

Ironworker apprentice program allows students to earn while they learn

High school graduates looking for a career that doesn't require expensive tuition may want to explore an alternative education path – the Ironworkers Local 378 apprentice program.

“Many students are surprised to learn of the good pay and benefits that come with being a union Ironworker,” says Local 378 Business Manager Jeff McEuen. “The best part for many of them is learning a skill without racking up huge debt.”



The hourly pay of a starting apprentice is typically 50 percent that of an experienced journeymen. A first-year apprentice with Ironworkers Local 378 earns \$16.75 an hour, plus vacation, health insurance and pension benefits, as they learn welding, structural-steel erection and other skills. Apprentices get regular pay raises as they progress through the training.

“It's a great opportunity to earn and learn,” says McEuen.

The apprenticeship combines four years of supervised, structured, on-the-job training with classroom instruction and hands-on training. Apprentices get 160 hours of instruction every year – including college-level classes.

Classes in structural steel, architectural steel and welding are each 50 hours – 30 hours of classroom instruction and 20 hours of hands-on lab or shop training.

“Our contractors expect high quality, productive workers to keep them winning work, which is why we invest so much in our training,” says McEuen. “Our skills make us stand out, and that keeps us working.”

Ironworker employment is projected to grow 22 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. That bodes well for recent graduates currently looking for work.

Read more about the Local 378's training program online at www.ironworkers378.org. Click on the member tab and scroll down to apprenticeship. You may also check out www.universityofiron.org.