

Bridges to Apprenticeship

Wisconsin Technical College System Student Success Center Innovative Practice
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Apprenticeship programs offer incredible opportunity through a unique earn-while-you learn framework comprised of training through on-the-job learning and post-secondary coursework combined. Apprentices are hired first by a sponsor and attend college as part of their full-time work week. The apprenticeship modality of learning a new career is available in high-skilled, high-wage, and in-demand careers in construction, manufacturing, utilities, healthcare, finance, information technology, agriculture, and service sectors. The WTCS provides instruction for over 75 apprenticeable occupations...and counting!

Unique to Wisconsin, apprentices in registered apprenticeship programs are required by law to be paid their hourly wage while in school as if they were on the job. As with all apprenticeship programs nationwide, apprentices also benefit from pre-determined wage increases that progress over the term of the apprenticeship. In many cases, apprentice sponsors also cover the cost of tuition and fees.

Across the WTCS, the median salary for 2017-18 apprentice completers was over \$80,000,¹ which surpasses the national median earnings of individuals with bachelor’s and master’s

¹ WTCS. 2020. [Apprenticeship Completion: Employment and Salary Data for 2017-18 Apprentices](#). Wisconsin Technical College System Publications.

degrees.² In addition, while over 95% of WTCS apprentice completers stay in Wisconsin,¹ they earn a nationally recognized completion credential.

While apprenticeship programs hold great promise for individuals who might not otherwise afford the time or cost of college, those who most need these opportunities have historically not had clear access to apprenticeships, both nationally and within Wisconsin. Nationally, women and people of color are significantly underrepresented in apprenticeship programs.³ In Wisconsin, people from minoritized communities (women, people of color, etc.) are also significantly underrepresented in apprenticeship programs (Figure 1).

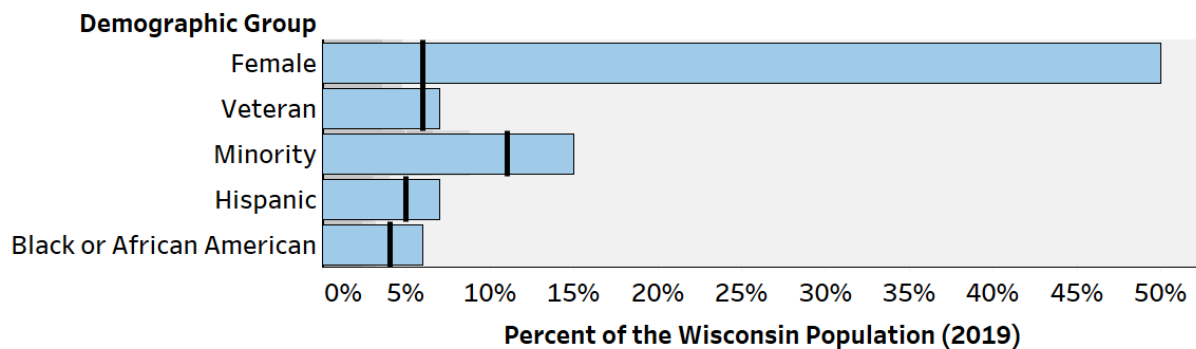


Figure 1. Summary of demographics for Wisconsin apprentices ([Characteristics of Active Apprentice Contracts](#), DWD) compared to the overall Wisconsin population for 2019 ([ACS 1-year estimates](#)). Representation within the Wisconsin population is shown with the light blue horizontal bars, whereas representation for apprentices is shown with the black vertical bars.

Strategies to diversify apprenticeship:

Build bridges

Bridge and pre-apprenticeship programs can recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds and provide the necessary supports to help each individual be successful in preparing for apprenticeship opportunities and connecting with employers who offer apprenticeship positions.

² Torpey, Elka. 2018. [Data on Display: Measuring the value of education](#). U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

³ Hanks, Angela, Annie McGrew and Daniella Zessoules. 2018. [The apprenticeship wage and participation gap](#). Center for American Progress. 1-11.

