



Special Report

THE PATHWAY TO APPRENTICESHIP

**ROADBLOCKS TO REGISTRATION
OF MINORITIES AND WOMEN
IN BUILDING TRADE UNION
APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING
PROGRAMS IN NORTHEASTERN
ILLINOIS**

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The Pathway to Apprenticeship is an independent report prepared by labor writer T. Shawn Taylor. Taylor is a journalist and media consultant specializing in labor and management issues in the U.S.

This report was commissioned by the City Colleges of Chicago, a leading provider of workforce training in Illinois.

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

In the construction industry, apprenticeship is the pathway to jobs paying as much as \$70,000-plus a year. But more than 40 years after the U.S. government took steps to end the systematic exclusion of minorities and women from coveted trade union apprenticeship training programs, the highest-paying unions still are overwhelmingly white and male.

Following passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African-Americans and Hispanics entered the trades in increasing numbers, though both groups were heavily concentrated in the lower-skilled trades. Analysis of apprenticeship registration data for northeastern Illinois (which includes Lake, McHenry, Cook, Will, Kendall, Grundy, Kane and DuPage counties) from 1996 to 2005, provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, shows little has changed (see charts 2 and 3, pages 20 and 21).

Uneven progress

Fewer than 3 percent of apprentices in the last five years have been women. In most cases, registration of African-American apprentices has either remained stagnant or declined sharply in unions such as the electricians and laborers. In the last 10 years, Hispanics have made gains, outnumbering African-American apprentices in the roofers, painters, carpenters, bricklayers and drywall finishers unions.

Limited access

In Chicago, the issue is and always has been access. For minorities and women, registration in apprenticeship training programs sponsored jointly by trade unions and contractors has been hampered by:

- Race and gender bias
- Nepotism (union members reserving slots for relatives and friends)
- Difficulty for chronically disenfranchised individuals to pass union entrance exams
- Absence of employer sponsorship
- Unpaid apprenticeship prep
- A tough, sometimes hostile work environment
- Lack of a personal vehicle to access training and work sites in the suburbs
- Limited knowledge of the skilled trades

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

A lull in the construction industry in the last two years has limited available apprenticeship slots, say union officials and contractors. Now, as the Chicago area construction industry gears up for \$10 billion, per year in projects over the next few years, including the modernization of O'Hare International Airport and 10 years worth of roadway projects, unique partnerships are forming to:

- Ensure a skilled workforce as the construction industry braces for a wave of retirements
- Provide disenfranchised minorities and women with sustainable careers
- Put an end to what some elected officials and community leaders feel is a deliberate attempt by some trade unions to exclude African-Americans

White participation declines

An analysis of apprenticeship registrations from 1996 to 2005, divided into two five-year periods, shows the number of white apprentices have declined in the following unions:

	1996-2000	2001-2005
Sheet Metal Workers	77 percent	69 percent
Carpenters	60 percent	56 percent
Bricklayers	57 percent	49 percent

“The labor pool that the trades have relied on is diminishing,” says Sue Schurman, president of the National Labor College (NLC), based in Silver Springs, Md. According to an August, 2005 study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), between 2002 and 2012 an estimated 850,000 jobs will be open in the construction industry. But experts predict there will not be enough skilled workers to fill them.

Unique partnerships

Academic institutions, state and local government and private industry are starting to work together to smooth the pathway to apprenticeship:

City Colleges of Chicago and the Builders Association — City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) recently expanded its Construction Technology apprenticeship prep and skills training programs in cement masonry, plumbing, carpentry, bricklaying, and welding. Additionally, CCC offers U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship Training approved programs in electrical and elevator construction technologies, in partnership with appropriate unions. Courses are taught at CCC's Dawson Tech and West Side Tech. The Builders Association has committed to hiring and sponsoring 50 City Colleges students into joint programs this year.

Illinois State Toll Highway Authority and contractors — In November 2005, the state agency adopted the Tollway Earned Credit program, which provides bid incentives on tollway projects to contractors who hire and sponsor into joint programs individuals from disenfranchised populations.

City of Chicago, City Colleges and contractors — Chicago's new Bid Incentive Ordinance (Ald. William Beavers sponsor), which went into effect in February 2006, gives contractors who hire and sponsor City Colleges students into joint programs a bid credit on public contracts.

Education: Degree programs

Dawson Technical Institute, a campus of CCC's Kennedy-King College, now joins more than 130 post-secondary educational institutions in the country that are taking a more active role in helping to prepare a skilled workforce for blue-collar, craft-related occupations. Nationally, trade unions are in lock step with a growing trend: Degree programs tied to apprenticeship and field training in the trades.

The Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Board of Higher Education evaluate apprentice programs for certificate and associate's degree credit.

SAC States

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services (OATELS) oversees the National Apprenticeship System, which includes the construction industry, in cooperation with the states. States are classified either as BAT (Bureau of Apprenticeship Training) or SAC (state apprenticeship agency/council) states, which act as agents for the federal government. There are 23 BAT states, including Illinois, and 27 SAC states. SAC states must adhere to the minimum federal requirements for apprenticeship programs, or may adopt stricter requirements through legislation. (Code of Federal Regulations Pertaining to ETA, Title 29, Chapter I, Part 29 Labor Standards for the Registration of Apprenticeship Programs).

Legislation is pending in the Illinois General Assembly (SB1266 – Sen. Emil Jones sponsor) that would recognize Illinois as a SAC state.

Conclusion

Today, the Chicago area construction industry is poised to stay ahead of negative trends and introduce economic and job stability to some of the city's poorest citizens – provided that historical tensions do not get in the way.

The Pathway to Apprenticeship is an independent report prepared by T. Shawn Taylor, a journalist and media consultant specializing in labor and management issues. This report was commissioned by the City Colleges of Chicago, a leading provider of workforce training in Illinois.

In the construction industry, apprenticeship is the pathway to jobs paying as much as \$70,000-plus a year with full benefits. But more than 40 years after the U.S. government took steps to end the systematic exclusion of minorities and women from coveted trade union apprenticeship training programs, the highest-paying unions still are overwhelmingly white and male. Only Hispanics have made gains entering the skilled trades in the last 10 years, though primarily in the lowest-paying, less-skilled trades.

In Chicago, revered nationwide as a labor union stronghold, construction careers are promoted as sustainable and lucrative. For the disproportionate numbers of minorities and women among the long-term unemployed and working poor, becoming skilled in a trade can mean the difference between abject poverty and ascension to the middle class.

Yet, in this city, as diverse as it is, the issue is and always has been access. For minorities and women, registration in apprenticeship training programs sponsored jointly by trade unions and contractors (henceforth “joint programs”) has been hampered by:

- Race and gender bias
- Nepotism (union members reserving slots for relatives and friends)
- Union entrance exams and oral interviews
- Absence of employer sponsorship
- Unpaid apprenticeship prep
- A tough, sometimes hostile work environment
- Lack of a personal vehicle to access training and work sites in the suburbs
- Limited knowledge of the skilled trades

Following passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African-Americans and Hispanics entered the trades in increasing numbers, though both groups were heavily concentrated in the lower-skilled trades. Analysis of apprenticeship registration data for northeastern Illinois (which includes the six county greater Chicago metropolitan area) from 1996 to 2005, provided by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services (OATELS), shows little has changed (see charts 2 and 3, pages 20 and 21).

Locally, representation by African-Americans and Hispanics continues to be greatest in the lower-skilled trades — those which take the least amount of time to complete apprenticeship and subsequently, pay lower journey-level salaries. In the last five years, the percentage of women apprentices in joint programs has declined to just below 3 percent from 4.3 percent during the previous five-year period (see chart 4, page 24).

Registration of African-Americans in some joint programs has not kept pace with national trends. In the Chicago metro area, the percentage of African-American electrical apprentices, for instance, has fallen, while studies show a gradual, steady climb in the number of African-American electrical apprentices nationally (Bilginsoy, May 2005).

Locally, Hispanics dominate the drywall finishers union (86 percent of apprentices, 2001-2005), but represent only 5 percent of apprentices in the operating engineers, in the top tier of industry wages.

Recruitment

Chicago's trade unions have approached recruitment of women and minorities differently. Some have hired African-American and Hispanic organizers to introduce the trades to people in their communities; formed sisterhood and ethnocentric groups; entered floats and marched in ethnic parades; and, when asked, have visited public schools, Boot Camps and prisons to introduce the trades to schoolchildren and offenders, alike. But not all unions view recruitment of minorities and women as a priority.

“You can't deny that unions have a history of racism and sexism, but the story is a lot more complicated than that,” said Sue Schurman, president of the National Labor College (NLC). Based in Silver Springs, Md. NLC, which is partially funded by labor groups, offers continuing education courses for union organizers and activists as well as bachelor's degree programs for tradespersons.

