I talk about the value of higher education all the time, and particularly as educators, I think it’s important that we encourage our members to pursue different types of educational opportunities. Whether it’s through the Instructor Training Program (ITP), where we will unveil 20 new courses this year, or through one of the programs we promote, such as the Construction Management Associate Degree program through Washtenaw Community College or Rowan University’s B.A. in Construction Management (see article in this newsletter). Programs like these can make a definitive impact on a member’s marketability with a contractor and owner. A lot of these programs will allow our members to convert their knowledge and experience into academic credits. There are also scholarships offered and online learning allows the participants to create their own schedules. Through our partnership with Washtenaw Community College our members can receive their associate degrees. As our industry continues to transform, it has never been more
timely for our members to continue with their education as well. We have to ask ourselves if our members are reaching their full potential? There are so many avenues to explore. If someone is a new business owner, they would surely benefit from courses to help run a business. On the technology side, some of our members are feeling like they are scrambling just to keep up and admit to being “self-taught” in areas like BIM. Wouldn’t it be better for them to enroll in a class to help understand advanced technology better?

It can be daunting going back to school, particularly to pursue an associate or bachelor or even advanced degree once we’re adults, but the truth is, many of these programs are designed to cater to folks who have not sat in a classroom for years. I want to encourage everyone to take a look at continuing your education and look for things that pique your interests, whether it is training on a new technology tool or welding a new process or something that will help define leadership skills in the field. Contractors and owners are impressed when someone takes the initiative to further their education and broaden their skill base.

As we’ve talked about before, the concept of “lean construction” is really about improving the process—to streamline ways to be more productive and cost effective. This year, I would like to aim that same focus on education and training, because both will result in a workforce that is highly educated and productive. The United Association offers many opportunities to further a member’s education. Let’s make this month the month that we inspire our members to take the initiative to further their own education.

**ATP Hosts Midwest Agricultural Mechanics Instructor’s Conference**

From Rich Benkowski, UA Training Specialist

ORLAND PARK, IL On February 8–9, educators and industry representatives participated in the Midwest Agricultural Mechanics Instructors Conference hosted by American Technical Publishers (ATP). Companies and organizations participating in the ATP conference included Briggs & Stratton Corporation, Decker Consulting and Investigations, Fluke Corporation, the Lincoln Electric Company, Milwaukee Tool, UA Local Union 597, the United Association, the National Council for Agricultural Education, and the National FFA Organization.

James Pavesic and Rich Benkowski, UA Education and Training Department representatives, presented career path opportunities for students in agricultural mechanics programs.

Instructors attending the ATP conference represented high school, community college, and university programs from IL, IN, IA, KY, MN, MO, OH, and WI. Each instructor was nominated by state agricultural education leaders to attend the conference. This select group attended presentations by industry representatives on the topics of building a culture of safety, new technology and industry trends, and apprenticeship and career pathways in the areas of power, structural, and technical systems. All attendees engaged in hands-on sessions related to electrical, welding, small engine, and power tool technology. Interactive discussions addressed grain engulfment safety, FFA career development events, apprenticeship career opportunities, and the agricultural mechanics curriculum.
Blackboard Beginner?

From Lauren Friedman, Online Learning Resource Coordinator

Starting a new course from scratch in Blackboard is difficult, especially for new users. Not only does it require you to create all new content, you have to know how to add and upload it, tweak settings, and administer the course.

If you have never used Blackboard before, you may not know where to start; there is a lot going on! Blackboard offers a three-minute orientation video that gives you an idea of what they offer and how to find it.

For more in-depth information, you can browse the Blackboard Help FAQs. These cover a variety of topics, with step-by-step instructions and screen shots. You can also check the WCC/UA login instructions if you need help logging in.

Do you prefer a classroom learning environment? There are two regional classes offered to help you learn about Blackboard 3001, Introduction to Teaching Online Using Blackboard LMS and 3002, Online Teaching Techniques Using Blackboard. Talk to your training director about signing up for these courses.

We also offer five Interactive Module Course Sites. An Interactive Module means there is a simulation embedded that students can interact with. The student will be put in a digital environment and asked to perform a task under instructor supervision without the risk of injury.

- Crane Signaling
- Dry Systems
- HVAC Troubleshooting
- Industrial Rigging
- Welding

These Master Courses and Interactive Modules are tools and starting places. They are not intended to stifle or restrain anyone who is teaching. You can make changes to the material as needed to reflect your course and your situation.

