



OUR PURPOSE

To CONNECT all CTE professionals with the network, resources, and abilities they need to make a meaningful difference.



2025-26 ACTEAZ Board State of the State

Submitted by: Heather Webb, ACTEAZ President
Stephen Weltsch, Executive Director

State Officers: Heather Webb, President; James Grieshaber, Past-President; Jennifer Kaufman-Fourness, President-Elect; Patrick Clawson, Vice-President; Patti Pastor, Secretary; Lori Luzier, Treasurer; Michelle Crary, and Cathy Bailey-Bagby Members at Large; Stephen Weltsch, Executive Director, and Shelly York, Associate Director.

Annual Program of Work

ACTEAZ is a member-driven association, and the annual goals established by the Board of Directors directly guide the work of the association. The following highlights showcase how this year's program of work shaped association initiatives, partnerships, communication, and member engagement across Arizona.

1. Strengthen ACTEAZ Communication for Clarity and Reach

- a. Launched a reimagined ACTEAZ brand identity, including new logo designs, and initiated a full website redesign to better communicate the association's purpose, member benefits, and statewide impact.
- b. Strengthened member communication through more intentional newsletters, strategic messaging, and expanded social media storytelling.
- c. Elevated CTE leadership in statewide workforce conversations through partnerships with Arizona Town Hall, Education Forward Arizona, Center for the Future of AZ (CFA), AZ Business Education Coalition (ABEC), and ElevateEdAZ to advance career-connected learning and work-based learning opportunities.
- d. Actively participated in the AZ Coalition for Career Readiness (ACCR) and served with an AZ initiative to design a statewide model for strengthening career exploration in middle school building toward a statewide ECAP plan. Partners included Pipeline Connects and CFA.

2. Deepen Relationships across CTE with Rural CTE Professionals

- a. Conducted and published a Rural CTE Student Survey to ensure student voice informs statewide priorities and programming.
- b. Expanded rural engagement through site visits, national presentations, and participation in statewide and national conversations focused on strengthening rural CTE programs and professional networks.
- c. Partnered with the ACTE and national leaders to increase rural-focused professional development opportunities, including development of a dedicated rural strand for the 2026 VISION Conference.

3. Lift Affiliate Voices and Collective Impact

- a. Launched the new Quality Affiliate Program to create clearer pathways for affiliate growth, recognition, and engagement.
- b. Expanded efforts to highlight affiliate accomplishments, educator impact, and member stories through newsletters, social media, and statewide communication campaigns.
- c. Continued intentional support of affiliate leadership and events to strengthen statewide collaboration and connection.



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4. Elevate the ACTEAS Summer Conference Experience

- a. Used member feedback and survey data to improve conference design, session alignment, and attendee navigation.
- b. Expanded listening opportunities through administrator meetings, focus groups, conference feedback sessions, and strategic board planning conversations.
- c. Began intentional planning for the future evolution of the Summer Conference to ensure it remains Arizona's premier CTE connection experience.

These efforts reflect the direct connection between ACTEAS board goals and association action. Through strategic partnerships, intentional listening, and member-centered planning, ACTEAS continues to strengthen and advance Arizona's CTE community.

ACTEAS Strengthening the Story of CTE in Arizona

This year, ACTEAS advanced two connected initiatives that strengthen a core priority for Arizona Career and Technical Education: ensuring that every educator, leader, and community partner can clearly understand and confidently communicate the value of CTE. ACTEAS is answering that question with practical tools below.

1. The **"What is a CTE Teacher?" infographic** captures the modern identity of CTE educators in a clear, visual, and accessible way. It elevates the role beyond traditional perceptions and reflects the reality of today's classrooms. Modern CTE teachers are designers of learning experiences. They integrate academic rigor, technical skill development, industry alignment, and real-world application to prepare students for both college and career pathways.

This resource helps shift understanding among families, administrators, and community partners—making the work of CTE visible, relatable, and valued.

2. The **CTE 101 slide deck** extends this narrative into a scalable, statewide communication tool. Designed for use with superintendents, principals, counselors, school boards, and industry partners, it provides a consistent message about the role of CTE in improving student outcomes and transitions. It reframes CTE not as an elective option, but as a core strategy that:
 - a. Drives student achievement and engagement
 - b. Strengthens school performance systems
 - c. Builds seamless pathways from middle school through postsecondary education
 - d. Supports Arizona's workforce and economic mobility goals

This tool ensures educators and advocates across Arizona are speaking with one clear voice about what CTE is—and why it matters.