“It's a mistake to think of unions as monolithic on this question of trying to bring in more minorities and women,” Schurman said. “Some are busting their ass out there. Some are not doing a damn thing.”

In 1964, government intervention became necessary to open union shops traditionally closed to minorities. Since 1972, apprenticeship program sponsors with at least five apprentices have been required to design an affirmative action strategy for recruitment and selection. The goal: to achieve the same representation of minorities and women in apprenticeships as in the local labor market.

Litigation, too, has opened doors. In Chicago, unions such as the plumbers and electricians, fell under court-ordered consent decrees to diversify in the 1980s. In the 1990s, protests of construction sites led by neighborhood activists sparked awareness of the lack of opportunities for African-Americans to work construction, even in their own communities. As a result, local aldermen and state legislators fought to adopt hiring initiatives that established percentage-of-the-workforce goals based on race, gender and zip codes, securing jobs for some.

Per-project solutions have proven insufficient to sustain careers and build capacity. Residents employed under hiring initiatives frequently are dropped by contractors once the project is finished, heightening tensions and despair among the scores of economically disenfranchised residents who spend months, sometimes years, trying to work in the trades but never reap the benefits.

“The freight” is the term Lauren Sugerman, president of Chicago Women in Trades (CWIT), uses to describe the history of exclusion and the emotional, hyper-politicized rhetoric endemic to discussions about removing barriers to apprenticeship training.

“This is all that's been happening in the 25 years I've been doing this — posturing on both sides,” said Sugerman, whose organization provides education and training for women pursuing construction careers. “It just drags everything down.”

A new day

In the last two years, a fresh dialogue and spirit of cooperation has started to emerge in Chicago. Union leaders, elected officials, community groups, state agencies and academicians, by identifying common interests and goals, have formed partnerships to help smooth the pathway to good-paying jobs in the trades for the city's poor. Below are a few:

- **City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) and the Builders Association** — In November 2005, with support from Mayor Richard M. Daley, City Colleges ramped up its new Construction Technology programs in cement masonry, plumbing, carpentry, bricklaying, welding, electrical construction and most recently elevator construction. These apprentice preparatory courses are taught at Dawson Technical Institute and West Side Technical Institute. The Builders Association has committed to hire and sponsor 50 City Colleges students into joint programs this year.
- **Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, and contractors** — In November 2005, the state agency adopted the Tollway Earned Credit program, which provides bid incentives on tollway projects to contractors who hire and sponsor into joint programs individuals from disenfranchised populations. The authority also has committed to hire 30 City Colleges students in 2006.
- **City of Chicago, City Colleges and contractors** — Chicago's new Bid Incentive Ordinance (Ald. William Beavers sponsor), which went into effect in February 2006, gives contractors who

hire and sponsor City Colleges students into joint programs a bid credit on public contracts.

“One of the problems has been opportunity and that's one of the things we're addressing,” said Al Leitschuh, president of the Builders Association, the organization that sued the city over its minority contract set-aside program.

“We have never viewed the lawsuit as having anything to do with minorities working in the trades. Dawson is a great opportunity,” Leitschuh said.

So far, 14 Dawson students have been hired and sponsored into joint programs by Builders Association contractors. Employer sponsorship into apprenticeship training is essential, because it is the closest guarantee to regular work.

The following Builders Association members have committed to sponsoring City Colleges students into apprenticeship training:

Bovis Lend Lease
Bulley & Andrews, LLC
Ceco Concrete Construction
Garth Construction Services Corp.
Herlihy Mid-Continent Co.
Kenny Construction Co.
James McHugh Construction Co.
McShane Construction Corp.
W.E. O'Neil Construction Co.
W.B. Olson, Inc.
Pepper Construction Co.
Power Construction Co.
Ryan Companies US, Inc.
Paul H. Schwendener, Inc.
The Clark Construction Group
The George Sollitt Construction Co.

The Levy Co.
Thorne Associates, Inc.
Tribco Construction Services, LLC
Turner Construction Co.
Walsh Construction

Dawson apprenticeship prep programs are taught by union journeymen in the appropriate trades. “Program participants are trained to pass apprenticeship program entry exams and succeed in the workplace,” says Bill McMillan, City Colleges’ associate vice chancellor for workforce development.

- **City Colleges and Local 134 IBEW-NECA** – Earning college credit for apprenticeship training, a concept embraced nationally now for more than a decade, is a trend that is only recently being discussed in the Chicago area, with the exception of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers – National Electrical Contractors Association (IBEW-NECA), which established its dual apprenticeship/ degree program with CCC in 2002. IBEW-NECA Local 134 offers the Electrical Technologies Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree through CCC’s West Side Technical Institute of Daley College.
- **City Colleges and the Chicago and Cook County Building and Trades Council (CCCBT)** – CCCBT has entered into dialog with City Colleges concerning education /apprenticeship programs. So far, this dialog has resulted in CCC’s partnership with the elevator constructors union, now in residence at Dawson. With the help of the CCCBT, City Colleges administrators are reaching out

to the union leadership of local plumbers, bricklayers, cement masons and carpenters in hopes of establishing similar apprenticeship /education partnerships. CCC wants to form articulation agreements with the unions that would enable students to earn college credit for apprenticeship training that can be applied toward an associate’s degree.

- **City Colleges and the Elevator Constructors National Elevator Industry Program** – The Elevator Constructors’ AAS degree is offered through CCC’s Dawson Technical Institute of Kennedy-King College.
- **Local 150 Operating Engineers and District Council Local 14 Painters and Decorators** – City Colleges administrators currently are negotiating with the operating engineers and painters unions to bring their apprenticeship programs to Dawson.

Dr. Wayne Watson, chancellor of City Colleges, said the concept of education and skills training is necessary to open the doors to apprenticeship to diverse populations and to assure that disenfranchised groups do not fall further behind.

“A new paradigm needs to be established in the United States where building construction trade unions and community colleges partner to create a skilled workforce — a skilled and educated workforce that can compete globally,” Watson said.

Obstacles

Even the best-prepared apprentice can fall through the cracks. States have limited resources to address artificial barriers such as lack of transportation and child care, major obstacles for African-Americans and women entering the trades. Today, the average apprentice, unlike 40 years ago when most apprentices entered training right after high school, is 27 years old. For poor people with family obligations, committing to up to 12 weeks of unpaid apprenticeship prep courses may present a financial hardship, particularly for African-Americans and single women in Chicago, who record some of the highest poverty rates in the major U.S. cities. (American Community Survey, 2004).

Work Environment

Then, there is the tough culture the building trades are known for — you don't work, you don't get paid; no sick days; no showing up late; no complaining; no excuses — and reports of hazing, racial jokes and sexual innuendoes on construction sites that have led uncounted apprentices to drop out of training and switch careers. The impact of the culture has been difficult to measure, and little has been done to change it. Charges of racial and sexual harassment on construction sites result in very few lawsuits. In Chicago, the majority of construction industry-related suits filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have been on behalf of women charging sexual harassment and gender bias, and most are settled out of

Table 1: Percentage of residents by race, ethnicity and gender living in poverty in major U.S. cities:

	All	Men	Women	White	White alone	Black	Hisp	Asian
US	13.1	11.6	14.5	10.3	8.8	25.6	22	11.8
Chicago, Ill.	21.1	18.6	23.6	11.9	8.3	34	19.1	18.7
New York, N.Y.	20.1	18.7	21.7	13.8	11.3	23.2	30.6	19
Los Angeles, Calif.	18	16.3	19.7	13.2	7.7	30.3	22.3	15.6
Houston, Tex.	19.6	18	21	16.8	5.5	26.2	26.1	15.2
Philadelphia, Pa.	24.9	22.3	27.2	15.5	13.7	31.3	42	29.2
Phoenix, Ariz.	15.9	15.5	16.4	14.7	8.7	21.8	24.5	12.4
San Diego, Calif.	13	10.4	15.7	13.1	7	10.7	24.9	11.4
San Antonio, Tex.	19.8	17.7	21.8	17.1	9.7	32.8	24.2	n/a
Dallas, Tex.	20.8	18.3	23.5	16.8	10.3	27.3	26.1	10
San Jose, Calif.	11.4	10.7	12	10.5	4.1	n/a	20.3	9.8
Detroit, Mich.	33.6	30.3	36.5	28.8	25.9	n/a	45.2	n/a
Indianapolis, Ind.	13.1	10.4	15.5	7.9	7.7	23.8	18.4	n/a
Jacksonville, Fla.	13.5	10.3	16.4	9	7.3	22.9	28.7	n/a
San Francisco, Calif.	10.2	9.8	10.7	8.1	6.9	21.1	15.8	9.5
Columbus, Ohio	16.7	15.5	16	11.9	11.5	27.6	23.9	13.7

The 2004 American Community Survey, courtesy of the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C.

court, according to John Hendrickson, regional attorney for the EEOC.

