

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nebraska DECA Honors 2026 State Career Development Conference Winners

LINCOLN, Neb. — April 21, 2026 — Nebraska DECA proudly announced its top finalists from the 2026 State Career Development Conference (SCDC), held March 19–20 at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln.

The conference brought together 724 high school DECA members from across Nebraska to compete in events focused on business, finance, marketing, and hospitality management. Students demonstrated excellence through knowledge, professionalism, and leadership in a range of competitive categories.

“Our students continue to impress us with their creativity, critical thinking, and dedication,” said Carol Malcolm, Nebraska DECA State Advisor. “Every participant represented their school and our state with pride.”

Top 8 Finalists by Event Accounting Applications Series

1. Shyamleen Shinde – Millard North
2. John Adams – Millard North
3. Ethan Ajai – Elkhorn North
4. Calvin Chohany – Millard South
5. Ajit Tadiparthi – Millard North
6. Kyler Brey – Bellevue East
7. Victor Cambridge – Westside

8. Natalie Larsen – Scottsbluff

Apparel & Accessories Marketing Series

1. Aisha Mirza – Millard North

2. Cameron Figg – Scottsbluff

3. Lillian Jones – Central

4. Natalie Fink – Millard West

5. Gracyn Cheloha – Gering

6. Noelle Bruning – Westside

7. Logan Deike – Westview

Automotive Services Marketing Series

1. Pratham Dhakal – Millard North

2. Dheeraj Ravi – Millard North

3. Rahma Al Iweer – Millard North

4. Gavin Vernon – Brownell Talbot

5. Elijah Zimmerman – Millard South

6. Krishna Penmetsa – Elkhorn North

7. William Lazinek – Millard West

8. Ben Fikar – Lincoln Southeast

Business Finance Series

1. Barrett Wiegand – Sidney

2. Pradyun Anand – Millard North

3. Niharika Kandari – Elkhorn North

4. Jack Hawkins – Westside

5. Garrett Tenney – Gretna East

6. Henry Hoiekvam – Central

7. Charlie Dencklau – Brownell Talbot

8. Sai Seelam – Elkhorn North

Business Growth Plan

1. Alejandra Wells – Burke

2. Ethan Murdock – Central

Business Law and Ethics Team Decision Making

1. Shaurya Mishra / Kap Nedunoori – Millard North

2. Aidan Erkes / Ahmad Rustamov – Westside

3. Saashvi Nayakwadi / Akshara Prathapa – Millard North

4. Khris Matul-Rosales / Mckenna Wheeler – Hastings

5. Genesis Deleon / Lauren Targy – Papillion LaVista

6. Max Haffner / Charles Richardson – Kearney

7. Londyn Fisher / Landen Purvis – Central City

8. Rorian Crouch / Sophia Sokolovska – Westside

Business Services Marketing

1. Prajwal Mohan – Millard North

2. Natalie Cisler – Millard North

3. Sloane Gregory – Papillion LaVista South

4. Lucas Agulla – Westside

5. Avery Simms – Westview

6. Jaxon Fittie – Lincoln Southeast

7. Hyrum Wang – Millard North

8. Aashish Gopisetty – Elkhorn North

Business Services Operations Research

1. Macie Sanderson – Millard North

2. George Schmall – Scottsbluff

Buying and Merchandising Operations Research

1. Grace Altman / Rebekah Solberg – Millard North
2. Kiernan Meink – Millard South

Buying and Merchandising Team Decision Making

1. Austin Gong / Andy Hsi – Millard North
2. Tejith Kodali / Mahesh Yandra – Millard North
3. Lila Burns / Ella Shafer – Central
4. Eddie Deahl / Natalie Pham – Papillion LaVista
5. Harper Gerharter / Keira Koory – Papillion LaVista
6. Robert Herechski / Alex Swoboda – Bellevue West
7. Christian Salinas / Madilynn Winger – Bellevue West
8. Elle Burkey / Charlotte Kenney – Millard North

Entrepreneurship Series

1. Laila Pace – Millard North
2. Nishanth Kandala – Millard North
3. Xavier Sorto – Lincoln Southwest
4. Gideon Terwilleger – Lincoln Southeast
5. Ava Reed – Scottsbluff
6. Owen Tejral – Papillion LaVista
7. Jax Miner – Westside
8. Dan Grunig – Sidney

