

NEW YORK CITY DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS COLLEGE DEGREE PROGRAM

A New Carpenters' College Partnership

The District Council has established a partnership with The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies at Empire State College SUNY to enable members and apprentices to earn an Associate in Science degree in Labor and the Construction Studies. The program combines college credits that you earn through your apprenticeship courses with general education and liberal arts courses provided by the Van Arsdale Center.

The ability to think critically and to read and write at the college level are essential skills for all citizens of a modern democratic society. But especially for trade unionists. The NYC District Council of Carpenters college program enables trade unionists to acquire the skills and knowledge required of them to be leaders at their work sites, in their communities and in their union.

The program emphasizes collective learning, student-faculty interaction, and class discussion. Students learn to think, read, and write at the college-level in a "hands on," active fashion, with their instructors functioning as "learning coaches," who foster their students' active engagement with the issues and arguments in the required texts and offer guidance about how they can most effectively communicate their own views or tell their own story.

Available Degree Options

Students completing the program are awarded an Associate of Science degree from Empire State College. This can be the end of a student's college career, or the beginning. With the diploma students can continue with the college for a 4-year bachelor's degree, or transfer to another college or university. All students have the opportunity along the way to think about their options and plan for their educational future.

Educational Requirements for the Associate Degree

An Associate in Science degree requires 64 credit hours, of which at least 32 must be in liberal arts and at least 24 must have been earned through Empire State College.

The National Program on Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction has evaluated the carpenter's education program to be worth 30 college credits, which Empire State College will accept toward its 64-credit associate degree when the apprenticeship is complete.

In addition, it is possible for a student to transfer up to 10 credits in liberal arts from an accredited college and still earn the minimum 24 required from Empire State College for a degree:

Required Credits for Associate Degree	64
Carpentry Apprenticeship	30
Maximum Additional Transfer Credits	10
Minimum Empire State College Credits	24

Why Trade Unionists Need To Go To College

Getting a college degree is hard work. If it weren't, it would be of much less value. New apprentices and even continuing students, pressed by the many demands on their time and energies, therefore often ask, "Why do I need to go to college?" After all, they say, "I'm just going to be a carpenter" (or a millwright or an orderly or a motorman or a whatever). "And I don't need book learning to drive nails or build scaffolds" (or, again, whatever).

Why do blue- and white-collar wage earners need to go to college? What do they learn in a literature class, a history class or a writing class that will help them on or off the job?

There are three answers to this question. First, a college education opens up job and career opportunities that are not otherwise available. Certainly, high-paying, upper-level positions generally require the skills and knowledge that a college degree signifies. Anyone who wants to move into a supervisory or managerial position later in their career should go to college.

But career advancement is neither the only nor the most important reason to go to college.

A second reason for attending college is the unrivaled opportunity to enrich your experience of life - to expand your horizons, figure out who you are and what you believe in, and acquire new and wider tastes in literature, music, art, etc. Many are reluctant to admit, at least in public, that such things matter. "What do I need that kind of enrichment for," they ask? "Just show me the money!"

To which the appropriate response is, "So you say." But what you will find as you go from one college class to another is that you will be asked to think - about who you are, what you believe, and what you enjoy - in public ways that will, inevitably, change you and what you think. Why are some countries rich and some poor? How can people who are different learn to treat each other the same? What is equality, anyway? What is truth? Beauty? Fairness? The Good? Why does it matter?

You will explore these questions in your college classrooms with other apprentices and the exploration will change you. If they don't, you will have been sleeping.

Why the Labor Movement Needs to Go to College

There is a third reason why wage earners need to go to college. and it has to do with the union movement itself. The union movement needs college-educated leaders at all levels, including the rank-and-file. It cannot effectively represent or be advocates for the interests of working people and their families without confident, articulate, well-educated leaders who know who they are, what they believe in, and what they have to do to secure their fair share.

The union movement sets the standard for all wage earners. If union wages fall and union benefits are reduced, the wages and benefits of all workers suffer. If wage earners are to receive their fair share of the wealth and welfare that they help to produce, then they need strong organizations, led by people who know how to get things done, whether at work, in the community, with government agencies or with politicians.

Where do union leaders acquire the knowledge and skills required to be strong leaders? One place is certainly “on the job.” The most important influence on a strong union leader is his or her experience as a wage earner. You can't be a weatherman if you don't know which way the wind blows. But a second important place where leaders are formed is in college classrooms, where they learn how to make the case for why workers deserve a fair share - and, more importantly, what that share is and how to go about getting it.

Which is why you need to go to college. You owe it to yourself, your family, and even your employer to become a better, more thoughtful and more productive person. But you also owe it to your union - which is doing so much for you - and to the union movement generally - without which working people as a group would not be able neither to contribute so much nor to secure their fair share of the wealth and welfare of the world.

Indeed, we could go even further. Working people need to go to college to be more productive and to learn how to represent and be advocates for themselves on the job and in the wider community. The future of American prosperity and democracy depends upon them - upon you - doing so. There is no prosperity if working people don't have money and there is no democracy if working people don't have power.

And no one is going to secure either money or power for working people if we don't do it ourselves. For democracy and prosperity to continue, wage earners need to organize and press for a voice and a fair share in every arena in which they have a presence.

The ability to do so effectively will be greatly enhanced by going to college. The more you know and the more you can do, the more effective and successful you will be.

Further Study

Students who are interested in continuing on for a bachelor's degree also have the option of continuing. The Associate of Science degree earned by apprentices is fully transferable.

Program of Study for the Associate in Science Degree

Within the curriculum of every college there are two kinds of courses: those that are required within the major; and those that are elective.

Another word that is used for required courses is “core,” which refers to those courses that are the essential part of the curriculum.

Required Core Courses

Required core courses of the Center for Labor Studies for the Associate in Science (A.S.) degree are:

Educational Planning **4 credits**
Educational Planning helps students design a program of study that can best serve their own individual educational goals and may include a combination of supervised coursework, independent reading, and research.

Information Resources and Technologies **4 credits**
Introduction to Information Resources and Technologies is designed to introduce students to common computer applications and the changes in the carpenters' trade that are being driven by the new economy and the new digital information technology.

College Writing and Effective Communication **4 credits**
College Writing and Effective Communication helps students learn what it means to communicate, orally or in writing, at the college level.

Global Civilizations **4 credits**
Global Civilizations is intended to provide students with an overview of the history, diversity and impact of human habitation across the entire globe.

Literature and Society **4 credits**
Literature and Society provides students with an opportunity to encounter a diverse group of storytellers and to think both about the meaning of life and the central role that stories play in the way human beings make sense of their lives and the world in which they live.

U.S. History **4 credits**
This course introduces students to some of the achievements, complexities and contradictions of the United States, paying special attention to the role of working people in the development of the relative prosperity of the economy and the democratic inspiration of the country's governing institutions.

Labor and the Economy **4 credits**
Labor and the Economy provides students with an introduction to economic reasoning, recent economic trends, and the importance of worker organization and unions to prosperity, efficiency and equity.

Class, Race and Gender in Modern Society **4 credits**
Class, Race and Gender in Modern Society provides students with an opportunity to explore the effect of class, race and gender differences on individual identity and social experience.

Occupational Safety and Health in Construction **4 credits**
Occupational Safety and Health for Construction provides an overview of essential safety and health concepts such as the hierarchy of controls and safety systems, and an introduction to current debates over occupational diseases, global warming, and other work environment issues.