Sugerman called the hard union culture “wearing” on minority and female apprentices. Some decide it’s just not worth it.

“What’s hardest to address are the micro-inequities — non-malicious, non-directed, unplanned behaviors that are mole hills but become mountains over time,” Sugerman said. “It’s more than getting in the door. It’s the price you pay.”

Trade unions and contractors are beginning to realize it is in their best interest to smooth the path to apprenticeship. As the Chicago area construction industry gears up for \$10 billion per year in construction projects over the next few years (including the modernization of O’Hare International Airport, estimated to last 12 years and produce more than 100,000 construction jobs), concerns are mounting over an aging workforce, mass retirements and a potential skills shortage.

“The construction trades are in general an aging workforce,” said Leitschuh. “In their

mid-to-late 50s, they’d like to retire. You need an influx of younger workers. All over there are problems finding workers. The trades has gotten a reputation as not being that desirable a job.”

Schurman said the unions have no choice but to fling open their doors:

“The trades, historically, were good at recognizing that much of workers’ ability to control wage is skill. In the process of controlling access to the skill, they have acquired the reputation of being racist, sexist and ethnocentric, of running their unions like country clubs for relatives. They have to rethink how to control skill. It’s being forced on them based on the nature of the workforce.

“The trade unions can no longer assume they are going to get the pick of the white male workforce. That historic labor pool the trades relied on is diminishing.”

According to an August 2005 study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (henceforth “GAO”), between 2002 and 2012, an estimated 850,000 jobs will be open in the construction industry. But experts predict there will

An analysis of apprenticeship registrations from 1996 to 2005, divided into two five-year periods, shows the number of white apprentices have declined in the following unions:

	1996-2000	2001-2005
Sheet metal workers	77 percent	69 percent
Carpenters	60 percent	56 percent
Bricklayers	57 percent	50 percent

not be enough skilled workers to fill them. Around the country, union membership, in general, is on the decline. Illinois experienced the steepest annual drop of any state between March 2002 (1,069,000 union members statewide) and March 2003 (967,000 union members), according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Trade unions additionally are dealing with an image problem fed by:

- Lack of awareness of the skilled trades among today's youth
- The disappearance of shop classes in public schools
- Negative stereotypes about blue-collar work
- Desire by parents — even those working in the trades — to see their children go to college

The skilled trades were at one time viewed as an alternative to college. Now, unions increasingly are having their training programs evaluated for college credit. Tom Villanova, president of the Chicago and Cook County Building and Construction Trades Council (henceforth “Building Trades Council), the organization that represents all 24 trade unions in the Chicago area, believes the aptitude to learn a trade is equal to the aptitude to earn a college degree.

“It’s just like going to college. Working with schools is another way to get a better applicant and make things accessible for everybody,” said Villanova, adding he is ready to move toward reconciliation and away from the unions’ heated past with minorities. “We’re supportive of Dawson.”

Today, Chicago’s construction industry is poised to stay ahead of negative trends and introduce economic and job stability to some of the city’s poorest citizens — provided “the freight” doesn’t get in the way.

“There’s better communication. It’s a totally different climate,” Sugerman said. “But I’m not sure everyone would agree with that.”



SECTION 1:

APPRENTICESHIP

What is it?

An apprenticeship is an earn-while-you-learn, privately-funded training program that prepares a skilled labor force for employers. Trade union apprenticeships usually last from three to five years. New apprentices earn 40 to 50 percent of journeyworker wages, which increase incrementally as apprentices achieve new levels of productivity.

Apprentices must complete a certain number of on-the-job hours before moving to the next phase of classroom instruction. However, the time it takes to complete an apprenticeship depends on the ability of an apprentice to find work, which is why employer sponsorship is so critical.

More than two-thirds of apprenticeship programs in the country are sponsored by joint training committees (Bilginsoy, 2005), which are made up of unions and an equal number of contractors (joint programs); the rest are provided by non-union (non-joint programs) organized by employers or employer associations. Studies show that joint programs have higher completion rates (graduation to journeyworker level) than non-joint programs.

Getting in

Entry requirements vary by union but, in general, joint programs require applicants to be drug free, have a high school diploma or equivalent (exceptions include the laborers and carpenters, which require two years of high school), and pass an entrance exam to test math and critical-thinking skills. Candidates also may be required to submit to an oral interview.

The interviews have come under sharp criticism from some African-American community leaders who call them another way to exclude minorities.

Villanova said some of his members have dropped the oral interview requirement because of that.

“It’s just not worth it,” said Villanova, who predicted the oral interview will be discontinued entirely within the next two years. “They’d rather get rid of (the oral interviews) rather than go through the accusations.”

A good score on the union entrance exam does not guarantee entry. When there is a large applicant pool and limited slots, even candidates with relatively high scores might not make the cut. However, their names may be included on a list of “eligibles” that unions maintain for up to two years. The unions must request approval from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services (OATELS), which oversees the National Apprenticeship System, to discard the list before opening new application periods.

Because open application periods are based on attrition as well as the health of the construction industry, apprenticeship applicants may have to wait several months before they can begin training. Villanova said a lull in work over the last two years has limited the number of available apprentice slots.

“We can’t accept apprentices until the DOL (Department of Labor) says we can. That’s another misperception,” he said.

Apprenticeship, however, is only one way to enter the skilled trades. Another route: Direct sponsorship by a contractor signatory with the unions. In his study, “How Unions Affect Minority Representation in Building Trades Apprenticeship Programs,” Cihan Bilginsoy, an economics professor at the University of Utah, found that although apprenticeship programs are identified with the union sector, **“not all union workers enter the construction industry via this route. Apprenticeship is not necessary for a worker to achieve the journey-level status and qualify for union wages and benefits. While precise numbers are not available, no more than 50 percent of the union construction workers enter the industry via apprenticeship.”**

Historically, direct sponsorship into the unions has been an option more readily available to white males entering the trades than minorities and women, who are not nearly as well-connected.

Compliance

With the reorganization of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration in the late 1990s, the Bureau of Apprenticeship Training became part of OATELS. OATELS oversees the National Apprenticeship System, which includes the construction industry, in cooperation with the states. The federal government tracks enrollment in apprenticeship programs through the use of the

Registered Apprenticeship Information System (henceforth “RAIS”), which includes apprenticeship registration and completion data from 30 states.

States are classified either as BAT (Bureau of Apprenticeship Training) or SAC (state apprenticeship agency/council) states, which act as agents for the federal government. There are 23 BAT states, including Illinois, and 27 SAC states. Only seven SAC states contribute to the RAIS data. In BAT states, OATELS has the authority to de-register training programs that are not in compliance. In SAC states, the state apprenticeship council has that authority.

Apprenticeship sponsors must get permission from OATELS, or from their SAC, before opening application periods. Joint training committees are required to advertise open application periods in publications that target minorities.

OATELS requires that apprenticeship sponsors with at least five apprentices submit an affirmative action strategy for the recruitment of minorities and women. Percentage participation goals vary by program sponsor. Some unions are multijurisdictional, so, while they serve Chicago, their affirmative action goals must take into account labor market representation by minorities and women within their entire district, not just in Chicago.

Tony Swoope, administrator of OATELS, explains:

“They have to develop an affirmative action plan by population. Each area may

be different. If (sponsors) are working in 30 jurisdictions, they aren't recruiting directly from Chicago but all over the state. That changes the dynamics. In some cases, the sponsor will say, 'We'll take the higher goal for minorities.' But it depends upon how wide the jurisdiction is for that union. If they're working the whole state, you want to see where there are opportunities by geographic area. Some unions are now going statewide and across states."

Program sponsors that fail to meet their recruitment goals may avoid action by the federal government by exhibiting "good faith efforts" to recruit more minorities and women.

"The compliance review officer will determine whether that program has done everything they could to increase participation by females and minorities — attending job fairs, serving on school councils and advertising," said Jim Harvey, director of Illinois' Bureau of Apprenticeship Training from 1988 to 1993. "Then, they would be given a pass on good faith effort. (The program) would be called in compliance."

There are two ways apprenticeship programs can be de-registered: Voluntarily and involuntarily. Swoope said most de-registrations happen voluntarily: "We are not the police," Swoope said, "but they must adhere to standards."

However, the DOL's monitoring and review of apprenticeship programs in BAT states has befallen criticism.

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), as reported in the August 2005 report, "Registered Apprenticeship Programs: Labor Can Better Use the Data to Target Oversight," found that the DOL reviews "very few" of the apprenticeship programs under its authority and does not utilize information on performance to determine which programs need compliance reviews.

