

A Preliminary Report on Associated Builders and Contractors Apprenticeship Training: Flawed and Failing Initiatives

A Study by the
Building and Construction Trades Department
AFL-CIO

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The construction industry is built upon a foundation of skilled craftsmanship. These skills, primarily supplied through apprenticeship and training programs, are critical to the supply of skilled workers, the safety of construction sites, and the reliability of our nation's offices, roads, and homes. This report reveals that the average Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) apprenticeship program registers relatively few apprentices, produces more cancellations than graduations, enrolls only a small proportion of all female and minority apprentices, and provides training in a narrower range of crafts.

The Typical ABC Program Produces More Cancellations than Graduates

- The Cumberland Maryland ABC program registered 105 plumbers between 1990 and 2002. However, only 12 graduated and only 16 are still active, while 77 left the program before completion.
- In 2000, the Bayou ABC chapter in Louisiana had 85 cancellations versus only 12 completions.

The Typical ABC Program Enrolls and Graduates Few Minorities or Women

- The Kentuckiana ABC apprenticeship program has enrolled only 44 female and minority apprentices in over nine years. Only 5 have graduated.
- From 1990 through 2002, the four Maryland ABC chapters graduated a single woman each and only 124 minorities. The minorities comprised only 14% of all ABC graduates in that period. The 2000 Census found that minorities comprised 38% of the state's population.

ABC Program Results by State

STATE	YEARS COVERED	GRADUATED	CANCELLED
Arizona	95--9/03	271	247
California	98--02	637	404
Colorado	95--02	105	516
Hawaii	7/98--6/03	46	136
Indiana	95--02	291	935
Kentucky	3/94--6/03	70	218
Louisiana	00--02	53	211
Maryland	90--02	862	2,135
Massachusetts	93--6/02	115	383
Michigan	95--02	120	273
Nevada	95--02	237	684
New Mexico	00--6/03	3	95
North Carolina	98--5/03	37	453

Ohio	95--02	448	631
Oklahoma	95--02	138	618
Oregon	98--02	324	592
Pennsylvania	95--02	530	596
Washington	98--02	58	244
Wisconsin	95--02	551	769

** There are no registered ABC apprenticeship programs, and thus no ABC apprentices, currently registered in the states of Delaware, Maine, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia. There are no ABC chapters in the states of Idaho, Missouri, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, or Wyoming. The remaining states have not yet provided information.*

By contrast, union apprenticeship programs enroll and graduate the substantial majority of all apprentices. In addition, union apprenticeship programs also enroll and graduate the substantial majority of all female and minority apprentices. The hundreds of millions of dollars the union sector spends annually on apprenticeship and training programs produces the skilled workers vital to the construction industry's future.

Union Programs Train the Majority of Apprentices

- Records from some 36 states obtained from the Department of Labor show that union programs have enrolled some 72% of all construction apprentices since 1989.
- In states as diverse as Kentucky, West Virginia, Washington, Pennsylvania, California, Hawaii, and Massachusetts, union programs account for 69% to 97% of all construction apprentices.

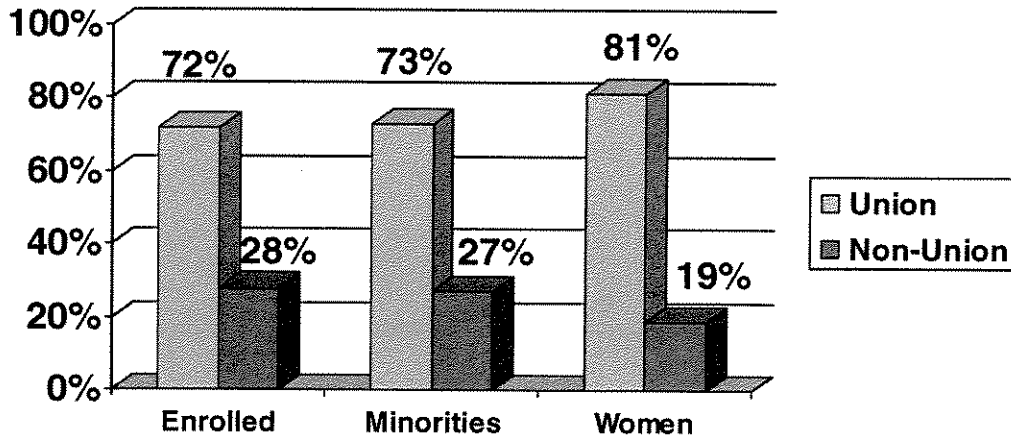
Union Programs Train the Majority of Minority and Female Apprentices

- Records from some 36 states obtained from the Department of Labor reveals that since 1989 union apprentice programs have enrolled almost three times as many minorities and over four times as many women as non-union programs.
- In Kentucky, West Virginia, Washington, Pennsylvania, California, and Massachusetts, union programs enroll from 82% to 99% of all minority and female construction apprentices.