Once you have used and changed a Master Course, you can request your edited version be copied over for the next semester—all your changes will persist to the new version, with no extra labor from you.

For more information on Blackboard, and a summary of the Master Courses and Interactive Modules we offer, you can check out page 17 of the eResource Guide.

Master Courses

A Master Course is a complete course created by a WCC Instructional Designer, based off of the UA’s textbooks. The courses come complete with syllabus, assignments, readings, and other learning tools to help instructors and students transition to online learning.

The Master Courses currently available are:

- Basic Electricity Theory
- Building Controls
- Drainage Systems
- Drawing Interpretation and Plan Reading
- Foreman Training
- Hydronic Heating and Cooling
- Job Safety and Health
- Math for the Trades Refresher Course
- Plumbing Service, Maintenance, and Repair
- Related Science
- Soldering and Brazing
- STAR Certification Review
- Use and Care of Tools
- Welding Practices and Procedures for the Pipe Trades

Requesting a Course

You can request a Master Course, blank course space, or a copy of a previously taught course by filling out the request form.

Questions?

If you have any questions or concerns about Blackboard, you can contact Lauren Friedman at 410-269-2000, or email at lfriedman@UANET.ORG. Also available is the WCC help desk at 734-477-8908 during work hours or 1-800-218-4341 for 24/7 support.
EPA 608 Update

The HVACR Service Technicians of the United Association are the front line of environmental protection by ensuring proper installation of equipment, reducing leaks and recovering refrigerant, and by educating equipment owners about the integrity of their mechanical systems. By proper handling of refrigerants, the EPA anticipates annual reduction in greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 1.5 million cars. EPA regulations (40 CFR Part 82, Subpart F) under Section 608 of the Clean Air Act require that technicians who maintain, service, repair, or dispose of equipment that could release ozone-depleting refrigerants into the atmosphere must be certified. Starting on January 1, 2018, this requirement will also apply to appliances containing most substitute refrigerants, including HFCs.

The EPA is undertaking its first overhaul of the CFC certification test bank since 1999. To be clear, the EPA is NOT requiring recertification of current technicians. The new exam reflects the updated regulatory requirements and new refrigerants, along with incorporating modern testing principles. The updated ruling took effect on January 1, 2017, with certifying organizations to start administering the new test by January 1, 2018. Certifying organizations must publish an online list of technicians certified under the new guidelines.

There are a few minor changes that affect the technician. When a 608 card is issued, the technicians social security number may not be used as an ID; furthermore, the EPA has removed the requirement that technicians own certified recovery equipment. Additionally, refrigerant distributors may only sell HFC refrigerants to certified technicians and must maintain records for the sales beginning January 1, 2018.

The new ruling also impacts the industry service practices. For example, newly manufactured or imported recovery and/or recycling equipment must be certified with use with HFCs. Technicians may only use certified recovery/recycling equipment, and the EPA has adopted the UL 1963-2011 flammability standard in that certification to ensure the safe use of recovery equipment designed for flammable refrigerants (propane). The language surrounding leaks has been expanded to include modified leak rates and mandatory verification tests along with periodic leak inspections.

Apprenticeship and Teaching Teamwork

From Mark Breslin, Breslin Strategies, Inc.

Apprentice school for many students is about acquiring the right skills and creating a strong foundation for their economic success. But no matter how good they are, they will never make that career on their own. They will always be part of a team. So in order to be a good team player they will need to learn the following:

- Coordination and planning with others
- Listening and feedback
- Working with people who are different
- Working with people who are difficult
- When to lead and when to follow
- How to make good group decisions

Why not start them early?

Here is an idea for you to consider at your training center—teach your apprentice classes in “crews” not classes. Take your students at the beginning of each year and split them into small groups of four to six. Students will continue to have their own course grades or evaluations, but you will also have team goals and expectations. And even better, teams will be ranked. On what you ask? How about:

- Attendance
- Tardiness
- Group project timing and completion
- Extra work or projects
- Add yours here ________________
The idea is to get them used to working in teams and crews from day one. That is how it is going to be for the next 25 years—so game conditions in apprenticeship makes it more realistic. It will also develop leadership skills, and finally, and most importantly, it will create peer pressure for team members to meet one another’s expectations. The training staff should not have to carry this responsibility alone.

For more information on shaping apprentice attitudes, behaviors and performance see the book *Survival of the Fittest.*

Remember, teams always perform better if they have high expectations of each other from the start.