Additionally, the GAO study found that states that run their own apprenticeship programs "are the backbone of the nation's apprenticeship system." State programs typically have twice the number of staff, perform twice the number of compliance reviews and spend twice as much time in the field performing monitoring and oversight.

SAC states

SAC states, which act as agents for the federal government at the state level, must adhere to the minimum federal requirements for apprenticeship programs, or may adopt stricter requirements through legislation. (Code of Federal Regulations Pertaining to ETA, Title 29, Chapter I, Part 29 Labor Standards for the Registration of Apprenticeship Programs).

"Many states have a state apprenticeship law," said George Bliss, labor chairman on the U.S. Department of Labor's Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship in Washington. "If they exceed the federal guidelines, they're OK. They can't be less than the federal guidelines."

Legislation is pending in the Illinois General Assembly (SB1266 — Sen. Emil Jones sponsor) that would recognize Illinois as a SAC state.

The Illinois Apprenticeship and Training Act includes the following provisions:

- Opportunities by young people, regardless of race, sex, creed, color or national origin, to obtain training
- Establishment of an Illinois Apprenticeship Council within the Department of Labor and local, regional and state joint apprenticeship committees
- Appointment of a deputy director of the Department of Labor to oversee the newly-created Office of Apprenticeship Training and Standards
- Provide for reports to the General Assembly on the status of apprenticeship training
- Establish a procedure for the determination of apprentice agreement controversies

Bob Pleasure, director of education for the National Labor College in Silver Springs, Md., said he believes that states do a better job of de-registering ineffective training programs.

“We’re concerned that there are bad training programs that have low completion rates,” Pleasure said. “The problem for women and minorities is completion. But in the union joint programs, there is a significant increase in completion rates (because) they are financed better and there is protection from grievances.”

The GAO report found that joint programs graduate 47 percent of apprentices compared to the 30 percent graduation rate of non-joint programs. Union apprentices also have pay rates 24 percent higher than non-union apprentices and union journeyworkers will earn 36 percent more than non-union journeyworkers. In a survey of 10 SAC states, the GAO found that union programs generally had higher graduation rates and higher apprentice wages.

Pleasure said he believes that if the BAT programs are effective, then it is best to work cooperatively with those programs. But locally, minority construction industry groups, while generally embracing union over non-union training programs, favor more state involvement.

“State monitoring would be good,” said Cesar Santoy, executive director of the Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (henceforth HACIA), adding that unions have been unwilling to share demographic data pertaining to the make-up of their workforce.

“I would support another layer of accountability,” Santoy said. “We need it to at least formulate the public policy. We hear from minority legislators that unions have a strong presence (in Illinois), and are making sure their interests are served. Now, legislators are saying, ‘Where’s what we need?’”

Villanova, of the Building Trades Council, said he does not support the proposed legislation that would make Illinois a SAC state. He said that SAC status would only add another layer of oversight that would bog down the apprenticeship process.

Harvey, the former state BAT director, said: “Of course, it would be a little more bureaucracy, but I do believe it would be to the advantage of certain groups of people.”

In a union town such as Chicago, joint training programs are the preferred path to construction careers. Watson, City Colleges chancellor, said to partner with the trade unions is to everyone’s benefit.

“Unions can become stronger and we can become stronger as a community college system if we work together,” Watson said. “The construction industry and the citizens will be the ultimate winners.”

Cost of training

It costs anywhere from \$10,000 to \$30,000 to train an apprentice. Joint programs are funded by contractors and an appropriation of workers’ wages voted on by the rank-and-file. “That’s why the signup is so stringent. If we start pushing people into programs who aren’t able to learn what they need to learn, you’re going to have unemployable journeymen,” Villanova said.

City Colleges administrators believe apprenticeship prep training is only the first step to ensuring the success of minority applicants on union tests and, eventually, on the job.

“We believe we should be full program partners with the unions, not just providing prep courses,” Watson said. “CCC wants to be a partner at the table.”

The Builders Association donated \$25,000 to Dawson to help fund student support services, including assistance developing a

resume, preparing for job interviews and tracking success of its graduates.

“A person who has gone to Dawson has a chance to succeed,” said Michael Schultze, vice president of the Builders Association. “Contractors don’t make huge profits. They want the best people. It’s to their advantage not to have any preferences or prejudices.”

In an industry with a history of preferences and prejudices, good faith efforts are often difficult to take at face value. What is apparent, even to the naked eye, are the minimal numbers of minorities and women working on major building projects in the Chicago metro area. Apprenticeship is the pathway to those jobs. Without access to training, opportunities to work in the unionized construction labor force are out of reach.



SECTION 2:

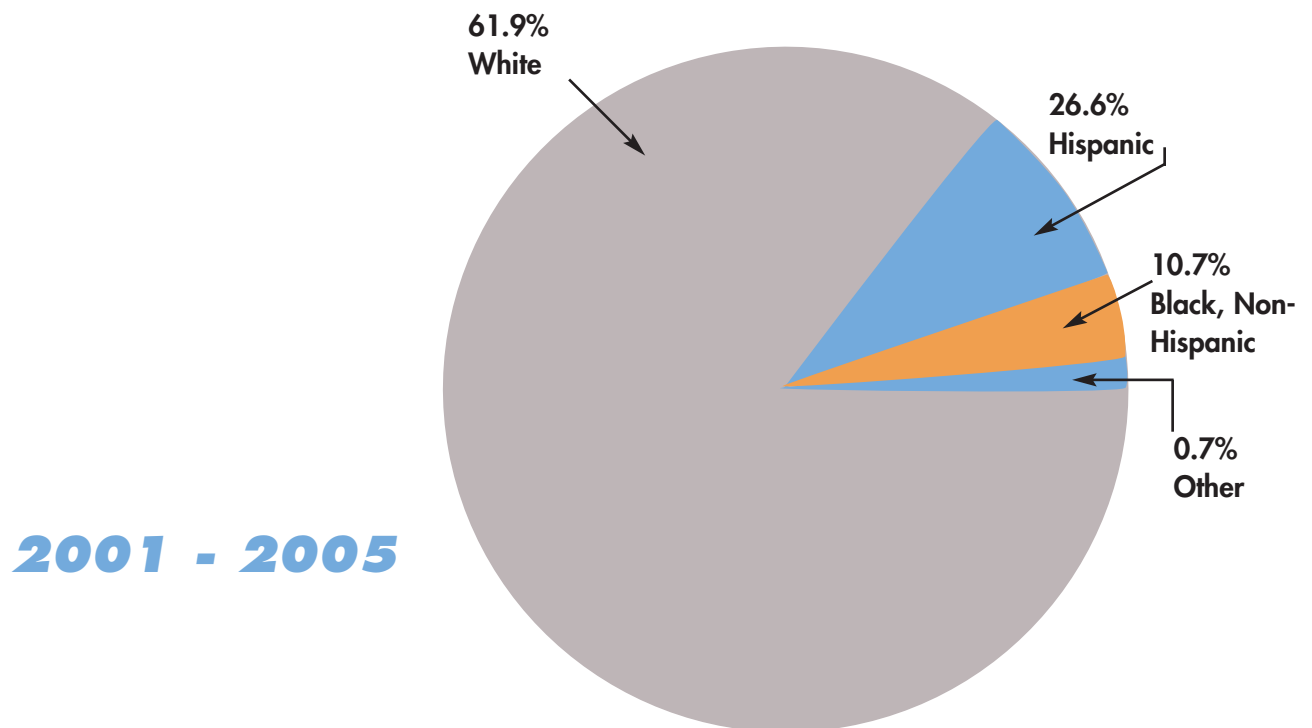
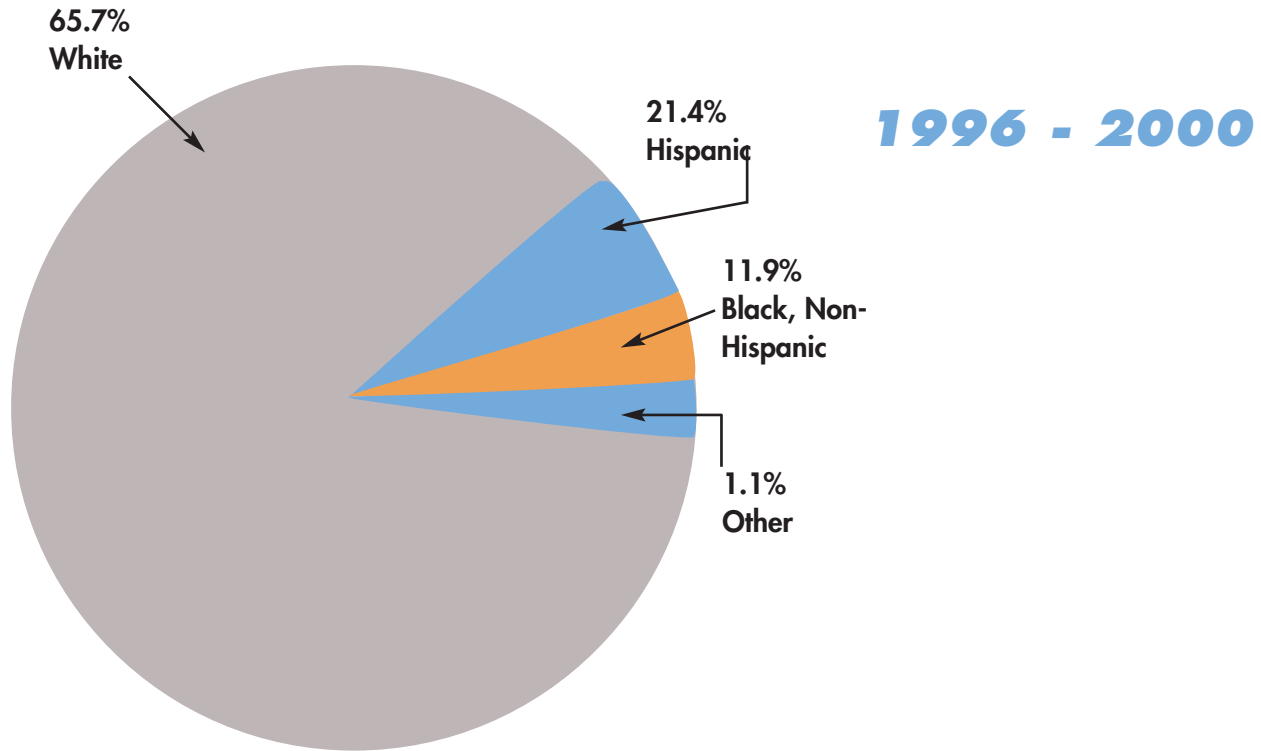
APPRENTICESHIP REGISTRATIONS

