



Promising Business Education Practice

Careers in Construction Alliance at Upper Bucks County Technical School

AT A GLANCE

The Careers in Construction Alliance is a collaborative effort between Upper Bucks County Technical School (UBCTS), Associated Builders and Contractors Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter (ABC), 500 regional commercial construction employers, and local high schools to promote careers and employment opportunities within the construction industry. This collaboration is funded by ABC. UBCTS was one of two schools selected as an initial partner in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

RESULTS/IMPACT

Four ABC members currently serve on UBCTS Occupational Advisory committees, and it is hoped that this number will increase as a result of the collaboration.

During the 2016-2017 school year, 14 UBCTS recent graduates were enrolled in the following ABC apprenticeship programs: carpentry (2), construction (2), electrical (5), and plumbing (5). In addition, one current student is engaged in a paid cooperative learning (work-based) experience arranged through ABC.

Forty students and three UBCTS instructors attended a field trip to ABC where they observed a skills competition, explored the latest equipment and industry trends, and learned about the postsecondary apprenticeship model.

UBCTS's Plumbing Technology program enrollment increased 25 percent from school year 2015-2016 to 2016-2017. Although data cannot confirm the reason for this increase, it is believed that ABC's letter of support for the program had a significant impact.

ORIGIN/IMPLEMENTATION

The alliance was developed in June 2016 by the Eastern Pennsylvania ABC Chapter primarily to address a shortage of skilled workers in the trades. The partnership helps UBCTS promote post-high school apprenticeship opportunities, informing students of the opportunity to gain paid, on-the-job training immediately after graduation. ABC also provides UBCTS with posters that illustrate the career path of several trade occupations.

At no cost to UBCTS, ABC organized a field trip for students to visit their facility; lunch was provided and each student received a t-shirt. During this trip, students learned about apprenticeship opportunities which may begin after high school graduation. ABC also hosts an information night for students and parents at their facility.

ABC's training director works with UBCTS's school-to-work coordinator to promote the program and identify potential candidates. As a partner school, UBCTS students are given priority in the apprenticeship application process. To apply for an apprenticeship, students must complete the application and participate in an interview. Students are expected to have a strong letter of recommendation from their UBCTS instructor.

ABC provided UBCTS with a letter of recommendation for its Plumbing Technology program which included job opportunities and salary expectations in the field. To demonstrate the level of confidence ABC has in the school's program, this letter was shared with parents of UBCTS students. Following the dissemination of this letter, the UBCTS Plumbing Technology program saw a significant increase in enrollment.

NEXT STEPS/SUSTAINABILITY

Administrators at UBCTS note the importance of continuing to find unique ways to prepare students for the workforce. This collaboration has shown early success in helping students explore, prepare for, and choose the apprenticeship model as a viable postsecondary option that leads to employment and career advancement opportunities.

UBCTS is excited to enhance its partnership with ABC and plans to accomplish the following in the near future:

- Develop an annual skills competition among students.
- Develop customized printed instructional resources for career planning.
- Create a student alliance council for student leadership opportunities.
- Promote and market the construction industry as a non-traditional field for women.
- Increase scholarships and registered apprenticeship programs for outstanding graduating students.

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