

State should adopt apprenticeship tax credit

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A recent news story about a college junior running for office detailed how the individual had spent 11 years at state college and had not yet achieved a degree. While this may seem comical, the state subsidy for the school in question averages around \$7,300 per student per year, which means that taxpayers shelled out about \$80,000 for this man's so far degreeless education.

The lead article in the April 17 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel outlined Wisconsin's job shortage for college graduates. It also outlined the fact that college-educated workers in Wisconsin earn 11 percent less than the national average.

Construction apprenticeship programs are funded by the industry and provide excellent wage and fringe packages for their graduates. According to nationwide statistics, only four out of every 100 college graduates makes more in their lifetime than a building craftworker.

During the term of their apprenticeship, apprentices earn money and pay taxes. They start to build a life and put down roots in the state of Wisconsin. Few leave the state upon completion of their apprenticeship.

The construction industry will soon be asking the Legislature to consider an apprenticeship tax credit to encourage construction employers to hire apprentices. The amount of the request for the entire period of an apprenticeship will be in the same neighborhood as the state subsidy for one student for one year at a state school.

In spite of the bright future for people who complete construction apprenticeship in the state of Wisconsin, we will likely be told by the Legislature that there are not funds for this credit – even though our completion rates are higher than the university systems and our apprentices earn (and pay taxes) while they learn, earn better than average wages and stay here after graduation.

Oh, by the way, you don't get to spend 11 years in an apprenticeship program without graduating.

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