



CVTC MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION FOR ALUMNI & COMMUNITY FRIENDS

NOVEMBER 2025 | VOLUME 16 | ISSUE 1



SHIFTING

PERCEPTIONS

DR. SUNEM BEATON-GARCIA, PRESIDENT, AND FORREST BUCK, DIRECTOR OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT & FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE, WELCOME STUDENTS TO A NEW YEAR OF HANDS-ON LEARNING AT CVTC.

This issue of the CVTC Magazine takes a fresh approach. Instead of telling our story only through storytelling, we invited our stakeholders—employees, students, alumni, partners, and community leaders—to share their own truths about what CVTC means to them. In these pages, you'll hear their voices explain, celebrate, and even challenge perceptions of technical college education. Fittingly, President Dr. Sunem Beaton-Garcia opens with a powerful myth-busting message of her own.

MISCONCEPTION: A TECHNICAL COLLEGE ISN'T A REAL COLLEGE.

TRUTH: IT ABSOLUTELY IS.

You've probably heard it before: "College isn't for everyone."

Sometimes it's said with a shrug, sometimes with sympathy, especially when someone chooses a technical college as if they are somehow settling.

Let's set the record straight.

At Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC), what happens in our classrooms, labs, and shops is real college education. It's rigorous, applied, and hands-on. Our students master complex skills, work with industry-level equipment, and solve problems side by side with

experts in their field. Whether they're training to be nurses, IT professionals, welders, or business leaders, they're preparing for careers that keep our communities running and our economy strong. We are uniquely equipped to translate credits into careers and experience into impact.

The outdated but still commonly used term "tech school" once meant short-term training that didn't result in a degree. Times have changed. Today, a CVTC technical diploma, associate degree, or certificate opens doors. It means higher wages, upward mobility for families, and a stronger economy for our entire region. Many of our graduates move directly into high-demand jobs. Others transfer to universities to continue their education, sometimes entering with junior or even senior standing because of the credits they earned here.

And let's be clear: The work is not easy. It's challenging and rewarding, combining classroom learning with real-world practice. Our students weld, code, build, analyze, diagnose, and innovate.

So, the next time someone suggests that a technical college is a backup plan, remember this: CVTC students aren't just in college. They're building the future of work.

A technical college is college. And it's where real opportunity begins.

Dr. Sunem Beaton-Garcia

President | Chippewa Valley Technical College

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MAGAZINE IS PUBLISHED FOR ALUMNI AND
THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

PRESIDENT

Dr. Sunem Beaton-Garcia

VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT & CHIEF OF STAFF

Joni Geroux

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CVTC FOUNDATION, INC. & ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT

Adam Wehling

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

Sara Steffen

CONTENT STRATEGIST & WRITER

Alyssa Van Duyse

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Mackenzie Slattery

CHIPPEWA VALLEY TECHNICAL COLLEGE
620 W. Clairemont Ave. | Eau Claire, WI
715-833-6200 | 800-547-CVTC | cvtc.edu

ON THE COVER

'IN THEIR WORDS'

In this special edition of the CVTC Magazine, students, colleagues, alumni, donors, and community partners share their own stories about the College by celebrating exceptional education, vibrant campus life, and dedicated employees who inspire success and career passion.

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A PASSION FOR...

...TEACHING

From the moment I began teaching transcribed credit classes at CVTC, I knew I would be making a difference in students' lives. For me, teaching is more than sharing information, it's about helping students discover their own strengths, build confidence, and see possibilities they may not have imagined for themselves. Every classroom feels like an opportunity to not only teach but also to learn, because each student brings unique experiences and perspectives that enrich our shared journey. I've learned from students as much as they have learned from me, that's why teaching is such a unique career.

I have been transcribing Business and Marketing classes for the past 15-plus years with CVTC, and in that time, my passion for teaching has only grown stronger. I love watching students grow, take risks, and push through challenges. Seeing that spark of understanding when something clicks is the most rewarding part of my work. I call those 'Ah Ha' moments. It's in those moments that I'm reminded why I chose this path: to inspire and empower others to reach their goals.

