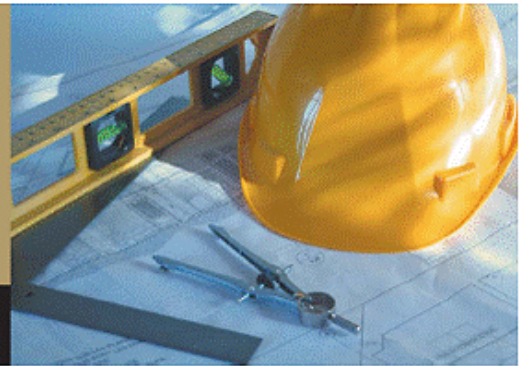




# ABC Training to Build

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## Building construction careers on a college foundation *ABC, community college partnership helps students achieve both*

By STEVE FORD

*San Diego City College Apprenticeship Program*

Is college a pathway to enter the construction trade, or is the construction trade a pathway to college? Easy answer: both!

Through a partnership of more than a dozen years between the ABC Apprenticeship Program and the San Diego City Community College District, multiple apprentice graduates boast college success stories.

Most important for those who are currently going through the apprenticeship process of daily worksite training with mentors and attending weekly college-level courses, is the promise of success ahead. Every year new graduates are becoming accomplished professionals on jobsite teams with ABC contractors.

As seasoned skilled-trade professionals, project foremen or individual business owners and contractors, today's inspiring achievements by apprenticeship graduates point to a sense of accomplishment for everyone involved. Naturally, the payoff for a long-term commitment from each apprentice creates a win-win

for the individual and the industry. Also, typically behind each apprenticeship success story there are many others who have supported apprentices who attend the ABC evening college classes, including spouses, significant others, parents and children.

For many apprentices, there is also a welcomed discovery from within the program. Many individuals go through high school with mainly hands-on and technical abilities without really connecting with textbook- and lecture-based classes. Students in the ABC Apprenticeship Program suddenly find a new and deeper interest in the construction-related courses they're required to study.

When apprentices find that their math class content is tied directly to immediate and practical applications for what they're doing with measurements, problem-solving and applying cool solutions at job sites, suddenly they see a clear connection for the new knowledge they've gained. The same is true with English and reading skills. Guess

who scores surprisingly high between many traditional academic students and skilled trades students on studies of technical reading comprehension?

If you guessed skilled-trade graduates, you nailed it (pun intended!). Here's why: While traditional academic students aim to grasp concepts, themes and ideas — when it comes to building a structure that rises three, four or 20 stories to support thousands of tons, concepts and ideas don't measure up, so to speak. Skilled-trade students have actually surpassed academic students on technical reading comprehension tests due to the precise and specific outcome demands of working with blueprints, building codes and industry standards and procedures.

This tells us that skilled-trade learners get into reading when it has something to do with what they do afterwards: "OK, now let's build something!" How high, how wide, what's the length, height, or diameter, what kind of junction, what's the spec, what's the volume, the load,

how many outlets do we need?

Meanwhile, once results-oriented college apprentice students complete the 24-unit college course requirements for the ABC program, they're eligible for a college Certificate of Achievement and one-third of the way toward earning a college degree (60 units, Associate in Science diploma). With their college advanced math and reading skills, knocking out the remaining 24 units of general education courses becomes easier. This brings students to 48 units — with only 12 units of electives remaining to earn the A.S. degree.

But wait, there's more! How about free money? Sure.

"Last year at City College, we gave out more than \$140,000 in grant money to a range of college students," said Carmen Ruffo, administrative technician of student affairs/scholarships. "And for apprentices in the skilled trades, we have six different scholarships that offer anywhere from \$200 to \$1,200 each. Many don't realize that often all they have to do is complete a one-page application and a brief essay

about their career goal — they think it's a lot of work, but it's really easy."

Ruffo noted that most of the grants offer the money to use for educational expenses such as tuition, books, tools and other school-related costs. For more information, go to [www.sdcity.edu/scholarships](http://www.sdcity.edu/scholarships).

So does it pay to go to college through the ABC construction trades Apprenticeship Program? You bet. As the famous saying about the best outcome from quality learning reminds us, "Education is not about filling a bucket, but lighting a fire!" With the ABC Apprenticeship Program and San Diego City College partnership, you're ready for ignition — or, better, graduation!

*Ford is the associate dean of the San Diego City College Apprenticeship Program. He is a member of each ABC San Diego formal apprenticeship program and an advocate for the students, working to inspire continuing education and degree career goals for all students at the ABC Training Academy.*

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