Career & Technical Education

Tyler Richardson
State President

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, known as vocational education, were originally designed for students pursuing jobs and careers in skilled trades. During the early years of its development, CTE programs were thought to be for students who did not excel in high school and were not expected to attend college. These programs developed a negative stigma of being lower quality than traditional schooling. However, CTE programs have changed drastically. Modern CTE programs offer a unique learning experience to a wide variety of students and allow students to be more involved in directing their education. The methods used in CTE programs could be a positive addition to traditional education classes.

To illustrate, in 2015 the United States (US) was ranked 14th in education and 17th in educational performance worldwide. The United States received this poor rating in spite of also being ranked 5th in monetary investments towards education. This disproportion of investment to outcome is likely the result of the manner in which the US approaches education. Rather than encouraging students to pursue their goals and helping them to develop a passion for learning, many institutions focus on testing. Students are not urged to fully understand subjects and techniques applied in CTE programs may be exactly what the educational system in United States needs. The traditional US education system is not designed to work for the student. However, CTE programs offer a more flexible environment designed to work for the student.

Career and Technical Education programs are designed to focus on the specific goals and aspirations of the student within their chosen field. They provide their students with a more free and independent environment in which they have the opportunity to receive hands-on experience and even work on real-world problems. Through these experiences they learn to adapt their work methods to fit their personal needs and solve problems independently. CTE programs provide an environment perfect for nurturing a love for learning. Instead of pressing students to pass tests, CTE programs encourage students to pursue what they love. Furthermore, studies have shown that students in CTE programs are more likely to attend school regularly, graduate from high school, and attend postsecondary education programs. One study showed that CTE programs may increase the probability of completing certain college preparatory courses. CTE programs offer a possible solution to the educational struggles of North America.

The United States’ approach toward education isn’t as advanced as it should be, but there is hope for improvement. CTE programs offer a model, founded on supporting the needs of the student, that has already proven to be effective. The techniques applied in CTE programs may be exactly what the educational system in United States needs in order to create successful students and a thriving country.
**Five Essential Tricks**

Christina Hiotaky  
State Secretary

Your 2016-2017 SkillsUSA Michigan State Officer Team has been hard at work these past 7 months since we were elected at the 2016 State Leadership & Skills Conference in April. We’ve completed CTSO State Officer Training in May. Some of our officers attended the National Skills & Leadership Conference in June. In July, we had a meeting where we planned the Fall Leadership Conference, met with Michigan legislators, and did a community service project. Two officers along with Ms. Brown, the state director, were able to participate the Washington Leadership Training Institute in September. This was an amazing experience with the opportunity for students to secure a well-paying manufacturing or technology career without the worry of tuition.

Running for state office is a worthwhile experience, but certainly one that comes with a lot of hard work and determination. If you are considering running for office, you should talk with your advisor, parents, counselor and your school principal to see if they think it would be a good idea for you to run. If you are looking for more tips to help you decide if you’d be a strong officer candidate, then look no further because I’ve compiled a list of 5 essential tricks to help you strengthen your candidacy.

- **Trick #1:** To be a strong candidate, you need to thoroughly complete the application! The application is the most tedious task that a potential officer candidate has to do, but by persevering and completing the application on time and with every signature and supplementary letter you have proven to others that you are serious about running.

- **Trick #2:** As many of you are probably aware, especially with the recent presidential election, candidates have a specific platform for their campaign. You should develop your own campaign to show SkillsUSA Michigan that you are well educated about the organization and are actively seeking new ways to improve it.

- **Trick #3:** How you present yourself as a candidate is just as much about what you talk about, as it is about how you act and dress. You should always present yourself in a professional or poised manner, creating trouble or becoming a cause for concern at the conference or even just dressing unprofessionally can turn heads and put you in the center of attention for the wrong reasons.

- **Trick #4:** People say that communication is key, and they are absolutely correct! With almost 4,600 members of SkillsUSA Michigan, it may be unlikely that you’ll get to talk to every member, but you should strive to talk to as many people as you can. Making yourself seem approachable and being the person that breaks the ice in a conversation can go a long way for a lot of people, especially when it comes down to the voting portion at the Delegate Meeting.