Teaching at CVTC allows me to connect deeply with students and support them both academically and personally. I strive to create a space where learning feels meaningful, practical, and connected to real life. When students leave my classroom with more confidence and a stronger sense of direction, I feel that I have truly made a difference.

NANETTE GOODMAN

BUSINESS & MARKETING TEACHER
| MENOMONIE HIGH SCHOOL
TRANSCRIPTED CREDIT INSTRUCTOR | CVTC



AVA ARNDT

HUMAN RESOURCES STUDENT & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT ALUMNI | CVTC

AVA ARNDT, STUDENT AND ALUMNA, WITH ANNE WEBER, STUDENT RECRUITMENT COORDINATOR.

...LEARNING

I'm proud to be a student at CVTC. I'm set to graduate with an associate degree in Human Resources after already obtaining an associate degree in Business Management—both from CVTC.

I chose CVTC for three key reasons: location, affordability, and culture. Eau Claire is the perfect-sized town for me—not too big, not too small—and I love experiencing all four seasons here.

WHEN I COMPARED MY LOCAL UNIVERSITY TO CVTC, THE CHOICE WAS CLEAR. CVTC OFFERED ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO EARN MY GENERAL EDUCATION CREDITS AND ASSOCIATE DEGREES AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE WITHOUT COMPROMISING ON QUALITY.

In fact, I'd argue that the education is better, thanks to small class sizes, which are no more than 24 students. I receive personalized, one-on-one support from my instructors.

But what truly sets CVTC apart is the culture. There isn't a single person here who doesn't want you to succeed.

My favorite memory is returning to in-person classes after two years of online learning during COVID. Nanette Goodman made that transition seamless. Whether it was helping me through tough assignments or simply being a shoulder to lean on, her support meant everything.

CVTC has shown me that anything is possible if you're willing to work for it.

I'm grateful for the experiences, the people, and the growth I've had here, and I'm excited for what comes next.

SPOTLIGHT STORIES

FOUR INDIVIDUALS SHARE HOW CVTC HAS SHAPED THEIR LIVES



When I worked on the family farm, I went through CVTC's commercial driver school to earn my CDL, so I suppose you could call me an alumnus. That experience gave me a deep appreciation for how CVTC equips people with practical skills that make an immediate difference. Today, I see that same value in our partnership with CVTC. It's not just about workforce development; it's about investing in people, creating opportunities, strengthening our community, and building a stronger future together.

ERIC RYGG // PRESIDENT | SILVER SPRING FOODS, INC./HUNTSINGER COMPANIES

When I was looking at colleges, I knew I wanted to be close to home but far enough away to gain some independence. I toured CVTC and loved the small class sizes and welcoming vibe. I worked as a Student Ambassador while I was a student, and I graduated from the Executive Assistant program in 2017. Now, I'm back as an Admissions Advisor, helping new students start their own journey. It's incredibly rewarding to be on the other side supporting students as they take the same steps I once did, and helping them realize that they, too, belong here.

HALEY BREMER // EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ALUMNI & CURRENT ADMISSIONS ADVISOR | CVTC



People often ask me why I love teaching at CVTC, and honestly, it's hard to choose just one reason. My students keep me coming back every single day. After a recent meeting, one of them said, "From the very first class, you pushed me in the best way. That push helped me find my voice, my confidence, and my purpose." That's why I do this. CVTC energizes me. The students, the inspiring colleagues I get to work with, and the everyday moments that remind me why teaching matters, that's what makes CVTC so special.

RACHAEL STILP // FOUNDATIONS OF TEACHER EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR | CVTC

I'm a high school student taking classes at CVTC. I chose CVTC to explore my interest in nursing and to start gaining college credits before graduating from high school. I completed the pre-nursing and healthcare program as a high school sophomore and obtained my LPN as a junior. It's a challenge to take college classes in high school, but it's worth it. My advisor, Mitch, is proactive in assisting me to make a plan to be successful.