APPRENTICESHIP REGISTRATIONS

5-Year Trend of Building Trades Apprenticeship Registrations in Northeastern Illinois*

By Ethnicity

CHART 1



*NE IL includes Lake, McHenry, Cook, Will, Kendall, Grundy, Kane and DuPage counties.

Participation by minorities and women

In the Chicago area, exclusion of minorities and women from the skilled trades has sparked outrage and charges of racism and sexism. The minimal numbers of minority and female apprentices in some unions appear to support those accusations (see charts 2 and 3, pages 20 and 21), but there are some mitigating factors (lack of transportation being one) to help explain why so few are getting in and why so many, once they do, drop it. (Registrations of other minorities such as Asians, American Indians and Pacific Islanders, were not included in this analysis).

African-Americans

In Chicago, the most contentious debate over who gets what construction jobs has involved African-Americans, and nothing stoked those fires more than the closing of Washburne Trade School in 1983. African-American leaders accused the unions of moving their coveted training programs to the suburbs to limit access by African-Americans, a charge that union leaders deny.

Today, the majority of apprenticeship training facilities are still in the suburbs. Villanova of the Building Trades Council said that 10 apprenticeship programs offer training in the city, including the carpenters of northeastern Illinois, which ramped up their apprenticeship program with a new multimillion-dollar training facility just east of the Dan Ryan Expressway in the summer of 2004.

Villanova offered a couple of reasons why unions train in outlying areas: Land

constraints and multicounty jurisdictions.

“Take the electricians. They have a school at 126th and Ridgeland that’s 26 acres. They outgrew that. Same with the operating engineers. It is just a fact of life that they just need a big piece of land,” he said. “About half our affiliates have multicounty jurisdictions. Local 597, the pipefitters, have two counties they represent. Local 150 (the operating engineers) represents three states. If you have even just Cook County, you’ve got to travel. You can’t take five buses to get somewhere.”

Union and community leaders as well as contractors will agree, however, that being far removed from training opportunities has hampered participation by African-Americans in apprenticeship programs. Nationally, minority registration in joint apprenticeship training programs has climbed gradually since 1995, with African-American males experiencing the greatest increases among minority groups. (Bilginsoy, May 2005). In the Chicago metropolitan area, African-American males have made marginal gains getting into the trade unions and in some cases have lost ground.

An analysis of apprenticeship registrations (RAIS data, see charts 2 and 3, pages 20 and 21) from 1996 to 2005 — divided into two five-year periods to achieve a representative sample since all joint programs do not accept apprentices every year — reveals a drop in African-American participation in the electricians union, among the top three, highest-paying trades, to 10 percent (2001 to 2005) from 16 percent (1996 to 2000).

Joint Program Apprentice Registrations for Northeastern Illinois*
by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, **1996-2000**

Apprenticeship Program	White Percentage of Total	Hispanic Percentage of Total	Black Percentage of Total	Others Percentage of Total	Women** Percentage of Total
Architectural Iron Workers	76.6%	12.1%	5.0%	6.4%	4.3%
Bricklayers***	56.9%	25.0%	17.4%	0.7%	2.1%
Carpenters****	60.0%	31.6%	7.9%	0.5%	3.9%
Cement Mason	50.2%	33.2%	15.6%	0.9%	6.6%
Ceramic Tile Finishers	70.2%	17.5%	12.3%	0.0%	4.4%
Ceramic Tile Layers	68.6%	5.9%	21.6%	3.9%	7.8%
Drywall Finishers	10.8%	79.0%	9.6%	0.6%	6.6%
Electricians	73.9%	8.8%	16.1%	1.2%	6.9%
Iron Workers	69.6%	16.0%	9.3%	5.1%	5.9%
Laborers	43.6%	17.9%	38.5%	0.0%	7.7%
Operating Engineers	88.1%	4.2%	6.3%	1.4%	8.2%
Painters	61.6%	21.1%	15.5%	1.8%	5.8%
Pipefitters	87.1%	6.6%	6.0%	0.3%	2.0%
Plumbers	77.2%	7.8%	14.7%	0.3%	2.2%
Roofers	44.5%	31.5%	22.7%	1.2%	2.0%
Sheet Metal Workers	76.6%	8.0%	13.7%	1.7%	4.4%
Sprinklerfitters	94.4%	2.4%	2.7%	0.6%	3.2%

* NE IL includes Lake, McHenry, Cook, Will, Kendall, Grundy, Kane and DuPage counties.

** Women are included in all categories.

*** Illinois District Council #1 Bricklayers D.C.T.C., Bricklayers

**** Chicago & NE IL Carpenters, Chicago & NE IL DISTRICT Council of Carpenters, Chicago & NE IL Council of Carpenters, Ap & Training PP, Carpenter's Local Union

***** Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor's Office of Apprentice, Training, Employer, and Labor Services.

Joint Program Apprentice Registrations for Northeastern Illinois* by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, **2001-2005**

Apprenticeship Program	White Percentage of Total	Hispanic Percentage of Total	Black Percentage of Total	Others Percentage of Total	Women** Percentage of Total
Architectural Iron Workers	79.3%	8.3%	7.4%	5.0%	4.1%
Bricklayers***	49.5%	35.6%	14.7%	0.3%	2.7%
Carpenters****	55.5%	33.8%	10.3%	0.5%	2.2%
Cement Mason	51.4%	35.7%	12.4%	0.5%	5.4%
Ceramic Tile Finishers	74.5%	17.6%	5.9%	2.0%	0.0%
Ceramic Tile Layers	77.7%	12.6%	9.7%	0.0%	6.8%
Drywall Finishers	11.9%	85.8%	2.3%	0.0%	0.8%
Electricians	76.7%	11.5%	10.4%	1.3%	4.8%
Iron Workers	68.2%	16.3%	13.7%	1.7%	3.4%
Laborers	54.0%	17.1%	28.3%	0.6%	9.5%
Operating Engineers	88.6%	5.2%	5.6%	0.6%	5.2%
Painters	60.8%	27.1%	11.2%	0.9%	3.3%
Pipefitters	83.3%	8.7%	7.1%	0.9%	1.8%
Plumbers	75.8%	11.2%	12.1%	0.9%	3.0%
Roofers	47.9%	36.0%	15.3%	0.8%	0.7%
Sheet Metal Workers	69.2%	13.8%	16.4%	0.6%	7.0%
Sprinklerfitters	88.7%	7.2%	3.1%	1.0%	2.4%

* NE IL includes Lake, McHenry, Cook, Will, Kendall, Grundy, Kane and DuPage counties.

** Women are included in all categories.

*** Illinois District Council #1 Bricklayers D.C.T.C., Bricklayers

**** Chicago & NE IL Carpenters, Chicago & NE IL DISTRICT Council of Carpenters, Chicago & NE IL Council of Carpenters, Ap & Training PP, Carpenter's Local Union

***** Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor's Office of Apprentices, Training, Employer, and Labor Services.

