



2026 North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge & Academy

Sunday April 12 – Tuesday, April 14, 2026

Hosted by South Dakota State University, Iowa State University, Dordt University
and the Midwest Regional Dairy Challenge Planning Committee
Denny Sanford Premier Center/Sheraton Sioux Falls in Sioux Falls, South Dakota

To Register as a Volunteer: <https://2026NAIDCVolunteerRegistration.eventbrite.com>
Register by March 12, 2026

The Board of Directors of the North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge invites you to join us for our 24th Annual Dairy Challenge and the 13th Annual Dairy Challenge Academy. These events will be held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota April 12-14, 2026, and hosted by South Dakota State University, Iowa State University, Dordt University, and the Midwest Dairy Challenge Planning Committee. This year's event will be held Sunday evening – Tuesday evening.

The North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge offers a two-day competition that enables four-person teams to evaluate a well-managed dairy farm business and then recommend management enhancements to a panel of judges comprised of industry and academic professionals. The Academy runs in conjunction with the contest, offering students an intensive program using the educational component of the Dairy Challenge without competition.

We are building our list of volunteers to help with the event on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. Being involved and working directly with the students gives you a first-hand view of the students in action, plus a large volunteer pool helps the event run smoothly. This is an excellent recruiting opportunity you won't want to miss!

If you have questions about the event, please communicate with volunteer coordinator Jesse Wellman Jesse.wellman@selko.com Mobile: 651-380-5539. Please ensure every individual from your organization that is planning to participate completes registration using this [form](#). **Forms are due Thursday, March 12, 2026.**

For 2026, you'll find many opportunities to work directly with students, including:

- Dairy Challenge Academy: educational program offered to as many as 120 sophomores, juniors, and seniors from 4-year dairy programs, as well as undergraduates from community colleges and technical schools. We need as many as 30 professionals from varied backgrounds to serve as Academy Advisors by sharing their knowledge of dairying and guiding groups of students through a dairy analysis. For more information about serving as an Academy Advisor, go to https://www.dairychallenge.org/pdfs/2026_National_and_Academy/Academy-Advisor-Invitation-2026.pdf If you are interested in being an Academy Advisor or would like more information about the role, contact national Academy coordinators [Ted Halbach](#) or [Eliza Ruzik](#) Please indicate your interest in being an Advisor on the Volunteer registration form.
- Contest volunteers: opportunities include guiding students during their Monday morning farm visit, monitoring Monday afternoon workrooms, moderating manager interviews on Monday afternoon, being a team guide on Tuesday, and a presentation room volunteer on Tuesday. See registration form for complete details and to sign up to volunteer. For more information about volunteer roles, visit our **Why Volunteer** page at <https://www.dairychallenge.org/volunteer/>
- Career and Innovation Fair: Opportunity for our sponsors at the \$5000 or above level to recruit *and* educate from their booths, explore job opportunities, and share latest innovations with students who will either be your future employees or customers. Additional details are below. Reserve your space on the registration form.
- Sponsors at the \$2500 level and above will receive student resumes & student contact information from this event. This is a great tool to have in your recruiting toolbox even if you can't attend the event.
- Monday Night Student/Sponsor Event: Platinum and Gold Sponsors (donations of \$5000 or more) are invited to our Monday night Student/Sponsor event. This will be a fun and interactive evening that will include food, drinks and activities that will allow you time to get to know the students as they wind down from a busy day on the host farms and preparing their presentations. More details about this event are coming. See the registration form to sign up.
- Tuesday Seminars: Sponsors at the \$15,000 and above have the exclusive opportunity to present a Tuesday Technology Seminar. A very limited number of seminar spaces are available and offered on a first-come first-served basis to our top-tier supporters. These 30-minute seminars are intended to provide additional education for students on leading industry topics, and to give your organization additional exposure to future employees and customers. While we ask the presentations not to be commercial in nature, speakers are encouraged to include a few minutes of "who we are" highlighting your company and products/services as part of your presentation. To find out more about this exclusive

opportunity and to sign up, please contact coordinator Gail Carpenter
ajcarpen@iastate.edu.