- **Trick #5:** Remain humble if you are elected, and throughout your term of office. At any point during your road as a candidate, it’s important to remember to not get too cocky or think too highly of yourself. You should continue to remain an approachable candidate to all of our members throughout your term if you are elected.

On behalf of the 2016-2017 SkillsUSA Michigan State Officer Team, we would like to wish all of the state officer candidates good luck, and we hope that all members have a successful year as we continue our journey through our Gateway to Lifelong Success!

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**Experience, but certainly one that comes with a...**
"I'm Mr. Green Christmas, I'm Mr. Sun, I'm Mr. Heat Blister, I'm Mr. Hundred and One..." I hum quietly to myself as I put frosting on my board. I'm working on a gingerbread house, for the local Saginaw Cookie Competition that my culinary class competes in every year.

Every year, usually during the 1st week of November, our class takes time to spend about 2 weeks making gingerbread houses for our local holiday celebration. The houses get put up for display at the Anderson Enrichment Center. There are different divisions in the competition, ours is the high school division, but there are also categories for professionals, families and amateurs to enter.

Our class splits up into small groups of 2 to 5 people and together they come up with a concept and design a gingerbread house. We start by creating a model out of construction paper and then use the parts to shape the cookies we make. I decided to work in a group of 2 with only one of my classmates because both of us knew we would be absent on several of the days we were supposed to be working on the house.

We agreed to a theme based on the Miser Brothers, two characters from a series of old Claymation style Christmas movies. The two brothers, Heat Miser and Snow Miser, are always butting heads because one is a hothead who controls heat and the other is all about cold. Due to the nature of the characters, we decided to split the board into two ‘territories’ for each character. The actual gingerbread house was going to be on Snow Miser’s side and decorated to look like an ice castle with icicles on the roof. The landscape house was decorated with snow frosted trees and little minions dancing around. Heat Miser’s side was decorated with a large volcano constructed of rice krispies and the landscape was made to look like it was covered in volcanic soil and rock.

In the middle the two characters stood on the lines of their property in a standoff. The end product looked good and we received a lot of compliments, but the best part was knowing that all my team’s hard work paid off because we got to be a part of the community. You see, even though we entered the houses in a competition and there is a prize, we really participate for the benefit of the community.

Every year in Saginaw, we have a big holiday celebration with a parade, horse driven carriage rides, a lights show at the water treatment center, and we display all the houses from the cookie competition at the enrichment center. Without us competing, there wouldn’t be very many houses to display and a fun tradition that helps bring our community together would lose some of its luster. Even though it’s a class requirement it still feels good knowing I had a part in helping my community.

It’s important to remember to give back to our communities and help promote positive activity. Some of the easy opportunities to help your community are by looking up and volunteering at local shelters or nursing homes in your area. Make sure to always be smart and safe though and get approval from a parent or guardian before participating in anything. Have fun being productive and helping your community, and upholding SkillsUSA theme: Champions at Work.

Are you contemplating joining a professional organization? If so, SkillsUSA is the one for you. SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry representatives working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. SkillsUSA helps each student to excel.

As the State Officer Coordinator, I had the opportunity to attend the SkillsUSA Fall Leadership Conference in November. There was approx. 375 students and advisors in attendance. We had several awesome workshops. Did you attend the conference? If not, did you hear about it?

If you are a new student and want to be a part of something bigger and more exciting than you would ever imagine. Look around your school, find a student that has been involved in SkillsUSA, if not, ask your counselor they can surely steer you in the right direction.

We always want to know what the blue print of our life will be. We want details, we want to know exactly what the result will be. Now, if you think about it, life is just not that way! No doubt, there will be some setbacks along the way. You ask yourself, can I do this, can I become a winner? Well just being a part of SkillsUSA makes you a winner.

However, only you must make that ultimate decision because when you do, it will change your life. Make SkillsUSA a lamp to your feet and allow it to guide you to your destination. When negative thoughts cross your mind such as, I can’t do this, I’m too shy, I can’t speak in front a crowd of people it’s just your mind deceiving you.

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However, only you must make that ultimate decision because when you do, it will change your life. Make SkillsUSA a lamp to your feet and allow it to guide you to your destination. When negative thoughts cross your mind such as, I can’t do this, I’m too shy, I can’t speak in front a crowd of people it’s just your mind deceiving you. You can do this!