- Madison College recently created a [Bridge Apprenticeship program](#). To learn more about this program, student outcomes, and how to implement this at your college, see the [WTCS Voices interview with Brad Baranowski](#).
- While [pre-apprenticeship opportunities](#) are available in Wisconsin, they are primarily provided through community based organizations located in the southeastern and south central areas of the state. Starting in fall 2020, efforts are underway to develop five new sector-based, pre-apprenticeship programs models that could be offered through the WTCS colleges themselves. This would make pre-apprenticeship opportunities more readily available across the state and streamline the pipeline into registered apprenticeship programs.
- Some of the [pre-apprenticeship opportunities](#) are administered by equity intermediaries. Equity intermediaries help businesses create and expand apprenticeship programs with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusive practices. For instance, the [Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership \(W RTP\)/ Big Step](#) is an equity intermediary in construction and manufacturing in the greater Milwaukee area and southeast and south central Wisconsin. To learn more about the work of equity intermediaries and equity-focused apprenticeship programming in Wisconsin, see the [Equity in Apprenticeship](#) report from COWS.

Increase transparency

Historically, information about apprenticeship within Wisconsin has not been easy for individuals to find and navigate. Yet recently, big changes have been set in place to make this information transparent and more widely available.

- Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards (BAS) has posted a [searchable database of featured employer sponsors](#) on their website. These employer sponsors have hired and trained apprentices and are likely to have additional openings. For construction apprentices, which are sponsored by local committees rather than employers, DWD BAS has a [searchable database of local apprenticeship committees](#).
- DWD Job Center of Wisconsin has added an ‘apprenticeship filter’ to their [online job search tool](#). This filter allows prospective apprentices to find employer sponsors in their occupational area that are currently hiring.
- Federal and Wisconsin Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunities (AA/EEO) regulations have been updated, and these changes took effect in January 2020 in Wisconsin. With these changes, DWD BAS has provided [AA/EEO guidance](#) to

apprenticeship sponsors. Under these provisions, employer sponsors with five or more apprentices must closely monitor the demographics of their recruitment area. If women, individuals with disabilities and particular race/ethnicity groups are significantly underrepresented within their current apprentice program, then they must set targets and strategies to diversify their recruitment and hiring of apprentices.

For more information, see...

- The program access action research brief, [Minoritized students are more often enrolled in programs that lead to lower wages](#), for information on barriers that may block individuals from accessing high wage programs, including apprenticeships.
- For information on how occupational identities are formed and ways to remove barriers for individuals from minoritized backgrounds, read [Influences on Occupational Identity: A Review of Research and Programs](#) from the Connected Learning Alliance.
- The National Skills Coalition [Roadmap for Racial Equity Report](#), which highlights apprenticeship bridge programs as a strategy to diversify apprenticeship.
- Visit the [Jobs for the Future website on equity in apprenticeship](#) and work-based learning information.
- Visit the [DWD BAS website](#) for youth and registered apprenticeship information.
- See the [WTCS Apprentice Completion report](#) for information about employment outcomes, demographics, and apprenticeship programming.

For questions, please contact Nancy Nakkoul, Education Director of Architecture, Construction, and Apprenticeship. nancy.nakkoul@wtcsystem.edu

Bridges to Apprenticeship: An interview with Brad Baranowski from Madison College

HILARY BARKER, HOST: This is WTCS Voices. I am Hilary Barker.

Apprenticeship programs offer incredible opportunity. They provide access to high-skilled, high-wage, and in-demand careers while allowing students to earn a living as they complete their coursework. Yet, those who most need these apprenticeship opportunities have historically not had access, both nationally and within Wisconsin. Women and people of color are significantly underrepresented in apprenticeship programs. Several strategies have emerged to help diversify apprenticeship opportunities, including building Bridge Programs that prepare students for apprenticeship and provide them with much needed resources.

Today, I am joined by Brad Baranowski. Brad is a Transition Specialist and Psychology Instructor at Madison College who is an adviser for the Apprenticeship Bridge Program. Brad, welcome to WTCS Voices.

BRAD BARANOWSKI: Thank you.

Getting started with bridge programs

BARKER: So first how did this program get started?