GABBIE TAVARE // SENIOR | EAU CLAIRE MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL



IN THEIR WORDS

DESTANY PEDERSEN

CVTC CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDENT

CVTC has given me the opportunity to be part of a wonderful community and learn about my passion. I chose CVTC after touring the campus on a field trip that I originally didn't want to attend. It ended up being the best field trip after I realized I had found the right school for me. I applied for the Criminal Justice program here at the River Falls Campus that same night. Since then, I have had the motto of taking every opportunity as it's given because you never know where it might lead you. CVTC has been an amazing experience for me because it has granted me the blessing to participate in many hands-on opportunities and learning experiences, including working with Public Safety before I enter the academy and career field. Everyone on campus, from the faculty to the students, makes CVTC a great place to learn and grow.





LAURIE BOETTCHER

CVTC DIGITAL MARKETING INSTRUCTOR

I was a non-traditional student. I remember being in my final semester and excited to graduate. Many of my classmates didn't feel the same. They felt that they had learned how to do things, but they hadn't done them. That's the moment I knew I wanted to work at CVTC. I wanted to work at an institution where I could teach that learning in a way that involved the student and build student confidence. I was so blessed to be given that chance. I love my job. Seriously, head over heels in love with my job. My favorite students are the ones who come in scared or nervous because they weren't successful in high school or other college programs. CVTC is different because students get continuous hands-on experiences doing the things they love. It builds their passion and excitement for their careers. I also love the community we build in our programs—both on and offline. While I guide the learning of the lessons in my courses, communication and camaraderie continue to expand that learning beyond my

MATTHEW JERLECKI

DIRECTOR OF LEARNING AT LIPPERT

This spring, I had the privilege of contributing to the keynote address at the CVTC graduation ceremony. Looking back on that moment and our partnership, one theme stands out: it takes many “yeses” to make real progress. Working with CVTC has been inspiring because at every level the administration, coordinators, deans, and instructors have been willing not just to adjust schedules, but to completely rethink how learning can be delivered. Instead of asking “how have we always done it,” we asked a better question: what outcomes truly matter for our Team Members? A certified welder. A safety professional.

An operations leader. Starting with those goals, we built training pathways that meet real workplace needs, prepare Team Members for success, and give them credentials that matter inside and outside of Lippert. The results are already powerful: high-impact welding and

CVTC IS DIFFERENT BECAUSE STUDENTS GET CONTINUOUS

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES DOING THINGS THEY LOVE.

- LAURIE

expectations. Students support each other's learning, offer help, and build friendships. Watching the ‘aha moments’ when students connect learning from other courses is incredibly rewarding. It's not just instructors; we have the most amazing and supportive advisors, student success specialists, and staff. EVERYONE is committed to helping our students succeed.

fabrication training, expanded opportunities for our High School Lippert Scholars, and a stronger, more prepared pipeline of skilled professionals. These wins belong equally to CVTC, Lippert, and—most importantly—the Team Members whose futures are being shaped every single day. With this foundation in place, I'm excited to see what new programs, new opportunities, and new successes we'll create together over the next decade.

BUSTED



TONY & LUKE
BENEDICT

MYTH 01:

BUSINESSES WON'T HIRE THEIR GRADS

We hire graduates from CVTC largely because of the quality of the programs and instruction they receive. We have a strong partnership with CVTC and work closely with the HVAC/R instructors. They do a tremendous job of updating the program curriculum to keep current with the ever-changing industry we are in. The team of instructors continually seek feedback from those that hire program graduates and take the feedback seriously to make the necessary program changes. This level of dedication is why CVTC is second to none. Graduates of the program come to us with a great foundation of skills and knowledge for us to build upon. Our relationship with CVTC spans four generations in our family business. We feel very fortunate to have CVTC in our backyard as they have been a vital part of our company's growth and advancement.

BROTHERS TONY & LUKE BENEDICT
OWNERS | BENEDICT SALES & SERVICE



CHARISSA
JAKUSZ

MYTH 02:

THEY ONLY TEACH TRADES

I came to CVTC from working in the university system. I've heard the myth that technical colleges are "just for trades" and wow, I have seen firsthand how wrong that is! I think of Ethan. I knew Ethan from when I was working at the university he attended. He got his bachelor's degree and a decade later our paths crossed again at CVTC as he came back for his nursing degree and I got to see him walk across the graduation stage with a giant smile! I couldn't have been more proud. I've seen students like him in business, design, transfer pathways and more come to CVTC to fulfill their dreams. For me, that's what technical college is about: opening doors, building confidence and helping students write their story here. I share this because I don't want anyone to miss the chance to fulfill their dreams. Technical colleges aren't just about trades—they are about real futures and real careers!