Are you going to talk yourself out of it or are you going to be bold enough to put out there and present yourself to whomever and compete in a skills event or leadership event or even become a SkillsUSA State Officer? We want you to become a part of the greatest national organization. The unknown is where things happen, take a leap for the first time and get involved.

We all want to be comfortable in whatever we choose to do. We are going to be put in situations where we don’t think we have the experience to do the job or compete in a skill. With a positive attitude and a willingness to learn you can conquer the world. Too often we talk ourselves out of something we know are going to enrich our lives.

You will discover the ability you never knew you had. Who knows, you can do things you never thought you could. How far do you want to go within the SkillsUSA organization? Are you thinking of competing in SkillsUSA Masonry? I was working on my solders with only a few minutes to finish. I rushed to get the solders done and I missed one; there were supposed to be nine in all and I only had eight. I was upset because I overlooked something I knew, but I lost track of time. From this small mistake, I learned to manage my time and I told myself I would get better.

The following year I had another opportunity to compete. This time I placed 3rd in the state. I had my medal in hand. I felt strong, proud, confident, and full of energy. I believe that those who try to be the best in any activity have a strong competitive nature, but that alone may not make you a winner. That doesn’t necessarily mean you’re not a winner, it may mean you need to improve on other skills.

How would you feel knowing you were competing against someone that has already been doing a skilled trade through a family business? What would be going through your head? You may feel nervous, and more focused on how well their project looks. But if you stay focused and confident in your ability, you increase your chances of winning. Only you know your capabilities.

Competition is an honorable thing to have in this world. It gives everyone an opportunity to show-case what they have learned and it is something to look forward to each year. It’s a chance to bring out the best in you, and a chance for businesses to see the young talent.
The 2017 Fall Leadership Conference was November 1 and was a success! After long excruciating hours and late nights, the SkillsUSA State Officers was able to pull it off! With the help of Alumni State Officers; Hayley Lee and Nolan Rogers, and guest speakers; Alyssa Chang from FOCUS Training and SFC Jeffrey Groom and SFC Ty Sweet from the Michigan Army National Guard, the Fall Leadership Conference was truly a celebration of everyone’s hard work!

As a formal introduction of the Fall Leadership Conference, the State Officer team performed the Opening Ceremony, which was highly executed. Every year, SkillsUSA invites a guest speaker from FOCUS Training. This year, we were pleased to have Alyssa Chang. Throughout her presentation, she was able to get the students up and moving. Especially with a game very similar to the movie Pitch Perfect, in which teams had a sing off, students were socializing with each other and were able to get comfortable with everyone around them. Concluding Alyssa Chang’s presentation, State President Tyler Richardson presented her with an award of appreciation for her work at the Fall Leadership Conference.

The State Officers have been working extremely hard on breakout sessions. Each breakout session had an activity and small presentation according to the topic. The students had their choice of which breakout session to attend, the options were; Reporting For Duty, Jawbreakers, Time is Not Your Enemy, What’s Behind the Scene, and The Green Room. State officers were paired in each breakout session, for the Green Room, my partner was State Parliamentarian Dearius Keller. Our topic was Community Service, we thoroughly explain how beneficial Community Service is to the worker and the community. And the key to planning a successful Community Service project is through teamwork. As an icebreaker and to exemplify teamwork, we started with the human knot. The students enjoyed the icebreaker and were able to loosen up a bit.

Next we decided to give the students a challenge. The students were on a limited $200 budget and had to plan a Community Service project according to a price list that was given. The team able to save the most money while improving the community depending on the products they purchased were the winners. To wrap up our breakout session, we decided to quiz the students. Each student that answered questions correctly about SkillsUSA Framework and importance of Community Service, was awarded a trophy and every student were awarded pieces of candy.

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The benefits of being in SkillsUSA are great. One of these is having the opportunity to travel. Since SkillsUSA is a Michigan and national organization, I have traveled to Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids for all different types of training and conferences. In Detroit, I participated in the officer training to become a state officer. Grand Rapids is where the state conference is held. I went there to compete in job interview as well as running for state officer. During the summer, the state officers came to Lansing to meet leadership from the state and to meet our local legislators.