Entrepreneurship Team Decision Making

1. Gauri Nair / Angela Qi – Millard North
2. Sammy Draper / Maddy Moore – Papillion LaVista
3. Owen James / Reid McIntyre – Westside
4. Colton Renken / Tucker Sanders – Burke
5. Ivan Pfeffer / Charlie Scherbring – Brownell Talbot

6. Levi King / Ethan Murdock – Central
7. Owen Matthews / Trey Quigley – Westside
8. Romeo Arreguin / Noah Litherland – Millard South

Financial Consulting Event

1. Jax Miner – Westside
2. Cameron Figg – Scottsbluff

Financial Operations Research

1. Eli Bartsch-Bang / Emily Cota – Westside
2. Peter Braun / Lawson Mully – Millard South

Financial Services Team Decision Making

1. Peter Braun / Lawson Mully – Millard South
2. Wesley Chen / Matthew Wood – Millard North
3. Perry Anderson / Akhil Mehta – Brownell Talbot
4. Varish Devineni / Joseph Dionicio – Millard North
5. Rishi Chundury / Zayd Khan – Brownell Talbot
6. Sam Lee / Easton Mahnks – Papillion LaVista
7. Donovan Ficken / Owen Ryba – Millard North
8. Rex Connell / Angelo Gibilisco – Westside

Food Marketing Series

1. Vishnu Patterm – Elkhorn North
2. Meruni Are – Millard North
3. Jacelyn Brown – Gering
4. Aziz Allam – Millard West
5. Noah Rogers – Millard South
6. Abhirup Koduru – Elkhorn North
7. Sophia Zhang – Millard West

8. Abinash Chalise – Elkhorn North

Franchise Business Plan

1. Perry Anderson / Akhil Mehta – Brownell Talbot

2. Emma Kutsch / Harper Lewandowski – Kearney

Hospitality & Tourism Operations Research

1. Ella Daily / Natalie Haecke – Millard South

2. Natalie Jensen / Bailey Palmer – Elkhorn

Hospitality and Tourism Professional Selling

1. Mollijane Smith – Scottsbluff

2. Addi Herzog – Westside

Hospitality Services Team Decision Making

1. Lilly Gutta / Claire Villotta – Westside

2. Addi Herzog / Phoebe Nguyen – Westside

3. Mia De La Cruz / Haley Rensch – Westside

4. Auzlyn Anderson / Sanai Foster – Westside

5. Olivia Antony / Rishitha Kotha – Millard North

6. Elaina Field / Gracelynn McDonnell – Plattsmouth

7. Anika Arora / Charvi Karampudi – Millard North

8. Reid Novak / Luke Olsen – Millard North

Hotel and Lodging Management

1. Mahalet Kinde – Brownell Talbot

2. Dylan Nguyen – Millard South

3. Arav Kaushal – Lincoln East

4. Madeline Jensen – Lincoln Southeast

5. David Dadabaev – Westview

6. Lillian Kassal – Central

7. Mollijane Smith – Scottsbluff

8. Elizabeth Brodkey – Westside

Human Resources Management

1. Mrethi Magesh – Millard North

2. Janani Prabakaran – Elkhorn North

3. Ryhan Bhat – Millard North

4. Anesu Chinyoka – Millard North

5. Jeffrey Ogbonnaya – Lincoln Southeast

6. Grace Altman – Millard North

7. Evellyn Milano – Scottsbluff

8. Jimmy Healy – Westside

Independent Business Plan

1. Emily Thai – Millard West

2. Jacelyn Brown / Joel Brown / Kailar Hawley – Gering

Innovation Plan

1. Lucas Agulla / Jack Hawkins / Jimmy Healy – Westside

2. Emmy Cano / Julianna Munoz – Gering

Integrated Marketing Campaign – Event

1. Alex Shaeffer / Emma Shaeffer – Lincoln Southwest

2. Austin Fuemmeler / Jack Rhodes – Papillion La Vista South

Integrated Marketing Campaign – Service

1. Sienna Maskin / Nichole Palfini – Central

Integrated Marketing Campaign – Product

1. Oliver Carpenter / Nathan Kelley / Ava Reed – Millard North

2. Josephine Anderson / Angel Bhandari – Brownell Talbot

3. Ethan Ajai / Parth Rai – Millard North

Marketing Communications Series

1. Isabella Smith – Central
2. Rikhil Jasti – Lincoln East
3. Marlene Aguilera – Gering
4. Taylana Tolbert – Bellevue East
5. Emily Thai – Millard West
6. Justin Pham – Millard South
7. Sorsha Conroy – Papillion La Vista South
8. Rebekah Solberg – Millard North