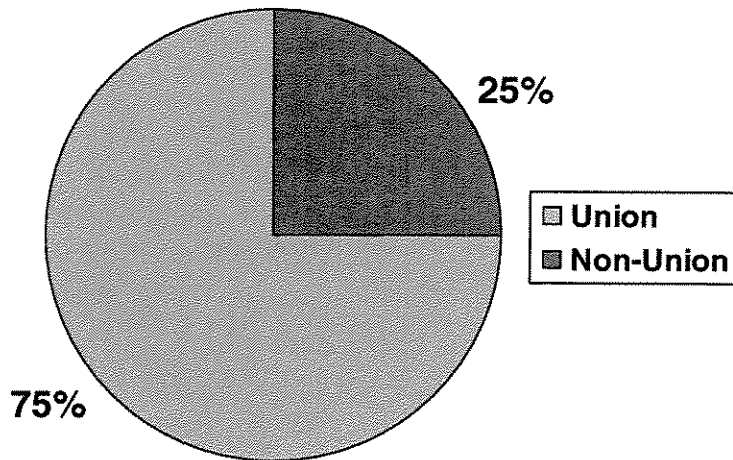
Union Programs Enroll a Higher Percentage of Minorities and Females Apprentices

- In Washington and Kentucky, female and minority apprentices comprised 23% and 16% respectively of all union construction apprentices. In the state's non-union programs, the numbers were 13% and 8%.
- In California, 66% of individuals entering a union construction apprenticeship program in 2001 were either women or minorities.

**Apprenticeship Enrollment
DOL Database on Some 36 States
1989-2001***



**Apprentice Graduates
DOL Database on Some 36 States*
1997-2001**



*Excludes 1996. In both charts, the non-union figures include enrollments for the ABC programs and all other non-union programs. See statement on methodology for more information on the DOL database.

PRELIMINARY STUDY FINDINGS

The Associated Builders and Contractors claims that “tens of thousands of construction apprentices train annually through ABC-registered apprenticeship programs,” and that the ABC is “the world leader in apprenticeship and craft training in the merit shop construction industry.”¹ The 37 ABC programs in this study comprise approximately half of the ABC apprenticeship programs, with the enrollment information typically covering at least five years. **The ABC programs below produced overall twice as many cancellations as they did graduates.**

ABC Programs

	Sponsor	years	Registered	Graduated	cancelled
AZ	Arizona Builders Alliance*	95--9/03	683	271	247
CA	San Diego	98--02	850	284	217
CA	Los Angeles Ventura	98--02	52	27	7
CA	Golden Gate	98--02	400	122	91
CA	Southern California	98--02	434	204	89
CO	Construction Industry Council*	95--02	634	90	452
CO	Western Colorado	95--02	154	15	64
HI	Hawaii	7/95--6/03	208	46	136
IN	Indiana	95--02	2,251	291	935
KY	Kentuckiana	3/94--6/03	542	70	218
LO	Bayou Chapter	00--02	85	39	174
LO	Pelican Chapter	00--02	69	14	37
MD	Cumberland Valley	90--02	897	254	526
MD	Baltimore Metro	90--02	1,848	363	985
MD	Washington Metro	90--02	329	11	153
MD	Chesapeake Chapter	90--02	840	234	471
MA	Massachusetts	93--6/03	694	115	383
MI	Western Michigan	95--02	118	28	75
MI	Central Michigan	95--02	145	10	43
MI	Northern Michigan	95--02	114	20	52
MI	Southeastern Michigan	95--02	155	62	103
NM	Rio Grande Chapter	00--6/03*	190	3	95
NV	Southern Nevada	95--9/03	780	145	473
NV	Sierra Nevada	95--9/03	380	92	211

