

# From Training to Career: Ascendium Equips Hundreds of Apprentices with Tools of the Trade Scholarship

WI, UNITED STATES, May 1, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Wisconsin employers struggle to find, attract, and keep qualified employees, especially in skilled labor occupations where individuals need specialized training for in-demand jobs. Apprenticeships can offer a solution to employers who face shortages of skilled labor by allowing them to create their own highly skilled workforce. According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce [Development Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards](#) (Wisconsin DWD-BAS), over 3,000 employers are currently involved in Wisconsin apprenticeships. These employers train thousands of registered apprentices annually in around 200 occupations, with new occupations approved regularly as employment needs shift over time.



Working closely with the Wisconsin DWD-BAS, the [Wisconsin Technical College System](#) (WTCS) develops apprenticeship programs to meet employer needs and provides classroom instruction for industrial, construction, and other sectors. WTCS's recently released [Apprenticeship Completion report](#) sheds light on the power of apprenticeships to change lives by providing a pathway to a good, family-sustaining job. Based on a survey in fall 2023, individuals who received an apprenticeship completion certificate from a WTCS college in 2022-2023 reported earning an annual median salary of \$96,733. Additionally, 96% of apprentices reported that they were still working in the state after completing their program.

Because of these and other benefits, interest in apprenticeships from employers and individuals continues to grow, as noted in the Wisconsin DWD-BAS 2024 Year in Review. In 2024, active

registered apprenticeship contracts reached another record high of 17,542 apprentices, surpassing the previous all-time high of 16,926 apprentices in 2023. This is an 81% increase compared to 2012, when a 24-year low in contracts was recorded in Wisconsin.

Ascendium invests in efforts to increase effective postsecondary education and workforce training pathways that lead to good, family-sustaining jobs. There is strong evidence that apprenticeships in certain sectors and occupations can lead to upward mobility. It's why Ascendium has supported WTCS apprentices over the past 12 years through our Tools of the Trade Scholarship Program. The program provides \$2,000 scholarships to eligible apprentices for tools, clothing, equipment, tuition, and other needs that help them complete the required education and training for their trade.



This year, 801 construction and industrial trade apprentices received Tools of the Trade scholarships for a total of \$1,602,000.

Since its creation in 2013, the program has awarded over \$6 million in scholarships to more than 4,300 apprentices statewide. Apprentices are eligible to apply for a scholarship if they are enrolled at a WTCS college, receiving credit for both fall and spring semesters, are enrolled in an eligible construction or industrial trade, and demonstrate financial need.

"For many learners from low-income backgrounds, finding a credential or training program that offers a clear return on their time and money is difficult," said Keith Witham, President and Chief Executive Officer at Ascendium. "Because they offer applied, job-relevant training and allow learners to continue getting paid while completing that training, apprenticeships are a compelling option for those seeking a clear path to a better career."

"The Wisconsin Technical College System deeply appreciates Ascendium's unwavering support for our apprenticeship students over the years," said Layla Merrifield, WTCS President. "Time and again, apprenticeships have proven to be a reliable pathway to excellent jobs with family-sustaining wages. The Tools of the Trade scholarships offer crucial assistance, helping students successfully complete their education, ensuring skilled talent for employers statewide."

2024-2025 Tools of the Trade Scholarship Recipients

Blackhawk Technical College

35 recipients

Chippewa Valley Technical College  
21 recipients

Fox Valley Technical College  
104 recipients

Gateway Technical College  
2 recipients

Lakeshore College  
41 recipients

Madison College  
109 recipients

Mid-State Technical College  
111 recipients

Milwaukee Area Technical College  
18 recipients

Moraine Park Technical College  
57 recipients

Nicolet College  
2 recipients

Northcentral Technical College  
28 recipients

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College  
127 recipients

Northwood Technical College  
10 recipients

Waukesha County Technical College  
99 recipients

Western Technical College  
37 recipients

About Ascendium: Ascendium Education Group is committed to making education and training beyond high school a reality for more people. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we fund initiatives across the U.S. that help learners from low-income backgrounds achieve upward mobility; provide student and employee success solutions to colleges and businesses; invest in education-focused innovations to improve learner outcomes; and provide information, tools, and counseling to help millions of borrowers successfully repay their federal student loans. While we have many roles, we have one goal — elevating opportunity by creating a world where everyone can reach their highest potential. To learn more, visit [ascendiumeducation.org](https://ascendiumeducation.org).

About Wisconsin Technical College System: The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) offers more than 500 programs awarding two-year associate degrees, one- and two-year technical diplomas, short-term technical diplomas and certificates, and classroom-related education for many Wisconsin apprenticeships. WTCS is the major provider of customized instruction and technical assistance for Wisconsin employers. With more than 280,000 people enrolling in a technical college each year, it is the largest higher education system in the state.□

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