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**Success is Mastered for One Welder at the Midwest Training Center**

The Midwest Training Center in Aurora, IL, in a partnership between Pipefitters Local 597, Chicago, IL, and the United Association, has been offering accelerated welding training and specialty welding training since late 2014. It has presented experienced welders with an opportunity to learn and practice new processes and has opened the door for worthy candidates through its accelerated welding program. Some individuals who come through the accelerated welding program can continue with the UA apprenticeship program at local unions throughout the country to become proficient pipelayer/welder journeypersons, while others—who have had previous experience—are able to go on to work as a journeyperson. Recently, one of the graduates of the program wrote about his experience at the school.

Antonio Guerrero, Steamfitters Local 353, Peoria, IL, thought he had the grit and perseverance to become an x-ray certified welder. He took advantage of every opportunity the Midwest Training Center offered, but as he described it, the journey was not always easy. “It was a very difficult period in my life,” he said, “where I had to sacrifice time with my friends, and most importantly, my family in order to accomplish my goals to become a union pipelayer/welder.”

When the time came for Brother Guerrero to take his first certification test, the UA-21, he did not pass the x-ray portion of the exam the first time. Brother Guerrero knew he had to double down and put in a lot of practice hours to ensure his success the second time around. He said, “Once I passed the UA-21, it was like a light bulb came on. My plan was finally coming to fruition. Within a two-month period, I received the UA-15, 41, 35, 67, and 91 certifications.”

Shortly after he received his certifications, Brother Guerrero was offered a job with Welding Services, Inc. (WSI), a specialty welding company out of Atlanta that specializes in automatic orbital welding, a process he mastered at the Midwest Training Center.

Today, Brother Guerrero reports that he is traveling throughout the country, an opportunity that he says his training at the Midwest Training Center has made possible. He continues to practice on his time off whenever he gets the opportunity. When asked what advice he would give to a perspective candidate for the Midwest Training Center’s programs, he said, “I am still motivated to grow each and every day, so that one day I too can stand side-by-side with some of the best men and women in the business and maybe even pass on some of the knowledge I’ve obtained to future generations. I hope that my story reaches the men and women who are beginning their journey in welding and helps them understand that perseverance is what overcomes obstacles. I wake up every day loving what I do. I’m always on the lookout for any type of exposure to the job, whether it’s actual work experience or classroom work. As far as I can see if one does what is immediately gratifying and easily obtainable, then things are usually more difficult later on down the road. However, if one manages to conquer the path less traveled, one enjoys the long-lasting benefits of these seeds he or she has sown. Success isn’t easy, and if it was, everyone would be successful.”

Brother Guerrero will always be grateful for the skills that he was able to obtain at the Midwest Training Center, and he hopes that his brothers and sisters will take advantage of such an opportunity.
Scholarships Available!

Earn a Bachelor’s Degree in Construction Management from Rowan University

NABTU Governing Board of Presidents Scholarships available to first-year students in all trades

(Up to $3,600 per student)

Rowan University’s B.A. in Construction Management degree completion program provides those with an associate’s degree or at least 60 credits with the remaining credits necessary to complete a bachelor’s degree in this growing field while taking classes online. Applicants with less than 60 credits may work with an enrollment counselor to explore available options. This program is ideal for journeypersons and seasoned professionals in the construction industry, as well as apprentices who are looking to develop leadership skills and advance their careers. The B.A. in Construction Management degree prepares individuals to supervise, manage, and inspect construction sites, buildings, and associated facilities.

- Rowan University’s program has received the endorsement of NABTU
- Consists of fully online seven-week accelerated courses
- Awards credit for prior work and experience in addition to transferring credits from other accredited colleges and universities*

With an emphasis on honoring students lifelong learning experiences and prior college credits, the B.A. in Construction Management Online program offers students the opportunity to apply specialized union training, apprenticeship program knowledge and prior college course work to complete their degree within as little as two years. All courses are delivered through Rowan Online, a nationally ranked provider of online education to ensure a top quality online learning experiences for students.

The Fall Online 2017 term begins on September 5. The application deadline is August 1. For more information, go to https://rowanu.com/programs/ba-construction or to enroll go to https://rowanu.com/apply.

*Limits on the total number of credit hours awarded apply. Transferrable credits and work experience must be evaluated and are awarded at the discretion of Rowan University officials.