NC	Construction Education of the Carolinas*	98--6/03	764	37	453
OH	Central Ohio	95--02	828	151	334
OH	Southwest Ohio	95--02	1,211	297	338
OK	Western Oklahoma	95--02	244	69	284
OK	Oklahoma	95--02	301	69	334
OR	Pacific Northwest Chapter	95--02	647	324	592
PA	Southeast Penn	95--02	92	21	39
PA	Keystone Chapter	95--02	852	357	301
PA	Eastern Penn	95--02	290	81	99
PA	Central Penn	95--02	175	25	116
PA	Western Penn	95--02	126	46	41
WA	Inland Pacific Chapter	98--02	239	58	244
WI	Wisconsin	95--02	2,665	551	769
	Total		21,286	4,896	10,181

* The Arizona Builders Alliance is co-sponsored by the state ABC and the state Association of General Contractors (AGC). The Construction Education Foundation of the Carolinas is co-sponsored by the state ABC and Electrical Contractors of the Carolinas and information on this program includes only apprentices who entered after the state ABC chapter was formed in 1998. The Construction Industry Training Council is sponsored by the Rocky Mountain ABC Chapter and seven other trade associations. Graduation records for New Mexico are only for apprentices that registered between 2000 and June 2003.

Kentucky

- The Kentuckiana ABC program has registered 16 people as sheet metal apprentices, 4 in early 1997, 4 in late 1997, 4 in September 2000, and 4 in May 2003. No one has ever graduated from the sheet metal program and most ceased participation within the next year. For example, the four apprentices who began on September 4, 2000 all left the program on January 19, 2001.

Louisiana

- In 2000, the Bayou ABC chapter in Louisiana had 85 cancellations versus only 12 completions

Maryland

- The Chesapeake ABC program registered 657 electrician apprentices. However, while 184 have graduated, 351 have left the program.
- The Cumberland ABC program registered 105 plumbers, but only 12 have graduated and only 16 are still active. In this case, 77 have left the program.

Maryland (cont)

- The Baltimore Metropolitan ABC program registered 112 carpenters. Only 16 have graduated while 69 apprentices have left the program.

Oregon

- There were 101 cancellations among sheet metal apprentices in the Oregon ABC apprenticeship program in 2001 alone, versus only 21 completions.

Union Programs Enrollment and Graduation Performance

The approximately 36 states that participate in the Department of Labor database of union apprentices accounted for the majority of all U.S. construction apprentices. The database, obtained in 1995 and again in 2003, provides a snapshot of the nation's apprenticeship system.

Union programs accounted for the majority of construction apprentices.

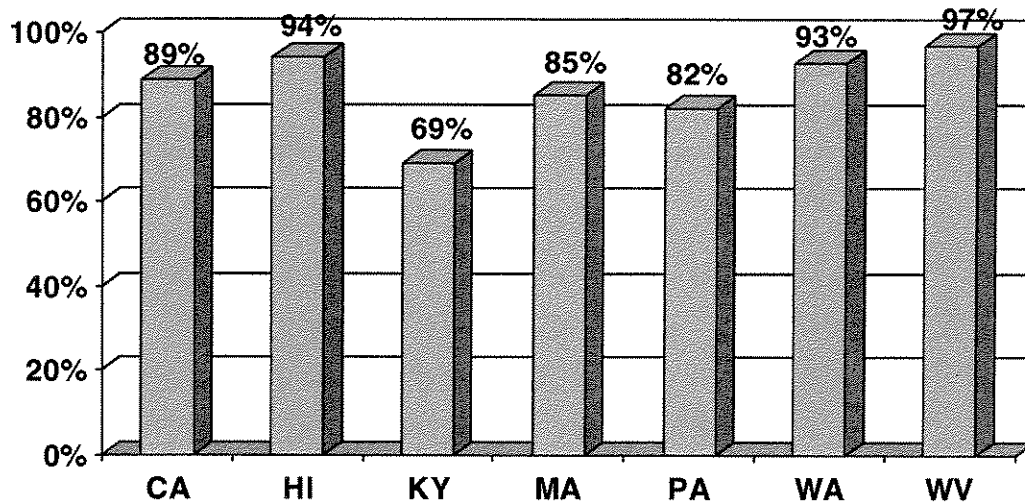
- Union programs account for 72% of apprentices who registered between 1989 and 2001.
- Between 1997 and 2001, union programs graduated 45,580 apprentices, three times the numbers graduated by non-union programs.