CHARISSA JAKUSZ
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT SERVICES | CVTC



DEBUNKING COMMON TECHNICAL COLLEGE MYTHS



**CLAIRE
WALKER**

MYTH 03:

IT'S THE FALLBACK CHOICE

After earning a bachelor's degree from UW–Madison and working for a few years, I chose CVTC for a new direction that better fit my strengths. Some people assume technical colleges are only for those who can't get into a university, but my path shows a different story. I wanted practical, hands-on training that complements my love for problem-solving and data analysis. The flexibility of CVTC's IT - Data Analyst program lets me keep working while building skills that feel natural to me. For me, CVTC isn't a fallback, it's a smart step forward.

CLAIRE WALKER

IT - DATA ANALYST PROGRAM STUDENT | CVTC



**SARAH
SCHLIESMANN**

MYTH 04:

THE CREDITS DON'T TRANSFER

One of the most common questions I hear as the UW Transfer Academic Advisor is "Sarah, will my credits transfer?" I know that the transfer process can seem confusing, maybe even a bit overwhelming, but the great news is that there have never been so many resources available for students to feel confident in their personalized transfer pathway! Articulation agreements, transfer guides, joint appointments with our partner UW's, Transferology—the free nationwide online tool to find how credits transfer between institutions—custom-made education plans based on your transfer goals...the list of resources are endless. It doesn't matter if you're planning on transferring next semester, next year, or next who knows when, at every step of your educational journey you can feel confident that you have the map for transfer success.

SARAH SCHLIESMANN

UW TRANSFER ACADEMIC ADVISOR | CVTC



BUILDING FOR THEIR FUTURE

Chippewa Valley Technical College has come a long way since its start in 1912. What began as a small vocational school has grown into a robust college serving 18,000 students. CVTC supports students across nearly 150 programs and certificates, preparing them for careers we couldn't have imagined a century ago. That kind of evolution doesn't happen by accident. It takes foresight and planning.

As Associate Vice President of Facilities, Operations, and Planning, I see that same forward thinking reflected in every building we design or remodel. Our students need more than classrooms; they need spaces that mirror the workplaces they're preparing to enter. That means updated technology, hands-on labs, and flexible spaces that can adapt to the industries of tomorrow.

At the same time, our facilities must be efficient and sustainable. Energy-conscious systems, smarter layouts, and technology-enabled operations ensure we remain responsible stewards of resources while supporting modern learning.

We don't do this work alone. Strong partnerships with local business and community partners guide us. Their insight into workforce trends ensures we're preparing students for the challenges and opportunities they'll encounter the moment they graduate.

From 1912 to today, we continue looking forward and our focus remains the same: building spaces that open doors for students and strengthen the workforce. Together, we're not just planning buildings, we're building futures.

ROD BAGLEY

ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF FACILITIES,
OPERATIONS & PLANNING | CVTC