BARANOWSKI: Bridges are not a new thing to Madison College. We've been operating bridges since about 2012. The original bridge model worked with manufacturing for the same reasons that you've just described. The history of bridges has molded into bridging students into many discrete programs like manufacturing, certified nursing assistant, administrative professional, business, etc. We saw a wonderful opportunity to partner with somebody who's already doing this great work in the community: WRTP Big Step. So, working with Bill Clingan and his group to essentially combine all the wonderful things that he does with the wonderful things that we do as well. One of the, forgive the pun, the bridges to the bridge was this curriculum called (MC3) Multi-Craft Core Curriculum training and it's really a training that's geared to help folks prepare for apprenticeships. There are some safety discussions, communication discussions, diversity, and the history of the labor market and all this good stuff. Big Step wanted to offer that MC3 training and we of course wanted to offer the great stuff that we do within the bridge and we will unpack those pieces later. So, we kind of squish them together essentially. Both of us are recruiting for these students. Both organizations are supporting these students that are getting these folks connected to apprenticeship work and again, for the reason you stated. There is a huge untapped market, and this market also does require a bit of remediation and that's what the bridge portion does.

BARKER: Great. How long has this program but in place and how many students have participated so far?

BARANOWSKI: So, this particular bridge started with our new grant cycle, which is July 1, 2019. We spent a great deal of the summer and the early fall doing the planning, coordinating and communicating. Our first bridge ran in the late fall and then that bridge was supposed to both connect folks to the first MC3 training that was happening in this region at the beginning of the New Year and/or get folks connected to an apprenticeship job immediately if they pass the Accuplacer that they needed [for their apprentice position]. So, we're on our third cohort right now. We're going to have a fourth cohort start after spring break. The class is three weeks long and it's really intended to boot camp people and get folks ready and then connect them to the next step or bridge to that next step. So far, with all three of the cohorts, we have 11 students, again of all varying backgrounds, as we've discussed. Three of those folks have successfully

completed or achieved the score that they needed on the Accuplacer to go into the apprenticeship that they needed. We hope to have a fourth [student complete] next week. That is where we're at right now.

BARKER: Well, that's very exciting. What do the students learn in this bridge program?

BARANOWSKI: So, students first and foremost learn about the world of apprenticeship. They learn about how to obtain an apprenticeship in the hidden curriculum around that right. We also teach test-taking techniques, test prep techniques and that kind of thing because students have to take a standardized test, which are not always built equally for everybody. A bulk of the work is spent on math remediation and specifically geared for math for the trades. However, there are some trades that require higher-level analysis than vocational math and so we work on qualitative analysis and that kind of stuff. It depends on each student's goals in where the instructor will take them. Students learn a great deal of interview preparation specifically for the trades. Students are taught early on what is expected of those employers and how to meet those needs. One of our sort of secret ninja names is 'barrier Buster' and what we're doing with the advising piece is really working on addressing any barriers (e.g., financial literacy) that would block them from work in this area. For example, a lot of discussions come up about resolving license issues, getting licensure so that they can drive, and identifying and getting folks connected to the apprenticeships that they desire.

Early outcomes

BARKER: So far, what kinds of outcomes have completers of this program experienced?

BARANOWSKI: Yep, so as I mentioned before, three students of the 11 have passed the Accuplacer with the scores that they need and are working right now and getting connected to apprenticeships. Four of our 11 students (and these may or may not be the same student, so I'm kind of talking about different pockets of students) have taken and passed the MC3 curriculum. Five folks have been dually enrolled in work smart or other WIOA funding sources, and three students continue to go through the different cohorts (now, in the third cohort) to meet the objective that they need.

Lessons learned

BARKER: Then, also thinking about for folks who may want to offer a bridge to apprenticeship program at their college, what advice would you give them? And also, what are some challenges of creating and implementing this type of program?

BARANOWSKI: So we have noticed that bridge programming requires a massive amount of communication and collaboration, because we're taking developmental education and we're

sort of blending it with credit-level education. That requires us to break down silos between adult basic education, arts and sciences, and applied tech areas. All of us have to come to the table and work together on understanding what each of us does and how we do it, and then understanding who is the target student or what type of student are we working with and then how do we put our collective strengths together to meet that student's need, essentially. This leads to a massive amount of communication and collaboration.

