. I would like to see myself, five years down the road, being there with them, working at Gillette College, and helping students like me achieve everything they hope, and everything they don’t yet realize that they can accomplish.”
Gillette College Recognizes Excellence

Each year Gillette College recognizes several outstanding students, staff, and faculty. Through the Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees and the American Technical Education Association, we celebrate the accomplishments of members of our college community for the 2014-15 academic year. These individuals have demonstrated excellence in their chosen area, contributed to their community college, served in their community, and led innovative change and improvement.

WACCT Classified Employee of the Year Nominee & State Recipient: Elaine Pridgeon

Elaine Pridgeon consistently demonstrates incredible competency in her job, making students her top priority, and doing all she can to meet their needs. She is their cheerleader and wants nothing more than to see them succeed. Students have come to affectionately refer to her as a second mother. Elaine's expertise has been instrumental in implementing new online exam software this year. She is the go-to person for questions from staff and students alike about electronic testing and preparing for nursing exams. She has taken on a variety of additional tasks to make the nursing program more successful — Examsoft implementation and super-user, HESI super-user, EvaluationKit builder, assistance with GC Nursing Club facilitation, and others. When Gillette College lost their lab assistant last year, Elaine stepped up and is doing not only her own job, but also taking on some of the functions of the lab assistant. She truly demonstrates the NWCCD’s mission: “Creating student success and making a difference in our communities through educational leadership.”

WACCT Faculty of the Year Nominee & State Recipient: Troy Miller

Troy Miller is a Welding Technology Instructor at Gillette College. He has leveraged his knowledge and experience to work in conjunction with industry partners to build the program at Gillette College into one that meets their needs, while simultaneously offering students a well-rounded welding education.

Troy establishes and builds lasting relationships with his students, and he is well-respected because of his patient teaching style and calm demeanor. He created student inventory sheets that assist in tracking the knowledge imparted in the classroom. He has been the driving force behind incorporating new technology into the welding program, such as pulse welding, a CNC plasma cutter, and a Meltview welding camera.

WACCT Student of the Year Nominee: Gaylene Spence & Wyoming’s 2016 Coca-Cola New Century Scholar

Gaylene Spence has never given up on her dream of earning a college degree, even though it has taken her decades to reach her goal. As a non-traditional student and mother of six (the youngest of whom is still in high school), Gaylene has faced great personal challenges in even attending classes, let alone being as involved as she is. Gaylene truly embodies the exemplary student, from her campus involvement to her dedication to her studies; from her excellent grades to her extraordinary perseverance. Her commitment to excellence is demonstrated by her 4.0 GPA and receipt of numerous honors and scholarships, including the 2016 Coca-Cola New Century Scholar Award, given to one student from Wyoming each year. She works with other students in the Records/Admission Office, mentors other students in the Math Center, and is an active member of Phi Theta Kappa, serving on the executive team. She also volunteers with Relay for Life, Campbell County Health, and the Heptner Cancer Center. Gaylene has “walking across the stage” at graduation in sight now and is enrolled full-time to complete degrees in both Secondary Education and Business, with the long-term goal of completing her bachelor’s degree.
Gillette College Facts

**GILLETTE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT**

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**Gillette College awarded 252 certificates and degrees in the 2014-2015 academic year and has awarded more than 2,218 degrees since 1992.**

**In-State Tuition & Fees for 2016-17**

**School Year:** $3,156 (30 credit hours)

**Economic Impact**

- FY16 Operating Budget: $10,524,956 (does not include capital construction)
- Full-time Employees: 88
- Part-time Employees: 82

**General College Information**

- Main Campus size: 91.09 acres
- Facility space: 203,000 sf (as of 2/1/2015)

The Gillette College Foundation continues to work on behalf of the college through capital campaigns and scholarship funding. Gillette College Foundation board members are: Kelly Barlow, Toni Bell, Gregg Blikre, Dan Clouston, R. Douglas Dumbrill, Alisa Engler, Wendy Hauck, Kerry Hayden, David Horning, Lee Isenberger, Nick Kasperik, Shilo Lundvall, Maggi McCreery, M.D., Debbie McLeland, Brenda Schladweiler, Peg Smith, and Jaime Tarver.