Marketing Management Team Decision Making

1. Eli Bartsch-Bang / Emily Cota – Westside
2. Kylie Gjoraas / Keely Sagucio – Papillion La Vista South
3. Cadence Bedenbaugh / Addison Day – Westside
4. Brighton Bernady / Kaelin Groenjes – Millard South
5. Wrennycole Nixon / Mia Swain – Papillion La Vista South
6. Madi Kully / Lili Santo – Westside
7. Benjamin Flott / Duncan Lapka – Millard South
8. Emerson Hess / Calista Perez – Westside

Personal Financial Literacy

1. John Gilmore – Ralston Senior
2. Gunner Rettele – Millard South
3. Aastha Chaudhari – Sidney
4. William Lesley – Elkhorn North
5. Reeya Chundury – Brownell Talbot
6. Hunter Hain – Lincoln Southeast
7. Sydney Witzke – Millard South

8. Clare Chandler – Papillion La Vista

Principles of Business Management and Administration

1. Ananya Deshmukh – Brownell Talbot

2. Justin Zhang – Papillion La Vista South

3. Benjamin Tran – Papillion La Vista

4. Lily Abele – Lincoln East

5. Evelyn Benitez – Papillion La Vista South

6. Alexis Murray – Elkhorn North

7. Joseph Mise – Bellevue West

8. Adarius Holmes – Millard West

Principles of Entrepreneurship

1. Sriram Kolli – Millard North

2. Connor Vickers – Burke

3. Kavya Dutt Bhardwaj – Brownell Talbot

4. Shaan Saxena – Brownell Talbot

5. Alex Kivett – Lincoln Southwest

6. Rafe George – Brownell Talbot

7. Cali Treffer – Scottsbluff

8. Astiz Amin – Elkhorn North

Principles of Finance

1. Emma Bornhoft – Lincoln Southeast

2. Thomas Schoedel – Papillion La Vista South

3. Jasper White – Westside

4. Valeria Tzompantzi-Contreras – Bryan

5. Jack Paulson – Lincoln Southeast

6. Nay Htoo – Benson

7. Kate Maxwell – Elkhorn North

8. Ian Lopez Silva – Bryan

Principles of Hospitality and Tourism

1. Jishnu Das – Millard North

2. Anna Karl – Bellevue West

3. Amaan Sadath-Vakkayil – Elkhorn

4. Annibel Zaloudek – Bellevue West

5. Joe Stanley – Elkhorn North

6. Jasa Benjamin – Burke

7. Shea Maxon – Millard West

8. Miles Jetter – Westview

Principles of Marketing

1. Josephine Anderson – Brownell Talbot

2. Paxton Lee – Papillion La Vista

3. Angela Hensley – Brownell Talbot

4. Ariana Galindo – Millard West

5. Khalea Hanna – Millard North

6. Olivia Pottebaum – Gretna East

7. Maximilian Templeman – Millard North

8. Isis Mercado – Elkhorn

Professional Selling

1. Bianca McDonald – Scottsbluff

2. Jaydyn Macklin – Westside

Project Management Business Solutions

1. Brooklyn Bavaresco / Ben McAllister – Millard West

2. Iman Khalil / Kate Martin / Ryder Moore – Millard West

Project Management Community Awareness

1. Montana Chronister / Haylee McIlhon – Millard West
2. Brooklyn Vaughn – Millard West

Project Management Community Giving

1. Sophia Zhang – Millard West
2. Lila Burns / Ella Shafer – Central

Project Management Financial Literacy

1. Kyah Hicks – Sidney
2. Reeya Chundury / Hayden Steffens – Brownell Talbot

Project Management Sales

1. Christian Salinas / Alex Swoboda – Bellevue West
2. Yesenia Baez / Anela Foster / Lana Wilcox – Westside

Quick Service Restaurant Management

1. Elsie Ryan – Papillion La Vista
2. Leighton Filter – Gretna East
3. Mackenzie Smock – Bellevue East
4. Wasi Bux – Millard North
5. Kailar Hawley – Gering
6. Lillian Wilson – Westview
7. Alia Choi – Millard West
8. Claire-Ana Monjarez-Palermo – Bellevue West