Schedule: On our web site you will find a list of the scheduled events for this year's event. Activities will be held at the Denny Sanford Premier Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Please complete the online [Volunteer Registration Form](#) by March 12, 2026 if you are planning to attend and/or send representatives to the event. Please ensure every individual from your organization that is planning to participate completes registration.

Hotel Accommodations: There is a block of rooms available to NAIDC sponsors and volunteers at the contest headquarter hotel:

Sheraton Sioux Falls

1211 North West Avenue

Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57104

Phone: 605/331-0100

Rate: \$179.00+tax includes wi-fi and parking

Arrival: Sunday, April 12, 2026

Departure: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 *or* Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Volunteers* may book using one of these options:

- Use this link: [North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge 2026](#)
- Call (888) 627-8088 and use group code: NO5542
- Request the group rate for North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge.

All rooms should be booked by March 10, 2026. After the March 10 cut-off date, reservations will be accepted based on availability and at the hotel's published rate.

The Sheraton is conveniently attached to the Denny Sanford PREMIER Center.

** Hotel rooms for contest judges will be reserved by NAIDC Management at the Sheraton*

Registration: Volunteer attendees should submit the [Volunteer Registration Form](#) by March 12, 2026

Meals: Volunteers are encouraged to join the students for meals throughout the event. Meal tickets can be purchased on the registration form. Meals will be offered starting with dinner Sunday evening and through dinner Tuesday evening. We highly encourage our sponsors and volunteers to eat with the students - this allows interaction and improves the overall student/sponsor experience. Gold and Platinum Sponsors (\$5000 and above) are especially encouraged to register for the Monday night student/sponsor event and the Tuesday awards dinner. You can indicate your interest in attending these events on the volunteer registration form.

Career & Innovation Fair: We invite our Platinum and Gold Sponsors (\$5000 and above) to set up a display to not only meet/recruit students, but to also share with our students - your future

employees and future customers - information on the latest innovations in your field. This event will be open to the anticipated 250-300 Contest and Academy students from top dairy and animal science programs across the US and Canada. The Career and Innovations Fair is planned for Tuesday, April 14, 2026. Set up will be offered on Monday between 2:00 and 5:00 PM and again on Tuesday morning between 6:30 and 8:30 AM; break-down will be at 5:15 PM Tuesday. You will be provided with a covered table with access to electrical outlets. However, you will need to provide your own electrical cords. Wireless internet will be available at no cost. To ensure your space, you must reserve your space by March 12 using the online [Volunteer Registration Form](#). *Requests received after March 12 may not be granted if spaces are filled.*

You may ship your booth/materials to the Denny Sanford PREMIER Center. Shipments should arrive no sooner than April 8, 2026, and should be addressed as follows:

Hold for <your name, your company>
Exhibitor, North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge
April 12-14, 2026
Denny Sanford PREMIER Center
1201 N W Ave
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

Dairy Challenge Shirts: Show your support for Dairy Challenge by purchasing a t-shirt. Shirts are \$15. Indicate size on the registration form. Shirts will be distributed from registration onsite.

Sponsorship: If your company has not yet renewed sponsorship for this contest year, click here: <https://www.dairychallenge.org/sponsors/donate.php> If you would like more information about NAIDC sponsorship, go to <https://www.dairychallenge.org/sponsors/> or contact Molly Kelley at mollyk@dairychallenge.org

We look forward to meeting you and/or your representatives in Sioux Falls April 12-14, 2026. Thank you for your partnership as we prepare students for successful careers in the dairy industry.

For complete contest information including registration link, latest schedule, and travel information, go to <https://www.dairychallenge.org/contests/national-contest-and-academy/>

Sincerely,

Jesse Wellman
2026 National Dairy Challenge Volunteer Coordinator
(651) 380-5539
Jesse.wellman@selko.com