In terms of a challenge, if you've got an ego or if you think you're the best shop in town, just forget all that stuff and break that stuff down. So it requires a massive amount of flexibility. There are different staff that do different things. There's advising staff like myself, and then there's the instructors in the classroom, but then you have administrative folks on the backend who are putting the courses on the web or making it so that we can enroll a student, of course, and details like that. And so you have to have a lot of flexibility there. I know that our instructor recommends highly a flipped classroom environment, and so some of the instruction is actually happening outside of class. And then the work to apply that instruction is happening inside the classroom, and so that's her method, and that seems to be affective for her.

And then, I'm going to say this because this is part of my job, but I've actually I've done a lot of research on this. I'm in a doctoral program and I'm just making my observations and connecting with other transition specialists in the state. Intrusive advising is probably one of the keys to this entire model, because it can be very easy for folks to operate in their different instruction or administrative silos. I think sometimes the intrusive advisor helps bridge the gaps between all those different things. I'm sorry I keep using this bridging thing. I couldn't resist it. Too easy! Bridging those different gaps between the different areas, but also bridging the gaps in terms of understanding what the student's barriers are. Helping folks make plans for those barriers, moving folks along, and that kind of thing. So when we say intrusive we mean proactive. It's not the traditional model where students go see Brad when you need this, that and the other. No, it's Brad is calling you. Brad is emailing you. Brad is getting a report from the instructor and following up, and that kind of stuff.

Related to the challenges with collaborating with other individuals, that just in and of itself creates challenges. So being prepared for that and navigating through that and again, I would say that one of the greatest tools for that is just communication. And so as an example, with our collaboration, if we have different understandings of what we think we are delivering and then something else happens, it's a matter of meeting immediately. Let us all meet today and get on the same page here.

Then there are the same challenges that exist for any type of bridge, which is recruiting. Recruiting is a pain. Recruiting is heavy work. It's heavy lifting because again, if the goal is to find these untapped potential students, then what are the ways in which we're doing that?

What are the creative methods that we use? In talking to other transition specialists in the state, they have the same challenge. Other than working with the students that we are already working with, what are the other ways that we are sort of pounding the pavement, as it were? So as an example, I spend regular time at the job center. I have a historical connection to the job center, and I enjoy that work. And so that's one way that I recruit. But there's a lot of challenges with that.

And also retention. So I mentioned we have 11 students, 3 or 4 of them may pass, and I have three that have continued. What about those other folks? Despite the intensive advising, sometimes it's still hard to hold on to people for whatever reason. Again, life barriers, schedule barriers. We have students who have to work three jobs to make it work, and so coming to our evening class may not always work for them. So those continue to be challenges that we try to work around.

I don't know if I actually described what a bridge is, and so would it be helpful to kind of unpack the kind of core essentials of that?

Unpacking bridge programs

BARKER: I think that'd be great.

BARANOWSKI: Each of them vary, but really we're looking at what are the academic gaps that exist? What are the harder classes that exist or the harder skills to learn? And how does a program faculty and a developmental education faculty, work together to help that student who wouldn't otherwise access that class or that program, be able to access that class or program. So again, a lot of the work that we spend surrounds math from an instructional perspective. The collaboration, the communication, the compression, the intrusive advising; those are all key parts of the model. So what we will end up doing is usually pre-teaching some of the material that they can expect to come in their first semester, and it's taught in a contextualized way. Early math skills, for instance. If we're building reading skills, it's all contextualized to whatever area or trade we're talking about. So for example, the first cohort that we did was more about plumbing and steamfitting and that kind of thing. And so we presented the material speaking in those terms and using examples in those terms. Things like that. Then students usually continue in their first semester and they get additional support from again the program instructor and the developmental instructor. Then there is the intrusive advising that's happening in between all of those steps. The goal is to transition that student into whatever that next step is for apprenticeship. It's not necessarily a long-term academic program, it's more about that long-term goal, whether that is Journeymen status or whether it's 4 or 5 years or whatever the case. So it's really a transition into a job, so that's another unique thing about this particular bridge. I hope I've unpacked that deeply enough for folks to understand the model.

BARKER: Yeah, I think so. And I think that you put together some great advice for folks who may be considering to add some sort of program like this at their college. So thank you so much for talking with us. It is really exciting to hear about this apprenticeship bridge program at Madison College!

BARANOWSKI: Thank you.