Restaurant and Food Service Management

1. Ocean Lin – Kearney
2. Sujith Tadikonda – Millard North
3. Montana Chronister – Millard West
4. Finnley Henrichs – Plattsmouth

5. Iman Khalil – Millard West
6. Nathan Kelley – Scottsbluff
7. Leah Zhu – Millard West
8. Marissa Haun – Scottsbluff

Retail Merchandising

1. Katelyn Tooher – Millard North
2. Annika Srivastav – Lincoln Southeast
3. Elizabeth Sanchez – Plattsmouth
4. Macie Sanderson – Millard North
5. Tina Beard – Lincoln Southeast
6. Eloise Carter – Lincoln Southeast
7. Addison Peck – Scottsbluff
8. Yunus Ahmad – Millard North

Sports & Entertainment Marketing Team Decision Making

1. Beau Cassell / Jack Cassell – Lincoln Southeast
2. Sienna Maskin / Nichole Palfini – Central
3. Evalyn Dworak / Jordyn Van Ginkel – Westside
4. Henry Black / Peyton Drake – Hastings Senior
5. Hunter Negus / Miles Rowe – Westview
6. Bennett Baack / Paxton Rhodes – Hastings Senior
7. Tyrell Earl / Xavier Williams – Millard South
8. Nadia Salahshurian / Quinn Warner – Westside

Sports and Entertainment Marketing Operations Research

1. Dylan Nguyen – Millard South
2. Irais Camacho Garcin / Gunner Rettele – Millard South

Sports and Entertainment Marketing Series

1. Hridhai Sajinesh – Millard North
2. Tyler Epstein – Millard North
3. Ethan Hyder – Millard North
4. Nick Krapfl – Westview
5. Sophia Bakke – Papillion La Vista
6. Luke McHargue – Central City
7. Oliver Carpenter – Scottsbluff
8. Addie Nielson – Papillion La Vista South

Start-Up Business Plan

1. Janani Prabakaran – Elkhorn North
2. Dan Grunig / Jack Hollingshead / Barrett Wiegand – Sidney

Travel & Tourism Marketing Team Decision Making

1. Ella Daily / Natalie Haecke – Millard South
2. Srinika Ravinuthula / Teja Sridher – Millard North
3. Aditi Jaras / Anagha Vemmelesseril – Millard North
4. Riley Casey / Nathaniel Perez – Papillion La Vista
5. Marwan Alkhaleel / Aariz Nasser – Millard West
6. Anezka Nemec / Aileen Ramos – Papillion La Vista
7. Story Platt / Jerzie Trudell – Papillion La Vista South
8. Arnav Parajuli / Maneil Uprety – Millard North

In Closing and Recognition

Nebraska DECA congratulates all students who demonstrated leadership, professionalism, and business acumen at the 2026 State Career Development Conference.

Top finalists will advance to represent Nebraska at the International Career Development Conference (ICDC) in April.

“Our students continue to inspire us with their talent, creativity, and commitment,” said Carol Malcolm, Nebraska DECA State Advisor. “We are proud of every member who came to compete and represent their chapters with distinction.”

Nebraska DECA extends special thanks to Team 69 as they end their tenure:

Gregory Overfield, President; Konnor Garrett, Secretary; Marwan Alkhaleel, VP of Membership; Macie Sanderson, VP of Communications; Rikhil Jasti, VP of Business & Industry Relations; Aziz Allam, VP of Community Engagement; Ella Daily, VP of Collegiate and Alumni DECA.

At the conclusion of the Conference, Team 69 announced our New State Officers, Team 70, who will lead Nebraska DECA throughout the 2026-2027 year. Help us congratulate these individuals who ran an exceptional campaign and are willing to take office:

- Kris Matul Rosales, President
- Wasi Bux, Secretary
- Owen Tejral, Vice President (role to be determined)
- Ashira Mirza, Vice President (role to be determined)
- Natalie Fink, Vice President (role to be determined)
- Niharika Kandari, Vice President (role to be determined)

Nebraska DECA looks forward to the leadership of Team 70 as these student officers continue to advance DECA’s mission of developing emerging leaders and entrepreneurs across the State.

About Nebraska DECA

Nebraska DECA empowers emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management across the state. Through DECA’s conferences, competitions, and leadership programs, members gain real-world experience and skills that prepare them for successful careers and civic leadership.

####End of Release