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Mitchell Technical Institute

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April 25, 2017

South Dakota Board of Education
800 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501

Re: Program name change request

Dear Board Members:

Mitchell Technical Institute is constantly striving to keep its programs fresh and relevant to industry, useful and responsive to employers and interesting and desirable to prospective students. To that end, in the Fall of 2012, MTI launched, with the SD Board of Education's support, a Farm Power Technology program. This program was specifically designed to appeal to a student who wanted a career in the agriculture industry, but wanted a more mechanical and industrial focus than production farming or ranching. This Associate degree program has been very successful with nearly 75 graduates since the first cohort enrolled in Fall 2012. Placement has consistently been near 100% and starting wages are typically in the \$17.00/hour range as highly skilled technicians are in demand by employers across the region. MTI has also enjoyed the support of many industry partners with donations of cash and equipment totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars. A visitor driving into the Nordby Trades Center courtyard on any school day will see large, expensive tractors, combines and other pieces of specialty equipment in use by the students for classroom and lab experiences.

Our instructors and admissions representatives have noticed in recent years that many students who ask about mechanical and transportation-related programs are seeking education and training in diesel technology. "Farm Power Technology" does not indicate the wide range of career options that might be available to them if they were to enroll. Therefore, MTI is seeking to change the name of the program from Farm Power Technology to *Diesel Power Technology* beginning immediately.

It is MTI's intent to keep a strong focus on diesel technology within the agricultural equipment industry, but to allow students to explore other types of equipment that use diesel technology. According to *learn.org*, "Besides working on diesel transportation vehicles, a diesel mechanic may work on diesel engines found in heavy equipment. This can include construction equipment, agricultural and forestry implements, semi trucks, dump trucks and equipment used for heavy hauling. . . [A]dditional industries include railroad [and] marine . . . engines."

According to the South Dakota Department of Labor, there were 708 job openings in the state for diesel technicians in 2016. Our technical institutes produced only 116 unduplicated graduates last year. And the need is not just evident in South Dakota. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment of diesel service technicians and mechanics is projected to grow 12 percent from 2014 to 2024, faster than the average for all occupations. Job opportunities should be best for those who have completed postsecondary training in diesel engine repair." In surrounding states, the need is equally great, ranging from a low of an expected 11.9% increase in Minnesota, to a high of nearly 22% growth in Montana. Wages are excellent as well, with a median hourly rate of \$21.72.

MTI hopes to continue to address the needs of our state and region by recruiting, educating and graduating highly skilled diesel technicians for the agricultural and transportation industries. To that end, Mitchell Technical Institute formally requests your support for a program name change from Farm Power Technology to *Diesel Power Technology*.

Thank you,



Mark Wilson
President