In September 2016, I traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the Washington Leadership Training Institute (WLTI). I was able to meet with Senator Gary Peters’ aide. Her name is Zephranie Buetow. Senator Peters is the senator from Michigan. I was also able to meet with Representative Sander Levin and his aid Emily Del Morone. I got to network with them about SkillsUSA. I also was able to see the monuments in our national capital.

During this experience, I participated in leadership training. One of the best parts of all of this was that I received a financial scholarship to attend WLTI. In the entire nation, only four were given and I was the only one from Michigan to get this scholarship. For all these experiences, traveling was fun and educational.

SkillsUSA gives you the opportunity to do public speaking. At the beginning of the school year, I would never have thought of doing public speaking. Now, I gladly do it. I spoke in front of about 200 hundred students at my Career Center about SkillsUSA. It helped me recruit others to learn about this great organization. Sharing about your personal experiences is a lot of fun and I get to educate others about how my experience can be there experience.

SkillsUSA give you the opportunity to be a good leader. A goal of mine is that I want to be in the Army and you need leadership skills to advance there. SkillsUSA has given me the leadership skills I need to succeed in the workforce and the Army. I have grown in confidence. It has helped me take charge of my life and in my school. I am more organized and feel I am a good leader. I am much more assertive now. I used to be a “go with the flow” type of person, but now I am able to speak up and share my point of view.

In November 2016, I worked with the other state officers to plan and present at the Fall Leadership Conference. At this event, we had to change our original plan as the session didn’t go exactly as we wanted. This was another example of being flexible and being a leader.

SkillsUSA is a great opportunity for you! It gives you a chance to travel, teaches you the skills for public speaking and being a great leader. I never thought in my whole life that I would have had the chance to speak in front of a group of people at the beginning of the school year with confidence and adaptability. Networking with legislators at both the state and national levels is another opportunity you could have if you get involved. Consider being a member of SkillsUSA!
In SkillsUSA, the officers use an incredible tool called The SkillsUSA Framework. The framework is one of many ways we use to train officers and other members. The framework has three main parts and a number of additional subcategories. The three main areas are Personal Skills, Technical Skills Grounded in Academics, and Workplace Skills. These make up the three sides of the triangular SkillsUSA Framework.

Let’s look at the Personal Skills first. While some of the skills associated with Personal Skills seem like a no-brainer and an officer like myself should have no problem developing these, believe it or not, I struggle with personal skills the most. Having a good work ethic is one of the best skills to have. I have to train myself daily and make sure I am organized and focused to complete my responsibilities. Since becoming an officer my work ethic has improved. Secondly, Professionalism is something a young adult like myself may not value as important but it is. Acting in a professional manner is something that does not come naturally to me. Being 100% truly professional is something I didn’t believe I could ever do. But with training and time with SkillsUSA, I have gone from always clowning around to being a hardworking, focused, and professional team member.

Technical Skills Grounded in Academics is another side to the SkillsUSA framework. It focuses more on tech center programs and professional development. Professional development is the skills you develop from working with a team. As you develop in SkillsUSA you become more and more connected with others. One of the largest roles in Technical Skills Grounded in Academics has to be job-specific skills. All the skills you learn as an officer can and do lead back to the workplace. One of the first skills you use and carry over to all of your meetings is parliamentary procedures which teaches you how to properly run a meeting. These skills can give everyone equal time and have the meeting run smoothly.

The third side of the SkillsUSA Framework is Workplace Skills. Workplace Skills are how we as a team of officers work together and with other teams. Workplace skills focus on teamwork, communication, decision-making, multicultural sensitivity, planning and organizing, and leadership. In a workplace, you will most likely be working with people from all kinds of ethnicities, backgrounds, and cultures so you must have open communication and be sensitive to how others might feel about certain topics to maintain cohesion of the group and avoid offenses. You must also know how to make good decisions to promote the productivity of your company. In the workplace, you must plan for the expected and the unexpected. You must be organized, always knowing where your documents or tools are, for instance.

In conclusion, the SkillsUSA Framework allows us to pinpoint areas in which to improve ourselves as well as to support our fellow workers and employers. I highly recommend you too use the SkillsUSA Framework on a regular basis to develop your personal, professional, and workplace skills.
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