African-Americans also had a poor showing in the boilermakers union. From 1996 to 2000, out of 108 new apprentices, only two were African-American. From 2001 to 2005, out of 81 new apprentices, just five were African-American.

In recent years, African-Americans made gains in the structural iron workers union, representing 14 percent of apprentices in 2001 to 2005 compared to 9 percent from 1996 to 2000. But the highest concentration of African-American apprentices are in the laborers union, the lowest-paying, least-skilled of the trades. However, even there, the number of African-American apprentices has fallen to 28 percent from 39 percent over the two five-year periods examined.

“The City Colleges program would solve an enormous problem by getting a pool (of candidates) that can pass the exams,” said Schurman, president of the National Labor College. “Once in, will they have support to succeed? Or will they face a hostile peer group?”

Trade union leaders tend to downplay, or deny, that racial tensions exist on construction sites. The contractor community appears either ambivalent or unaware of the problems.

To be successful in the trades, African-Americans, more than any other disenfranchised group, have a great deal of historical and present-day baggage to set aside. Some African-Americans are still fighting the “last war,” based on a history of exclusion, said Ed Gorman, who sits on the board of

the American Community Partnership in Washington D.C., a non-profit that leverages national, state, local, union and community-based resources and training to spur economic development and provide long-term career opportunities for the poor.

Gorman said he witnessed the tensions up close while participating in the Working Together for Jobs program, financed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to link the Chicago Housing Authority with the trades, from 1995 to 2000. He said his biggest frustration with Chicago: A lack of vision and leadership.

“Some of the union leaders are fighting the last war, too — the fight against affirmative action,” Gorman said, adding he does not blame the unions for the stagnant apprentice numbers. “People who are in need will gravitate to quality. The people who stop success are politicians and bureaucrats and people who don’t understand what it takes to sustain it.”

In Chicago, the tensions have led to the formation of renegade groups within the African-American community that activist Eddie Read said would rather antagonize and intimidate than form partnerships with unions and contractors to help African-American residents get jobs and sustain careers.

“There are people out there who are using what some people might call gang banger or strong-arm tactics of intimidation for people to do business with them,” said Read, president of United Services of

Chicago, which trains disenfranchised African-Americans to enter the skilled trades. “This is not about intimidation, this is not about harassment. This is about putting people to work.”

Brian Banks, a private consultant in Chicago who has worked for years to broker relationships between the major players in the construction industry to create opportunities for minorities and women, is similarly frustrated with neighborhood antagonists that disrupt meetings intended to educate African-Americans about the trades.

“When are they going to come to the table and cut a deal? Why be part of the struggle and not be there when the gravy gets passed?” Banks said. “The politics have moved the ball forward. The African-American community hasn’t taken advantage of what the politics afford us. The Latinos have. We’re frustrated historically. We’re using a 50-year-old strategy.”

Hispanics

For Hispanics, the results also have been mixed, though not for the same reasons as African-Americans.

Over the same 10-year period from 1996-2005, Hispanic representation grew in the bricklayers, carpenters, roofers and drywall unions, the latter of which they dominate with 86 percent of new apprentices from 2001 to 2005. However, Hispanics represented only 5 percent of apprentices in the operating engineers, among the highest-paying trades, (see charts 2 and 3, pages 20 and 21).

Santoy of HACIA, which represents both union and non-union contractors in the Chicago area, said awareness of the trades among Hispanics generally is lacking. Their rapid growth in the painters and dry-wall unions can be attributed greatly to word-of-mouth, he said. As workers get in, they tell friends and relatives, which, Santoy stressed, is not the same as having a relationship with union top brass.

“I’d say it has to be a generational gap. The Hispanic community is catching up. Who knows what an operating engineer is?” said Santoy, who considers the operating engineers, structural iron workers and electricians unions the most restrictive. “They’ll make exceptions for some, but it’s hard to get in off the street.”

Though, for Hispanics, it is not as hard as it used to be. Labor unions, at one time critical of the immigrant workforce, which union officials viewed as a threat to industry wages, have made a turnaround in recent years by actively recruiting immigrant workers as a means to safeguard union-scale wages. The share of Hispanics in the non-union construction sector is greater than the number of African-Americans.

“Hispanics are the Jet Blue of the construction industry,” said Gorman, drawing an analogy to the airline industry to explain the Hispanic growth in the trades. “They’re unencumbered with the baggage.”

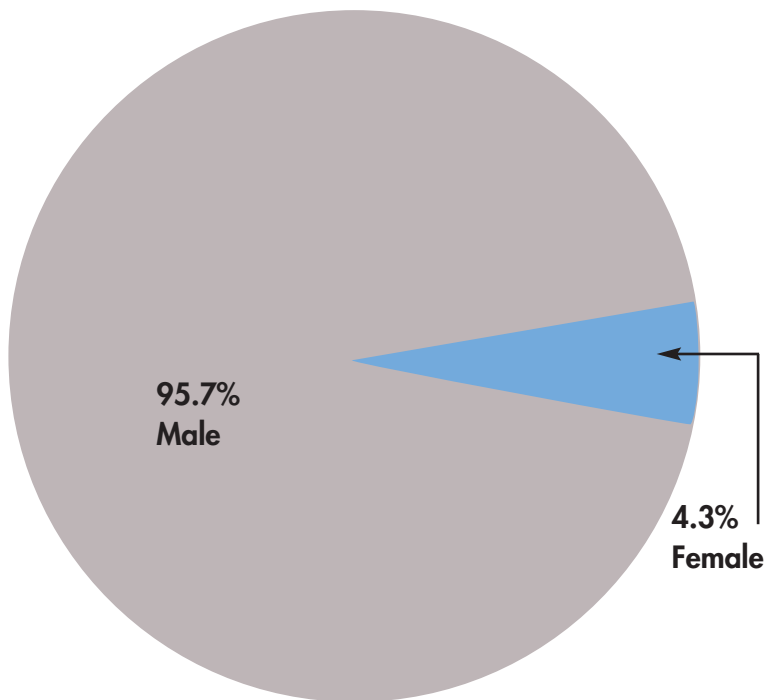
APPRENTICESHIP REGISTRATIONS

5-Year Trend of Building Trades Apprenticeship Registrations in Northeastern Illinois*

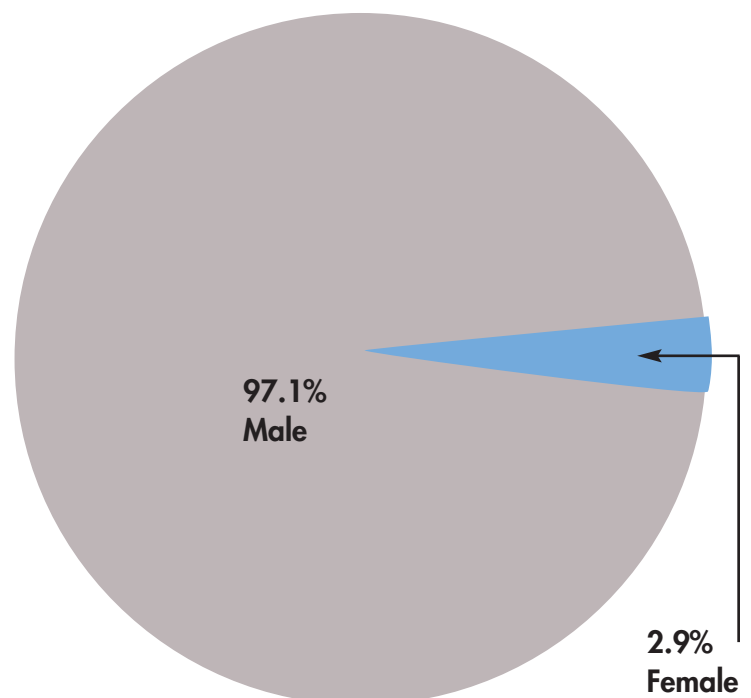
By Gender

CHART 4

1996 - 2000



2001 - 2005



*NE IL includes Lake, McHenry, Cook, Will, Kendall, Grundy, Kane and DuPage counties.

HACIA promotes union over non-union training run unilaterally by employers. However, the Hispanic community typically downplays racism as a factor to participation in joint programs, Santoy said.

“I’m sure there’s some rudimentary racism but in (the unions’) defense, they realize it’s a new day and age,” he said. “The Hispanic population is growing.”

For Hispanics, an even greater issue is job safety. Hispanics account for the highest number of injuries and deaths on construction sites, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Leitschuh, of the Builders Association, said safety is a great concern among his membership.

To help deal with it, the Builders Association published a Spanish-language dictionary of construction terms. Some contractors individually have published safety instructions in Spanish. But, Leitschuh said, contractors assumed that their workers could also read and write in Spanish.