ACTEAS remains committed to strengthening how CTE is understood, valued, and supported across Arizona. These tools ensure that when educators speak about CTE, they are not explaining a program—they are communicating a powerful strategy that changes lives, strengthens schools, and builds Arizona's future workforce.



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Building Community: The “Third Space” for Arizona CTE

Beyond programs and pathways, ACTEAZ invested in something equally essential: connection.

Through the Connection Conference and other convenings, ACTEAZ created a “third space”—beyond school and home—where CTE professionals’ step outside job titles and reconnect with purpose, identity, and one another. In a profession defined by constant change and growing complexity, this space matters. It is where veteran educators regain energy, new educators build confidence, and everyone remembers they are part of something larger.

The future of CTE in Arizona isn’t built in isolation. ACTEAZ ensures it is built together.

ACTE and Region V

- ACTEAZ actively promotes and participates in national conferences such as ACTE Vision, National Policy Seminar (NPS), Work Based Learning Conference, and Region V events.
- Arizona is proud to be served by ACTE President Dr. Robert Torres.
- ACTEAZ Executive Directors are active members of the National Executive Directors Association (NEDA), collaborating with leaders from across the country.
- ACTEAZ has proudly received the ACTE Quality Association Award for over 20 consecutive years, a testament to our sustained excellence and impact.
- ACTEAZ welcomes *ACTE Post-Secondary Fellows* Jennifer Curtis, Chandler-Gilbert Community College, and Danny Fisher, Gateway Community College.
- Arizona proudly serves on the Region V Awards Committee and the Region V Policy Committee.
- Special congratulations to West-MEC, recipient of the Innovative Career and Technical Education Program Award for Arizona. This award recognizes West-MEC’s leadership in expanding work-based learning opportunities through AI technologies.

Premier Series

This year, ACTEAZ offered 35 Premier Series courses, reaching 548 participants statewide. Our offerings included 24 in-person courses and 11 virtual courses, providing flexible learning options for educators. At the ACTE Connection Conference, ACTEAZ will continue to offer Premier Series sessions, expanding access to high-quality professional development.

The ACTEAZ Premier Series is especially valuable for professionals transitioning from industry to education, as well as for serving the unique needs of rural school districts across Arizona.

These courses are fully certified by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) for credit toward certification deficiencies and are taught by highly engaging instructors who model best practices in the classroom. Each course equips teachers with proven strategies they can use throughout their careers.



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Fellows

Since 2000, the ACTEAZ Fellows Program has graduated 205 Fellows, including 5 new graduates this year. Currently, 14 Year-One Fellows are advancing to Year Two of the program. Applications for the next cohort launched in May, continuing our mission to develop future CTE leaders in Arizona. This year, the Fellows Program introduced several key enhancements, including a new program coordinator and the addition of a capstone project focused on addressing some of Arizona's most pressing CTE challenges.

Elections

This year's officer election includes an energized slate of candidates representing strong participation across the state. Each of the newly elected leaders brings a powerful combination of experience, passion, and vision for the future of CTE in Arizona.

ACTEAZ is thrilled to share the results of our 2026 ACTEAZ Board Elections and expansion of the Board of Directors to strengthen representation.

Welcome Our New Board Members:

- President: Jennifer Kaufman Fourness
- President-Elect: Patrick Clawson
- Vice President: Patti Pastor
- Secretary: Cathy Bailey-Bagby
- Member at Large: Marsha Becker
- AZ School Administrators (ASA): Kathryn Strevell
- Az School Counselor Association (AzSCA): Kris Guy

These leaders will help shape the next chapter of ACTEAZ's story. Elevating member voice, advancing professional development, and continuing our legacy of student success.

ADE Partnership

ACTEAZ and the Arizona Department of Education CTE maintain a long-standing, collaborative partnership, co-hosting the ACTE Summer Conference for decades. ACTEAZ also works closely with all CTE program areas and Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), whose students often advance to national competitions after winning at the state level.

The 2026 Connection Conference marks 51 years, featuring over 300 sessions and welcoming more than 1,200 attendees, presenters, and exhibitors.