

A photograph of Benjamin Cornaby, a young man with light brown, wavy hair, smiling. He is wearing a tan, button-down work shirt with "SkillsUSA" and a small American flag logo on the left chest. A white lanyard with a gold medal hangs around his neck. He is also wearing a black leather belt with a large, silver, oval-shaped buckle that has a welding torch design and the word "WELDING" on it. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a competition stage.

2X SKILLSUSA COLLEGIATE CHAMPION DREAMS OF BECOMING A WELDING ENGINEER AND CWI

I graduated from Utah State University (USU) Eastern with an Associates of Applied Science in Welding Technology and am currently taking classes toward a Bachelor of Welding Engineering. I will graduate from USU sometime in 2029.

I started pursuing a welding degree because of welding competitions. I finished in the top three in the USU Eastern invitational welding competition for high school students two years in a row. This earned me a few thousand-dollar scholarship to attend the university. I was interested in competing in the SkillsUSA welding competitions, and USU Eastern had a good reputation and history of doing well at welding competitions. I was curious what the key to success while competing was, and I learned that it's simply hard work and true dedication paired up with a positive environment and motivated instructors.

ESAB/AWS Scholarship winner Benjamin Cornaby has won gold at SkillsUSA (shown here) and twice finished in second place to represent the USA at the WorldSkills competition.

My intended career path ideally involves some of my favorite things about welding: hands-on learning in the booth, weld inspection, welding competitions, teaching, lean manufacturing, collaboration, and practical use of the trade. My career aspirations include completing my Welding Engineering degree, becoming an AWS Certified Welding Inspector (CWI) and becoming a valuable welding engineer with skill and expertise to add to the workforce in the United States of America. I believe there is always room for improvement and I intend to keep learning for the rest of my life.

I currently work at a structural steel fabrication shop in Price Utah called Intermark Steel. It's a great opportunity for me to learn many things that I wouldn't have otherwise, like large scale fabrication and fit up, layout techniques, and how to fix problems that arise. I like the challenge of improving my speed and craftsmanship while at work.

My favorite thing about welding when I started was the solitude and peace I found while under the hood. More recently it was the relationship I saw between my personal skills improving and the time and effort I was putting in.

Welding has shown me that I can do hard things. Nobody can take away what I've done and learned on this journey and the things I've overcome while being a welding competitor.

The most exciting thing that's happened to me so far is participating in the SkillsUSA World Trials welding competition and nearly represented the United States of America at WorldSkills — twice! The World Trials are a series of competitions which take the best welders from the past two years of the SkillsUSA national competition and provides a way to select the welder who goes on to represent the USA at WorldSkills. I won second place in 2024 and again in 2026. Years of my life were put into becoming the best welder I could be.

My favorite parts of the welding competition process is when I finally figured things out along the way, which at the time seemed impossible to do. As an example of what had to do:

- How to weld an open root plate/pipe with 7018, scoring above 90% overall in the competition
- Welding plates and pipe with zero indications on an x-ray or bend test
- Achieving fillet weld size points when the tolerance is minus zero and plus 2mm for all welds on a given project
- And meet other scoring criteria which had tolerances as small as 1mm.

Through competition, I learned how to work through the unexpected problems that arose, and I loved the challenge. Although I didn't end up going to WorldSkills, I grew immensely from the journey.

My journey now focuses on pursuing my dream of becoming a welding engineer, and ESAB/AWS scholarship has allowed me to continue attending USU. The impact will always be remembered and appreciated.

My advice to others is that if you enjoy welding for whatever reason, I encourage you to go as far as you can with it. Always push yourself to be better. There's something for everyone in welding. This is a trade focused on hard work, dedication, craftsmanship and respect. If you have the passion and are willing to learn from others and receive criticism, then you'll achieve your goals. Chase your dreams; you will not regret it!



ESAB builds and supports the next generation of skilled welding professionals through **Future Fabricators** program. Support includes 12 \$5,000 scholarships awarded in collaboration with the American Welding Society (AWS) Foundation for students pursuing welding certifications and degrees. Benjamin Cornaby was one of the 2026 scholarship winners, and he shares his story here.

- By Benjamin Cornaby, welding engineering student



ESAB / esab.com

