



First of Its Kind Publication Details State of American Registered Apprenticeship System in Construction

ICERES Combines State & Federal Data Sets to Deliver Comprehensive Look at Outcomes Tied to Key Workforce Development Programs

EAST LANSING, MI, UNITED STATES, April 16, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Researchers from the Institute for Construction Employment Research (ICERES) have announced the launch of what will be an annual compendium on the performance of America's skilled trade apprenticeship programs—the largest, privately financed system of higher education in the country. In "The State of Registered Apprenticeship Training in the Construction Trades, 2024 Edition," the authors develop a comprehensive, first-of-its-kind national assessment of construction apprenticeship programs, detailing the number of registrations, completion and cancellation rates, demographic trends, program design, wage rates and more across seventeen different skilled trades.

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"As America embarks on an historic new era of construction investment—in infrastructure, energy systems, utilities, housing and more—this annual work will be a vital tool for program sponsors, policy makers, instructors, and others working to meet the nation's demand for skilled trade workers," said co-author Cihan Bilginsoy, an Emeritus Professor of Economics at the University of Utah. "Specifically, it will—for the first time—give each of these key stakeholder groups the one-stop, easily navigable information they need to better assess program performance, identify best practices, remedy shortcomings, and set policy."

Assessing apprenticeship outcomes in the United States has historically been complicated by data problems. Individual states and the federal government each maintain systems for tracking apprentices, however the systems are somewhat incompatible, and the data are often incomplete and contain inaccuracies. Relying on decades of experience, Bilginsoy developed a methodology that addresses these concerns and he teamed with co-author Russell Ormiston—an economics professor at Allegheny College—to produce the most comprehensive analysis of apprenticeship programs in America's construction trades to date.

“Registered apprenticeship programs are the lifeblood of the American construction industry however there have been obstacles that have made assessing outcomes particularly challenging,” Ormiston said. “We hope that by resolving many of these data problems that this report will be an important benchmarking and policy tool for construction stakeholders across the country.”

Construction trades represent 65% of all registered apprenticeships in the United States. "The State of Registered Apprenticeship Training in the Construction Trades, 2024 Edition" opens by providing historical perspective of industry employment, the age of skilled tradespeople, and the job choices made by young workers. It then offers 14 chapters featuring simple, easy-to-read graphs that detail patterns in apprenticeship registrations and outcomes across states, trades, demographics, training models, and the union affiliation of programs.

“In general, labor market data shows an aging construction workforce in certain trades at a time when we are seeing a spike in construction demand,” Bilginsoy said. “The good news is that apprentice registrations are once again rising across most trades, with strong growth in electrician programs leading the way.”

This Year's edition details how joint, or union-affiliated programs deliver the vast majority of new apprentice registrations and completions, as well as stronger diversity outcomes, and substantially higher exit wage rates on average, it notes that the non-joint (non-union) side of the apprenticeship system has been gaining market share and suffered from less volatility during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, non-joint programs account for the majority of new apprentices in electrical and HVAC trades that often have state or local licensing regulations, and nearly forty percent of plumbing and pipefitting apprentices.

“Registered apprenticeship programs offer a pathway to good-paying blue-collar jobs that have long been the backbone of the American middle class,” Ormiston added. “These are important workforce training programs that often do not require a nickel of student debt or a dime of government tax dollars. This new annual publication offers an accessible way to understand how different programs and trades are faring in developing a stable and diverse workforce for the industry.”

Bilginsoy and Ormiston detail that while “time-based” programs requiring set numbers of classroom and on-the-job training hours represent the overwhelming majority of training models in both joint-and non-joint programs—joint programs are now three times more likely to offer “hybrid programs”—or programs that require specific hours of classroom and workplace training plus a demonstrated trade competency in order to graduate.

Data suggest skilled trade apprenticeship is functioning as an alternative to college for many young Americans, with 20 being the most common starting age of new apprentices and more than 93% with at least a high school diploma or GED. However, "The State of Registered Apprenticeship Training in the Construction Trades, 2024 Edition" presents key distinctions

within demographic subcategories, and highlights that many older workers are able to pursue mid-career transitions into the skilled trades.

“Overall, the process of analyzing data has revealed that the State of Registered Apprenticeship Training is uniquely positioned to meet the needs of a growing US Construction sector,” Bilginsoy added. “That said, there are clear distinctions and lessons in the data about what is working best, and about the workforce supply challenges facing specific trades. We will be releasing updated editions each year, so that industry leaders, regulators and lawmakers can have better access to the real-time data they need to make informed decisions about policies and investments that will impact this critical economic sector in the years to come.”

“The State of Registered Apprenticeship Training in the Construction Trades, 2024 Edition” is available for purchase at www.apprenticebook.com.

The Institute for Construction Employment Research (ICERES) is an independent, non-profit network of academic scholars and construction researchers whose mission is to facilitate academic-quality, non-partisan research on construction labor issues.

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