



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Gillette College wins national mining innovation award for virtual reality project

The Gillette College Industry Safety Training Center has won a Mine Safety and Health Technology Innovations Award from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health for their work developing a stand-alone blind spot awareness virtual reality training.

Several faculty members and administrators attended an awards dinner in Washington, D.C., on Monday evening to accept the prestigious award. Gillette College is one of just two award recipients nationally.

According to Nick Ullrich, MSHA instructor at Gillette College, the training addresses some of the most dangerous situations students face during their careers in mining – blind spots. Using 360-degree photos from an operating mine, GoPro and drone footage, and virtual reality technology, the training allows users to virtually experience blind spots from within 10 pieces of commonly used coal mine equipment.

“The project allows students to see and understand all of the equipment, people and light duty vehicles that are around them the whole time they are operating one of these pieces of equipment,” Ullrich explained. “The actual footage from a mine and the specific piece of equipment helps them understand exactly where those blind spots are and how big they can be.”

The training includes virtual renderings of 10 pieces of mining equipment, including a motor grader, scraper, excavator, crane, water truck, haul truck, track dozer, loader, shovel and even a dragline. Gillette College instructors have already incorporated the training into several courses and trainings, and it will continue to be a key resource for students.

“This project fits the category of innovation award perfectly. To apply virtual reality technology to help solve one of the biggest hazards in large mining operations makes perfect sense,” said Northern Wyoming Community College District President Dr. Walt Tribble. “It’s out-of-the-box thinking like this, applicable to many heavy equipment situations, that will save lives. I am proud of our entire MSHA team; this recognition is well deserved.”

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About the Northern Wyoming Community College District

The Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD) is multi-campus community college including Sheridan College, Gillette College, and Sheridan College in Johnson County. NWCCD serves approximately 5,000 students per year. www.gillettecollege.org



Photo: Gillette College instructors and administrators receive the 2019 NIOSH Safety and Technology Innovation Award at an awards dinner in Washington, D.C., on Monday, Oct. 21. *Photo courtesy of National Mining Association.*

Back row, left to right: George Luxbacher, Deputy Associate Director for Mining at NIOSH; Jed Jensen, NWCCD Dean of Career & Technical Education; Senator Mike Enzi; Vice President, Gillette College Janell Oberlander; Jim Stratton, Director, Industry Safety Training Center

Front row, left to right: Nick Ullrich, MSHA instructor; NWCCD Vice President of Academic Affairs Estella Castillo-Garrison; Christena Britton, Gillette College MSHA Grant Faculty; Rohy Keffer, Gillette College MSHA Grant Coordinator/Trainer



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