

School District Five student named first SkillsUSA National Officer from South Carolina

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IRMO – A Lexington-Richland School District Five student has been elected as a National Officer for the SkillsUSA organization making her the first ever National Officer from the State of South Carolina.

Avery Smith is a rising senior in the Law Enforcement Services Program at the Center for Advanced Technical Studies (The Center) and Spring Hill High School. She will serve the 2024-2025 term as the SkillsUSA Region 2 Vice President. She will be a leader and facilitator at multiple state and national conferences and events, concluding her term in Atlanta, Georgia in June 2025 at the National Leadership and Skills Conference.

Smith has already begun the training as a SkillsUSA National Officer and is ready to put in the incredible work necessary to be a leader for all. “I am truly honored and ecstatic that I have been granted this opportunity to hold such a position,” Smith said. “None of it would have been possible without the amazing outpour of support and encouragement that I’ve received. I am beyond excited to venture into this new role, and I promise to fulfill it to the best of my ability.”

The process to become a National Officer is extremely grueling and takes incredible commitment from the candidate, their family, and their advisor/teacher. Smith had to complete multiple certifications over the course of these past two years, attend multiple conferences and earn multiple accolades, run for and hold a state officer position, and complete many other tasks just to qualify for the application process. She then had to successfully pass a written test, interview process, and submit a recorded speech just to make the ballot sheet in Atlanta, Georgia. While in Atlanta, Smith had to campaign using materials she helped to create prior to the trip while staying within a required budget and restrictions, give a 2-minute memorized campaign speech in front of hundreds of voting delegates, answer a difficult problematic question in front of the same crowd, and participate in multiple ‘Meet the Candidate’ sessions. All of the onsite events occurred over the course of a week and culminated with a delegate vote on Friday, June 28, 2024. That same night, during the Awards Session, in front of over 17,000 people, her name was called and she ran on stage, becoming the first ever National Officer from the state of South Carolina.

Smith is also a two-time state officer (relinquishing her role as President after this year’s national election), a two-time state champion and national competitor, state facilitator, and has completed many hours of leadership development and professional development training. She is also one of only a handful of students from South Carolina to earn the SkillsUSA National Statesman Award, led congressional meetings in Washington D.C., and sat on the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council.

The Center for Advanced Technical Studies has long held leadership positions across the SkillsUSA organization from local to national levels. During the last seven years, the Center has held a dozen SkillsUSA South Carolina State Officer positions, including the title of President in most of those

years. Last year, the Center had the state's first ever National Officer Candidate in Sylvia Dobbe, but her amazing efforts fell just short of being elected.

Smith's Law Enforcement Services teacher and SkillsUSA Advisor, Joseph Chapman, has worked with Avery for over two years, was seated with her at the Awards Session, and participated in the National Officer pinning ceremony following the announcement. "When I reflect on the past two years, it is amazing to see how Avery first entered my classroom as a timid sophomore and has grown into a national leader on the biggest stage possible. This past August, after much consideration, Avery made the commitment to run for national officer and we began working immediately towards that goal. Nearly a year later, the feeling of having her name called and seeing her on that stage is still something I am having trouble describing. Avery is an amazing person who has worked incredibly hard to get where she is today. Her growth these past two years is unfathomable. It was an honor to be by her side when she officially became our first ever National Officer and pin her National Officer Pin on her lapel. The word proud does not come close to describing my admiration for Avery Smith. She has inspired so many throughout the last two years and I cannot wait to see how she positively influences the hundreds of thousands of SkillsUSA members in the coming year."

SkillsUSA is a nonprofit partnership of education and industry founded in 1965 to strengthen our nation's skilled workforce. SkillsUSA has nearly 400,000 members nationwide in high schools, colleges and middle schools, covering over 130 trade, technical and skilled service occupations. SkillsUSA is recognized by the U.S. departments of education and labor as integral to career and technical education. It has served nearly 14.2 million members since 1965. For more information please visit, www.skillsusa.org.

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