The top 10 trade unions are:

- Electricians
- Carpenters
- Plumbers
- Roofers
- Structural iron workers
- Sheet metal workers
- Painters
- Pipefitters
- Bricklayers
- Operating engineers

“We have a lot of illiteracy here,” he said. “If you can’t read, what good does it do you?”

Which begs the question: How can an illiterate person pass a union entrance exam? “That’s a good question,” Santoy said. “That’s why you see more Hispanics at easier trades like the laborers and carpenters, where an employer is sponsoring them into the trade.”

City Colleges is currently working with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to create a Spanish-language construction safety manual. Eric Griggs, provost for entrepreneurship and apprenticeship at Dawson, said Dawson has expanded outreach to the Hispanic community and to women. Out of the 14 apprenticeship prep graduates hired by Builders Association contractors, two were women.

Women

“Mary,” a sheet metal worker in her late 40s, is the daughter of a sheet metal worker, though her father didn’t believe that women belonged in the trades. That didn’t deter Mary. She became a training instructor and pursued a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts at the National Labor College (NLC). For her senior thesis, Mary sought answers to why more women were not pursuing construction careers.

“Women working in the trades are puzzled why more women do not want to do this type of work,” said Sue Schurman, president of NLC. “Mary found that the idea of the trades was not in girls’ minds. They see the trades as non-sexy, not female. Mary found that you would have to do a real intervention to persuade them.”

Besides the more obvious reasons — gender bias and sexual harassment — the number of women in the building trades has continued to decline, partially due to a lack of education and interest in the trades.

Nationally, participation by women in joint programs, which peaked during the Carter administration, has dropped every year, with minority female participation being the worst at less than 1 percent. (“The Status of Registered Apprenticeship: An Analysis Using Data from the Registered Apprenticeship Information System,” 2004).

In the Chicago area over the last 10 years, the number of female apprentices has risen in unions such as the boilermakers and sheet metal workers. But in general, female registrations in joint training programs have fallen slightly or remained stagnant. Women represented less than 3 percent of new apprentices between 2001 and 2005 in unions such as carpenters, bricklayers, pipefitters and sprinklefitters. Overall, the percentage of women in apprenticeship programs in northeastern Illinois fell to 2.9 percent from 2001 to 2005 from 4.3 percent from 1996 to 2000, (see chart 4, page 24).

Among the top 10 building trade unions that serve northeastern Illinois, the number of newly registered apprentices are overwhelmingly white and male.

Sugerman of CWIT, which placed 45 women in apprenticeship training programs in 2005, said the women who attend CWIT’s classes (average age 34) have little knowledge of the trades when they arrive.

The trades aren’t on most women’s radar. And though both the union and non-union sectors frequently mention women as an “untapped reservoir” of labor that could alleviate a skills shortage in construction, the number of women in the trades remains low and is even declining, (Bilginsoy, 2005).

“Contractors see us this way: I’ve got a job to do. If I have a crew, why do I care if I have a woman?” Sugerman said, adding that women who do make it into the trades may not get the level of instruction and experience they need on the job because men would rather not deal with them. “This ghetto-izes women. You’re only allowed to progress so far.”

“The issue,” Schurman said, “is how to get successful women in the trades to tell their story. We’re not a small group of superhuman women. They’ve got to be women other women can identify with. They need to tell them, ‘If I get divorced today, it’s my husband who has to worry how he’s going to take care of himself. I’m set.’”

Despite the low numbers of women in the trades, female tradespersons have proven to be effective advocates for the industry and for joint programs, in particular.

“We stand in the middle of a little lake. We could build bridges on both sides. But women aren’t seen as a constituency group in the same way as African-Americans,” Sugerman said. “It doesn’t matter that most of the women we serve are primarily African-American women.”

CWIT was recently awarded a \$2.1 million, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to set up programs in collaboration with community colleges, workforce boards and industry.

“We hope to build a pipeline for women to be aware of, prepared for and supported in entering jobs in the construction industry, as well as build the capacity of the partners to sustain and replicate the initiative beyond the grant period,” Sugerman said.

National women’s groups recently lobbied successfully to restore nearly \$1 million in funding for the federal Women in Apprenticeship and Non-Traditional Occupations Act (WANTO Act), and established a Women’s Committee in the Building Trades Department of the AFL-CIO.

The majority of discrimination claims filed with the Chicago regional office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against construction contractors involve charges of gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment on construction sites.

For women who have already made the decision to enter the skilled trades, child care is one of the main reasons women have abandoned these pursuits. “There’s just no flexibility,” said Sugerman, adding that 60 percent of CWIT’s participants are single mothers.

Child care/transportation

The failure of minorities and women to enter or complete apprenticeship training programs often has little to do with their work ethic or willingness to participate. Tradespersons take great pride in their craft and approach each day anxious to perform their skill. For women, child care can become a tremendous barrier. Under the current administration in Washington, federal dollars to support poor working mothers has been repeatedly cut.

Transportation is another huge barrier. Tradespersons must be able to get to work assignments far from home. Because their work day usually starts at 7 a.m., even if apprentices were willing to jump several buses and trains to get to work, they still would have great difficulty making it on time.

Apprenticeship training instructors stress the importance of having reliable transportation during orientation. Those who are unable to get to training or accept work assignments in the suburbs eventually will be dropped.

The Illinois Toll Highway Authority is in the process of designing a program by which poor, disenfranchised Illinois residents working on roadway projects can purchase refurbished state cars at a low interest rate. The Tollway Transportation Initiative, a subset of the Tollway Earned Credit program, would require participants to pass a stringent screening, including examination of their driving and insurance records. (For information, contact Roberto Rivera, EEO manager, 630-303-8345, or go to www.illinoistollway.com).



SECTION 3:

ARTIFICIAL BARRIERS

Participants in the program will have to meet income eligibility standards under the federal Workforce Investment Act and undergo an assessment at one of the state's One-Stop employment centers, Rivera said.

Solutions: **Employer sponsorship**

Recognizing that employer sponsorship is key to the success of every apprentice, the City of Chicago and the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (henceforth “the tollway”) have adopted earned bid credit incentives by which contractors can earn bid credit for hiring and sponsoring into apprenticeship the following individuals:

- Students attending construction technology programs at the City Colleges of Chicago
- Disenfranchised individuals, regardless of race

Rusty Castillo, procurement warehouse services manager for the tollway, said the Earned Credit Program, which went into effect in November 2005, sought to correct problems with a previous city ordinance passed during the Harold Washington administration that she described as lacking enforcement. Under that program, contractors would make hiring commitments, then include the penalties and allowances for liquidated damages in the bid specifications, she said.

“The contractors have been the beneficiaries of the program, but we didn't see the changes in the workforce,” Castillo said.

“We did a blend of that program and a frequent flyer mileage kind of concept. Earn the credit first, then apply it on the back

end. You don't have to enforce anything. They either do it or they don't.”

Under both the city's and the tollway's earned credit programs, contractors who intentionally submit a canceled earned credit certificate or submit fraudulent payroll checks will be barred from participating in the program and could face criminal prosecution. One of the objectives of the tollway credit program is to make available to the contractors a trained pool of workers that can fill vacancies.

The tollway awards credit on a sliding scale, with the greatest given to trades considered the most difficult to penetrate, such as the operating engineers and structural steel iron workers, which are awarded 35 cents on the dollar for every hour worked. Contractors who use apprentices to perform cement and carpentry work can earn 20 cents on the dollar and those employing laborer apprentices can earn 15 cents on the dollar, Castillo said.

“We figured if a contractor hired six people — two in operating engineers, two in carpentry and two in laborers for six months, they could earn over \$100,000 in credit,” Castillo said.

Solution: **Paid apprenticeship prep**

Apprenticeship training initially was intended for recent high school graduates still living at home with their parents. Today, the average age of an apprentice is 27. For minorities and women, slugging through unpaid apprenticeship prep programs can represent a financial hardship. Some struggle to come up with car fare to get back and forth to training. For many,

even a refurbished state vehicle at a low interest rate would be out of reach.

Most community-based organizations that provide pre-apprenticeship training lack funding to assist graduates with transportation. Pleasure, the National Labor College professor and education director, believes local governments should step up with funding.

“You need to pay those people a salary,” said Pleasure, adding he believes that public officials in cities should provide financial support to joint training committees so that disadvantaged people do not fall through the cracks.

