



**Welding Technology Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Meeting Date:** April 30, 2026

**External Participants:**

John Szluega – Welding Tester, Hennig

Rachel Rainey – Human Resources Generalist Recruiter, Hennig

Derrick Wells – Sales Manager, Tech-Weld, Inc.

John LeSage – Owner, Tech-Weld, Inc.

Aaron Fritzgerald – Controller, Cresswood Shredding Machinery

John McNamara – Instructor, Sheet Metal Workers Local 219

Justin Gustafson – Assistant Business Manager/Trustee, Boilermakers Local One

**Internal Participants:**

Dr. Jessica Berek – Interim Associate Vice President of Instruction

Jescelynne Gibbons – Associate Dean of Instruction

Zachery Caccia – Welding Faculty

Mitchell Meares – Welding Faculty

LaCretia Konan – Associate Vice President of Community Engagement

Courtney Walz – Director of Development

Catherine Macias – Administrative Specialist

**I. College Updates**

- A. Spring 2026 enrollment declined by 1%, enrollment growth anticipated for Fall 2026.
- B. The College’s all-inclusive tuition model, including textbooks, has received national recognition. Tuition will remain flat for the upcoming year, and the College will continue its all-inclusive tuition model.
- C. The College anticipates \$30 million in capital improvements over the next three to four years, focused on essential infrastructure upgrades.
  - i. Construction of a new greenhouse will begin later this month following Board approval.
  - ii. The roof of the Caukin Building will be replaced this summer.

**II. Department Updates**

**A. Spring Semester Updates**

- i. Enrollment
  1. Enrollment is strong, welding sections are nearly at capacity. Efforts are underway to implement linked courses within a cohort model, with anticipated launch next year.
- ii. Curriculum



# KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE

1. The new Advanced GTAW (TIG) course has been approved and is scheduled for Spring 2027. This long-requested course by students and industry partners is now possible with the addition of a second full-time faculty member, Mitchel Meares, expanding instructional capacity.
  2. The revised certificates for basic and advanced welding have been approved by the College and will ensure consistent offerings for students.
- B. Heavy Metal Summer Experience
- i. This event will be held on June 1, from 3-7pm on campus. 32 local high school students will be participating in the event. There will be four stations: two welding, one diesel power technology, and one appliance repair.
- III. Partner Updates
- A. Hiring/Labor Market Needs
- i. Business partners report strong demand for welding graduates, with multiple employers actively hiring and seeking additional candidates. A shortage of qualified welders persists and is expected to continue.
- B. Other Updates
- i. Business partners expressed strong appreciation for the Welding Technology program.
  - ii. Gustafason noted that among the many programs he has visited, Kishwaukee College stands out as the best. LeSage concurred and shared that the pipe simulator was particularly noteworthy, far exceeding other colleges he has visited.
- C. Open Discussion
- i. Business partners shared emerging interest in laser beam welding; however, it is not yet widely utilized locally, and equipment costs (approx. \$80,000) remain prohibitive.
    1. Business partners also emphasized the value of welding positioners where feasible, and a potential donation of a positioner from Tech Weld was noted. Meares plans to visit Tech Weld in the next month to continue the conversation.