**OUR STUDENTS NEED MORE THAN CLASSROOMS; THEY NEED
SPACES THAT MIRROR THE WORKPLACES THEY'RE PREPARING TO ENTER.**



CVTC FAST FACTS

18,067

COURSE ENROLLEES AND

6,809

PROGRAM
STUDENTS



95%

of graduates are

EMPLOYED

6 MONTHS

within graduation and, of those,

82% found employment in a
FIELD RELATED
TO THEIR TRAINING



22%

of students started

JOB IN THEIR
FIELD OF STUDY

while still enrolled at CVTC



CVTC PARTNERED WITH

65



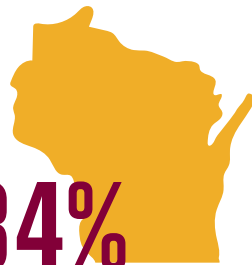
SCHOOL DISTRICTS

to offer dual credit opportunities to students

84%

of graduates are

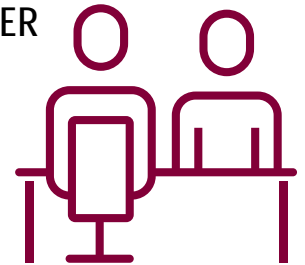
EMPLOYED IN
WISCONSIN



95%

OF EMPLOYERS
WOULD HIRE

ANOTHER
CVTC
GRAD



1 OUT OF
EVERY

42 JOBS

IS SUPPORTED BY THE ACTIVITIES
OF CVTC AND ITS STUDENTS



14:1



STUDENT TO FACULTY RATIO AT CVTC

120+ REGIONAL
BUSINESSES

received
customized
training to
help train
employees



My education was a way out for me. I had never stepped near a college campus before. I didn't realize all of the resources available to me. I'm the first of my parents' kids to ever graduate. I grew up being told that, 'You would never be anything. You would never amount to anything.' There was a time I thought I was stupid, like I wasn't anything. **And I made it. I know I broke a generational curse.** So many students have these barriers. Without your help, I don't know if I would have been able to uphold my family.

Segdrick Farley | Alumni
Legal Studies/Paralegal Program



BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU DO, I'M ABLE TO
GO TO COLLEGE AND BE SOMEBODY.



WE HAVE STUDENTS OF ALL
DIFFERENT AGES AND ABILITIES,
AND WE'RE HERE TO MEET THEM
WHERE THEY'RE AT, BE WITH
THEM ON THAT JOURNEY, AND
HELP THEM REACH THEIR GOALS.
THOSE AMAZING LIGHTBULB
BURSTS OF 'I DID IT! I'M
UNDERSTANDING AND LEARNING!'
THAT FOR ME IS THE JOY.

ALYSSA HEDENSTROM
CVTC ADULT EDUCATION & COLLEGE
PREP INSTRUCTOR

That's what
keeps me here at
CVTC – knowing
that the impact
that we have
isn't just about
getting a job
at the end but
being a part of a
community.

Sondra Mero | CVTC EMS Instructor



WORDS THAT



CVTC is where dreams are nurtured, potential is unlocked and aspirations find wings. For businesses that depend on CVTC to train their future workforce, the College is an imperative leg of the community stool.

BJ Rauckman | Senior Director of Distribution Operations for NSP Wisconsin, Retired

You each have a beautiful story with moments of learning and growth and challenges that have to be conquered. And no matter what your aspiration entails, it's our mission at CVTC to meet you where you are, welcome you with open arms, help you over the hurdles and through the struggles, and guide you to your educational finish line.

Sunem Beaton-Garcia
CVTC President



WITH UNWAVERING DETERMINATION, WE WILL
ELEVATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR INSTITUTION
AND OUR STUDENTS, FULFILLING OUR SHARED
MISSION OF CHANGING
LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION
AND CREATING A BRIGHTER
FUTURE FOR ALL.

BRENT CHRISTIANSON
CVTC INTERIM DEAN OF AGRICULTURE,
ENERGY & TRANSPORTATION



Having that connection through CVTC, **getting the education here,** and then being able to apply it is **super rewarding.**

Amanda Poirier | Alumni
Radiography & Residential Construction Programs



T STAY WITH US

WHY I GIVE

CVTC DONORS SHARE THEIR STORIES

ABOUT PAYING IT FORWARD

I chose to donate to CVTC since it had a substantial impact on me and my family growing up. My father was among the many who lost their job when Uniroyal shut down in Eau Claire. At the time, he was the sole provider for our family of five. He went back to school at CVTC (while my mother ventured into the workforce) and re-booted his career in the IT industry. This sparked my own interest in software development, which led me to CVTC and a 20+ year career in IT so far. I have many friends and co-workers that have their higher education from CVTC, from fellow IT geeks to folks in the trade industry. CVTC is a vital part to the ecosystem of the Chippewa Valley. When deciding an organization to support, CVTC stands out for their commitment to quality education and support they provide their students.

JAKE LONG | MONTHLY CVTC DONOR

IT SOFTWARE DEVELOPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER



JON KOTT, CVTC GRADUATE, IS REMEMBERED FOR HIS PASSION, WORK ETHIC, AND
GENEROSITY - QUALITIES THAT LIVE ON THROUGH A MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP.