“It’s a serious problem, not paying pre-apprentices,” Pleasure said. “Gaining the resources to pay pre-apprentices for training is a reach, but it shouldn’t be. The opportunity is there for state and local government to provide (wages for pre-apprentices) in public construction. It isn’t just a federal task. Every city should

Highlights of the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority’s Earned Credit program:

- Tollway officials prescreen disenfranchised individuals to meet union standards
- Tollway sends three candidates for every available position; the contractor makes the final selection
- Contractor sponsors individual into the union, provides letter of intent to hire, copy of union card and proof of payroll
- Tollway presents contractor with an earned credit certificate good for one year
- Contractor cashes out the credit earned on the next bid submitted to the tollway

be supporting these programs. But they need to be full service—providing child care and health care, and they have to be downtown, not out in the ‘burbs.”

Pleasure mentioned a model program run out of a housing project in Philadelphia. A training facility was set up in the middle of the complex so residents could access training and be placed into pre-apprenticeship for 20 weeks. “They have a job from day one rehabbing housing, working and getting paid — as pre-apprentices,” Pleasure said, adding that participants could earn between \$10 and \$12 an hour.

That program was partially funded by local government and organized by Gorman of American Community Partnerships.

“It’s more than education — it’s political and community advocacy,” Gorman said. “The labor market model, when community and government are added to it, gets opportunities for low-income people, keeps union market share high and gets it done with less resistance. Unions and contractors are just starting to get it.”

Ordinances and hiring initiatives are part of the arsenal, Gorman said.

“Communities have to say development here ‘if,’ and the ‘if’ is jobs,” Gorman said. “Cities re-invent the wheel for every project. You have to think more broadly than the project.”

“The issue is not training programs; the issue is changing public works procurement to reflect what you’re trying to get

done,” Gorman continued. “The economy is sufficient to generate 300 to 500 (minority) union apprenticeship opportunities a year without breaking a sweat.”

Highlights of the City of Chicago’s Earned Credit Bid Incentive ordinance (Ald. William Beavers sponsor):

- Contractor must hire construction technology students from the City Colleges of Chicago
- City Colleges prescreens candidates and provides pre-apprenticeship and skills training
- Contractors receive bid credit based on the total labor hours apprentices perform
- City’s Department of Procurement Services determines the amount of the earned credit and issues a certificate to contractor
- Contractor subtracts earned credits from base bid on future bids to determine award criteria
- Procurement uses the award to determine the lowest bidder



SECTION 4:

DROPOUT RATES

Joint vs. non-joint

Union apprenticeship programs run by joint training committees experience higher graduation rates (i.e., ascension to journeyworker status) than programs operated by non-joint training committees, research shows. Nationally, white males have the highest completion rates, followed by Hispanics, women and then African-Americans, (Bilginsoy, May 2005).

In the Chicago area, measuring success rates has been next to impossible because the trade unions have refused to share their demographic data as it relates to journey worker status. The RAIS data alone is not useful to calculate successful completions because the data is not disseminated in such a way that completions correlate with registrations.

OATELS tracks the progress of new registrants to try and understand why cancellations occur. Swoope, OATELS administrator in Washington, said that in 2005, OATELS found that 85 to 89 percent of apprentices were still active after the first nine months.

“The sponsors don’t like the fact that people come into apprenticeship and decide to quit,” Swoope said, adding that most people leave voluntarily.

But the government’s analysis does little to explain the disparities between gender and ethnic groups, or the factors contributing to cancellations that occur after the first year.

To union officials, cancellations, while costly, are interpreted as a weeding out of people who are not serious about the trades. Dismissals do occur, though they are usually due to attendance, not performance issues, Villanova said. “You can’t miss a certain number of days” while in training, he said, adding that contractors feel that “if someone chronically doesn’t show up for school, (he or she) won’t show up for work.”

Culture of the trades

For apprentices, understanding the union culture and what is expected of them cannot be stressed enough. Everyone is not cut out to work in the trades, a fact that Griggs, Dawson provost, acknowledged.

“We’re going to send the most senior people out there,” Griggs said. “Some won’t complete the course.”

More than 90 percent of Dawson students are African-American; the average age is 30, Griggs said. Many come from the city’s poorest communities. Some, Griggs said, are trying to clean up their act and view Dawson as “their last chance.”

Dealing with an older student population has its challenges. Dawson instructors devote time to preparing students for the hard union culture, stressing the importance of getting to work on time, holding their tongues, and not falling victim to race-baiting.

“We tell them that people will be hollering at them, asserting their authority over them, and they can’t get upset. Life is nasty, brutish and short,” Griggs said, paraphrasing a quote from English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. “We give students sensitivity training to let them know what to expect.”



SECTION 5:

EDUCATION

Dawson now joins more than 130 post-secondary educational institutions in the country that are taking a more active role in helping to prepare a skilled workforce for blue-collar, craft-related occupations. Nationally, trade unions are in lock step with a growing trend: Degree programs tied to apprenticeship and field training in the trades.

CCC offers AAS degree programs in electrical construction and elevator construction. Additionally, Daley College with IBEW-NECA has earned Illinois Community College Board approval for a new AAS Degree / Union Apprenticeship program in Communications Technologies.

Increasingly, trade unions are seeking to have their apprenticeship training programs evaluated for college credit. The Illinois Community College Board evaluates programs at the certificate level. For associate's degree programs, the curricula is evaluated by the state college board as well as the Illinois Board of Higher

How much college credit is apprenticeship training worth? A sampling below from the Illinois Community College Board of the number of credit hours that may be applied toward associate degree programs:

Bricklayer = 64 credit hours
Carpenter = 61 to 64 credit hours
Painter = 65 credit hours
Plumber = 64 credit hours
Electrician = 62 to 69 credit hours

Education, said Carol Lanning, senior director of program planning and accountability for the state college board.

“It does seem to be a trend to have programs evaluated for college credit,” Lanning said. “The unions, many of them, have made the decision that it is a benefit to their labor force if their members pursue a college education.”

Pleasure said the trend partially has been driven by “the appetite among apprentices to get a degree.”

“In addition, there was this real appreciation that it was a way of raising the field in such a way that it could command higher wages,” Pleasure said.

City Colleges administrators currently are negotiating with union officials to establish apprenticeship program partnerships at Dawson that could be evaluated for college credit applied toward an associate's degree. National Labor College President Sue Schurman said those students could then take that degree and apply it toward a bachelor's through NLC's new online distance-learning program. “We'll take that transcript.”

So why a degree?

The skilled trades were at one time viewed as an alternative to college. A journey plumber with an associate's degree is paid the same hourly wage as a journey plumber with a high-school equivalency. But as unions consider the impact technological advances are having on construction work — and who is selected to per-

form particular tasks — college-level accreditation is the natural next step to claiming ownership of jobs.

“In our work, we run into a wall in promotion opportunities and work assignments. Anything that can be assigned to an engineer will be assigned outside the bargaining unit. Therefore, we want to claim this work, because it’s coming right out of our hides,” Pleasure said. “If the credential being demanded is a bachelor’s degree, we’ll get a bachelor’s degree. We don’t like these distinctions.”

The National Labor College, which began as a labor studies center in 1969, began granting bachelor of arts degrees in 1997 and was accredited in 2004. NLC is the only post-secondary educational institution dedicated to union members, leaders, activists and staff. Tuition is subsidized by the labor movement, and NLC will accept up to 60 college credits earned in apprenticeship training to apply toward one of its degree programs.

The NLC recently received a \$2 million grant from the Kellogg Foundation to establish a new bachelor of technical and professional studies, an online distance learning curriculum that allows trade unionists who have already gone through apprenticeship or who have an associate’s degree to earn their bachelor’s within a year and a half to two years.

“If we want to maintain a broad middle-class standard of living in the U.S., what skills do our workforce need?” Schurman

asked. “We need to rethink what post-secondary education looks like. It needs to look like a high-skilled set of competencies. It needs critical thinking and problems-solving skills associated with liberal arts.”



CONCLUSION

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As building trade unions embrace higher education as a means to enhance careers and maintain the skill within the collective bargaining unit, ensuring equal access and participation by minorities and women is essential to preventing their marginalization. **The struggle for equal access is old, but the solutions and partnerships that are being tried and tested in northeastern Illinois are new and hold promise.**

City Colleges of Chicago, the Builders Association, the Illinois Toll Highway Authority, the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, the Chicago and Cook County Building and Construction Trades Council, and community-based organizations all have an interest in working together to maintain a skilled workforce as the construction industry braces for a wave of retirements. However, due to historical challenges and the present-day resistance of some participants in the process, laws such as those sponsored by Ald. William Beavers and Illinois Senate President Emil Jones may still be necessary to level the playing field.

Not everyone is cut out to work in construction. Those jobs are seasonal and require time spent in the elements or, in some trades, hundreds of feet in the air. The issue in Chicago has always been access. For the city's poor, a career in construction could mean the end of poverty and a shot at a good living. Providing people with sustainable careers and protecting the middle-class standard of living is reason enough for the major players to trade in the harsh rhetoric of the past for a more conciliatory tone in the future.

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