New Apprentices in Construction by Year and Program Type

	TOTAL REGISTRATIONS	UNION REGISTRATIONS	NON-UNION REGISTRATIONS
1989	27,414	75.6%	24.4%
1990	29,378	73.2%	26.8%
1991	24,594	72.1%	27.9%
1992	23,937	70.8%	29.2%
1993	28,034	73.2%	26.8%
1994	34,677	71.8%	28.2%
1995	28,340	73.2%	26.8%
1997	43,303	69.5%	30.5%
1998	47,826	70%	30%
1999	56,713	71.2%	28.8%
2000	63,633	71.8%	28.2%
2001	60,131	70.8%	29.2%
1989-2001	467,980	71.6%	28.4%

A number of state building trades councils, along with several academic institutions, have published studies on the apprenticeship programs in their states. The BCTD also obtained data from several other state apprentice agencies. **The results from these states make the same point as the DOL data—that unions enroll the substantial majority of apprentices.**

**Percentage of Construction
Apprentices Enrolled in Union Programs²**



ABC Apprenticeship Programs Minority and Female Participation

These ABC programs fail to enroll a significant number of minority and female apprentices. This conflicts with the organization's efforts to blame such union-supported policies as prevailing wage laws and project labor agreements for the under-representation of these two groups in the construction workforce.

Kentucky

- Only 44 of the ABC apprentices were females or minorities, or just 8.1% of the total number of registered apprentices in ABC program. The state study found 16% of union apprentices were female or minority.
- In addition, only 5 of the 44 women and minorities enrolled in the program have graduated.

Louisiana

- The two ABC programs in the state graduated only 9 minority males and no females in the three-year period.

Maryland

- Each of the four ABC programs in the state graduated a single woman over a 12-year period.
- The total number of minority graduates in the period was 124, or 14.4% of all ABC graduated apprentices. By contrast, the 2000 Census found that minorities comprised 37.9% of the state's population.

Massachusetts

- The ABC programs enrolled 10 females in over ten years, or only 1.4% of all ABC registered apprentices for the period.

Washington

- The program graduated only one female in the five-year period and graduated no male minorities. [There were two male graduates whose ethnicity was listed as "not elsewhere classified"]

Wisconsin

- Between 1995 and 2002, the ABC registered only 96 of the 1,155 female and minority apprentices in all state construction apprenticeship programs.
- As of May 2003, the ABC had 1,351 registered apprentices but only 30 [or 2.2%] were minorities.

Union Apprenticeship Programs Minority and Female Construction Apprentices

The apprenticeship database maintained by the Department of Labor records the information on an apprentice's ethnicity and sex for apprentices in some 36 states. State programs also maintain this information.

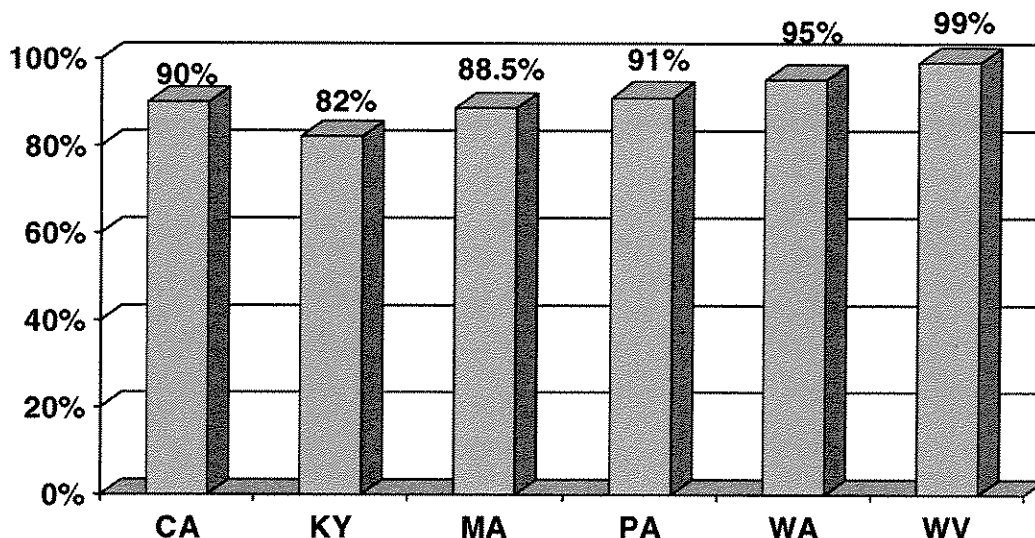
Department of Labor Apprenticeship Database

- Between 1989 and 2001, union programs enrolled 51,800 minorities, almost three times the number enrolled in the non-union programs.
- Between 1989 and 2001, union programs enrolled 15,298 women, over four times numbers enrolled by non-union programs.
- Between 1997 and 2001, union programs graduated over three times as many female and minority apprentices as the non-union programs.