We created the Jon Kott Midstate Truck Service Memorial Scholarship for our son, who passed in December 2021 at 23 years old. He had attended CVTC to become a diesel technician, and his dedication to his education, career and community were second to none. His fellow CVTC students were his second family as they graduated and started working together at Midstate, and he quickly earned the respect of his superiors for his drive. **We were all incredibly proud of him. And when he passed, we decided to make the scholarship to help CVTC students who are as dedicated as he was, who would've been his coworkers and friends.** We are passionate about this cause because we believe the loss of Jon was a tragedy not just to us but to the community and industry, and we believe that with the help the scholarship provides, his legacy lives on in them.

LUCINDA & JIM KOTT | CVTC DONORS

People often ask me why West Central Wisconsin has had such dramatic economic growth and weathered economic downturns so well in the past 50 years. I tell them that it's because of two well-kept secrets—our Wisconsin career and technical education system and the State's regional planning commissions. **Providing training and retraining opportunities for our regional workforce helps assure the occupational and economic well-being of our friends and neighbors doesn't happen by accident. It takes an exceptional faculty. That's why I worked with CVTC to establish two annual Outstanding Educator awards at the college and donate to fund them every year.** Indeed, we can be very proud of the fact that, since 1990, the faculty at CVTC has won more statewide and regional teaching awards than any other educational institution in Wisconsin. With a strong CVTC, we can continue West Central Wisconsin's economic growth and stability throughout the 21st century.

JOHN FRANK | CVTC DONOR & RETIRED CVTC SOCIAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT CHAIR AND PARALEGAL PROGRAM DIRECTOR

CVTC.EDU/FOUNDATION | LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT CVTC STUDENTS, PROGRAMS, AND THE COLLEGE.





**KYLE
DOWNING**



FIRE SERVICE TECHNICIAN
INSTRUCTOR

The award is meant to enhance education by recognizing the contributions of adjunct instructors to student learning and improve the status and respect for the teaching profession.

PAUL + KAREN KOHLER ADJUNCT
INSTRUCTOR EXCELLENCE AWARD



**TAMI
DAVIS**



NURSING INSTRUCTOR

The award's mission is to recognize outstanding role models and to elevate the value that society places on education. The award recipient must demonstrate excellence in teaching and learning, professionalism, and foster positive student-teacher relationships.

JOHN FRANK OUTSTANDING
EDUCATOR AWARD



**KATI
MORLEY**



DIRECTOR OF
LIBRARY SERVICES

The purpose of this award is to recognize and celebrate emerging leaders at CVTC. By honoring these recipients, we aim to inspire a culture of continuous development in the pursuit of excellence.

HANNAH + RYAN CONNOR
EMERGING LEADER AWARD



**MISSY
VIRCKS**



MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING
TECHNOLOGIST INSTRUCTOR

This award recognizes new faculty members who show exceptional skill in promoting student learning and providing quality education.

DOMER NEW FACULTY TEACHING AWARD



**KURTIS
BURTON**



**JOHN
COOK**



STUDENT INVOLVEMENT
LEAD

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY
SPECIALIST

First awarded in 2007, this award recognizes innovative work that contributes to a culture of excellence at CVTC. It was established through the generosity of many and a matching gift from the Casper Foundation.

CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE AWARD



**DAWN
BARONE**



**JERRY
MOLDENHAUER**



**MIKE
NICKELS**



**LEAH
VELASQUEZ**



NURSING
INSTRUCTOR

STUDENT SUCCESS
SPECIALIST, RETIRED

DEVELOPMENTAL MATH
INSTRUCTOR

INSTRUCTIONAL
DESIGNER

The award recognizes colleagues who have demonstrated outstanding dedication to helping students thrive at CVTC, contributing to improved student outcomes through their relationship-building, teaching or service strategies, and process improvement efforts.

STUDENT SUCCESS ADVOCATE AWARD



620 W. Clairemont Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54701

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit 43
Eau Claire, WI



gala

continuing the legacy



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
of the CVTC FOUNDATION