State Apprenticeship Studies

The studies produced by state building trades councils, along with data obtained by the Building and Construction Trades Department, again reveals that unions enroll the vast majority of female and minority apprentices.

Percentage of Female and Minority Construction Apprentices Enrolled in Union Programs by State³



While union programs enroll and graduate the vast majority of minorities and women apprentices, **the data also shows that women and minorities comprise a higher percentage of the apprentice workforce in union programs.**

- In Washington, 23% of all union construction apprentices were either female or minority. The corresponding figure for the non-union programs was only 13%.
- In Kentucky, 16% of all union construction apprentices were either female or minority. The corresponding figure for the non-union sector was only 8%.
- In Massachusetts, 27% of union apprentices that registered between 2000 and 2002 were minorities and women, compared to only 19.5% in non-union programs.
- In West Virginia, the non-union sector enrolled 3 females and no male minorities between 1990 and 1999, compared to 309 for union programs.

- In California, women and minorities comprised 66% of the union apprentices that enrolled in 2001. While the figure for non-union programs was 54%, union apprenticeship programs registered 10,215 women and minorities in 2001 while the non-union sector registered only 1,045.

Other Performance Standards

These studies did not uniformly ask the same questions, nor did the states provide data in similar ways. However, **union apprenticeship programs performed better in various ways:**

Completion Rates

Union programs had a significantly higher completion rate, and significantly lower cancellation rate, than did non-union programs.

- The Pennsylvania study found that union programs had by the end of 1995 graduated 65% of the apprentices who entered in 1989 and 1990, while only 25% had cancelled. By contrast, non-union programs had graduated 50%, while 44% of the apprentices had cancelled.
- The West Virginia study found 56% of all non-union apprentices that had entered a program in the 1990s had cancelled by the end of the decade, compared to only a 23% cancellation rate in the union programs. In the same period, union programs graduated 38% of its apprentices, while the non-union programs had graduated only 7%.
- In Massachusetts, 47% of the non-union apprentices who registered between 2000 and 2002 have already left the program. By contrast, only 35% of the union apprentices had left their apprenticeship program.
- The study using the DOL database found that 41% of union apprentices that enrolled between 1989 and 1991 had already graduated by December 1995, while only 25% of the apprentices enrolled in the non-union programs had done so. In addition, while only 37% of union apprentices had dropped out of the program by December 1995, 54% of non-union apprentices had already left the program.

Craft Training

Union programs provided training in a far wider range of crafts.

- In Kentucky, union programs trained apprentices in a wide range of construction trades: 28% of the union apprentices were electricians, 20% were carpenters, 10% were plumbers, and 11% were pipefitters. By contrast, 64% of the non-union apprentices were enrolled in only one trade—electricians.

- In West Virginia, 60% of non-union apprentices were in one trade, electrician, and the non-union programs failed to enroll any apprentices in such trades as operating engineers, pipefitters, sheet metal workers, plumbers, asbestos workers, and boilermakers.
- The study using DOL data showed that union programs accounted for 82% of apprentices who registered in 1989, 1990, and 1991 and had graduated by December 1995. In many crafts, union apprenticeship programs accounted for over 90% of all graduates.

**Relative Share of Graduating Apprentices
(Class of 1989, 1990, 1991)
as of December 1995**

	UNION	NON-UNION
All Trades	82.2%	17.8%
Bricklayer	90.9%	9.1%
Carpenter	91.9%	8.1%
Electrician	69.5%	30.5%
Operating Engineer	98.7%	1.3%
Painter	96%	4%
Pipefitter	87.8%	12.2%
Plumber	65.6%	34.4%
Roofer	91.7%	8.3%
Sheet Metal	86.1%	13.9%
Structural Steel	98.5%	1.5%
Other Trades	84.1%	15.9%

Conclusions

- **Apprenticeship programs allow sponsors to employ low-paid apprentices in exchange for providing training vital to the industry's future. By producing more drop outs than graduates, many ABC programs have failed to complete their end of the contract.**
- **Apprenticeship programs are regulated by the U.S. Department of Labor or various state apprenticeship agencies. These agencies are responsible for monitoring the viability and authenticity of programs registered by them. These agencies should investigate the failing ABC programs to determine the reason for the low graduation rates, and to determine if the ABC programs are being run in accordance with state and federal law.**
- **A school that failed to graduate over half of its students would not be accredited in any other sector of American education. Neither should such schools be allowed in construction. All apprenticeship agencies should be required to graduate a specified minimum percentage of its students in every craft.**

Recommendations

- The Department of Labor (DOL) announced this year its intent to increase the number of apprenticeship programs registered. Given the results of this study, it is critical that the DOL undertake a thorough investigation of the ABC apprenticeship programs to determine if these programs are legitimate and viable before issuing new registrations.
- Guidelines should be established to ensure the quality of programs, effectiveness of training, and the attainment of prescribed completion rates.
- Registration should be terminated for programs that fail to meet completion rate standards.
- The Department of Labor should create a monitoring process, based both on on-site inspection and on the use of the existing Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services (OATELS) database of apprenticeship registrations, cancellations, and graduations.
- The Department of Labor should end carte blanche registrations of apprenticeship programs and demand that any program existing now or in the future that does not meet a specified and required completion rate be de-registered.
- The Department of Labor should undertake a comprehensive review of all registered apprenticeship programs, union and non-union, to compare start and completion rates.

Methodology

The apprenticeship system is administered by a state apprenticeship council (SAC) in Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico also run their own apprenticeship programs.

The Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services (OATELS) is in charge of the apprenticeship program in the remaining states. However, a significant number of SAC states [the number has varied from 8 to 13 over recent years] maintain their program information on the OATELS computer system. The states that participated in the database in 2001 were the 23 states whose apprenticeship programs are directly administered by OATELS, including Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah West Virginia, and Wyoming, as well as the 13 SAC states of Arizona, Florida, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. The information from the DOL database in this study does not include data from 1996, and was obtained in 1995 for the 1989-to-1995 period, and in 2003 for the 1997-to-2001 period.

Both the SAC states and the OATELS computer database maintains records for apprenticeship programs by industry type--enabling information to be gathered solely on construction apprenticeship programs--and on the union or non-union status of the programs. The Building and Construction Trades Department obtained information on the apprenticeship system from OATELS and various state apprenticeship agencies. In addition, a number of state building trades councils, along with several academic institutions, have recently published studies on the apprenticeship program in their states and these form an important part of this study. The studies are listed in the appendix and can be found at the Department's website at <http://www.bctd.org>. While not every agency has provided information, and agencies often provided information in different formats, this report is the most complete profile of ABC apprenticeship programs ever published.

Published Apprenticeship Studies

Apprenticeship Training in the U.S. Construction Industry, Cihan Bilginsoy, University of Utah, Department of Economics

Apprentice Training In Kentucky: A Comparison of Union and Non-Union Programs In The Building Trades, Building Trades Apprenticeship Coordinators/Directors Association of Kentucky, Inc. and Greater Louisville Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO

Construction Apprenticeship and Training in Pennsylvania, Capital Area Labor-Management Council, Inc. and Construction Partnership Coordination Project

Apprenticeship Utilization in Washington State Programs in the Building and Construction Trades, Washington State Labor Council and Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO

Building Trades Apprentice Training in West Virginia: A Comparison of Union and Non-Union Building Trades Programs in the 1990s, West Virginia University Extension Service, Institute for Labor Studies and Research

Construction Apprenticeship Training in California, University of California Los Angeles, Institute for Labor and Employment [work in progress]

¹ The statement on the numbers participating in ABC apprenticeship programs is from a document dated January 2003 and found on the ABC webpage, issues and advocacy section, issues background subsection, document titled Apprenticeship/Job Training. The statement on being a world leader is from the ABC website, education and training section, craft training and apprenticeship subsection.

² The period covered for each state in this chart is 1985-1994 in Kentucky, 1990-1999 in West Virginia, 1995-2001 in Washington, 1997-2001 in Pennsylvania, all active apprentices on 12/31/01 in California, all active apprentices in June 2002 in Hawaii, and all registered apprentices from 2000-2002 in Massachusetts.

³ The period covered for each state in this chart is 1985-1994 in Kentucky, 1990-1999 in West Virginia, 1995-2001 in Washington, 1997-2001 in Pennsylvania, all active apprentices on 12/31/01 in California, and all registered apprentices from 2000-2002 in Massachusetts.