

**2025 Edwin Marsh Memorial Scholarship Essay**

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Any personal information included within the essay was redacted, along with any trade identifiers prior to distribution to the scholarship committee. Therefore, the committee made their selection based solely on the content of the essay.

As an apprentice, I am taking Ivy Tech courses while also having normal apprenticeship classes. Instead of extending the length of the apprenticeship, we take the classes all together. The Ivy Tech courses are divided throughout the length of the entire apprenticeship so students are not overloaded with classwork. While I have to be committed in my studies and also working on the job at the same time, it can get tiring throughout the week. Doing this will result in completing the apprenticeship in a normal time without having to go on longer to complete more courses. Even if I do not have the option to do this, I would still take the longer apprenticeship because the end result is more beneficial for apprentices that receives an associate's degree.

Obtaining a degree for a construction career would have more value than the desire for a shorter apprenticeship. The associate's degree provides a more comprehensive education for students. While the apprenticeship centers around practical skills and on-the-job training, the degree helps students with higher education, business management, historical knowledge, and communication skills. Having the degree demonstrates a broader understanding of the field and develop skills that become invaluable as one advances in their career. Among all industries, construction workers have the lowest levels of education ("Construction Chart Book," 2018). According to the same website, union members tend to have higher level of education than non-union workers. 41% of union members have post-secondary education compared to 27% of non-union members. Apprentices will become better journey-person with proper education and training. Gaining an associate's degree will not only help attract more workers, but produce more career advancement opportunities.

In a time of a competitive job market, having a degree can set a person apart from other candidates. Employers and contractors recognizes commitment to professional development and willingness to invest in ones future. Traditionally, the building trades have emphasized practical experience over academic credentials. While construction work is physical, technical, and skill-based, the industry is changing. There are new technologies, building codes, and project managing is increasingly complex. Education open doors to leadership positions and supervisory roles. The associate's degree can be a stepping stone for a bachelor's degree in

construction management, if students want to pursue that later on. Having a strong educational foundation can give a tradesperson an edge over others. Becoming a journey-person as quickly as possible is appealing for students who want a full-time wage or those looking for more money. People may not want to pay tuition to take 5 additional classes but Ivy Tech's courses are affordable and many apprenticeship programs even cover the cost of the courses or offer assistance. But completing only the apprenticeship limits those opportunities, especially in larger construction firms or union leadership roles where formal education is increasingly valued.

The construction work field is looked down upon because of its lack of education and physical labor. There is a societal bias that favors traditional college pathways. Holding an associate's degree can help bridge that perception gap, giving the trade credibility when dealing with clients, engineers or architects. Workers in the field holding an associate's degree can be viewed as desirable to contractors and offer more work. Completing an associate's degree is an achievement that boosts confidence and open opportunities. Education is not just about job qualifications. Education is also about developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills that benefit all areas of life.

Ultimately, the decision between a shorter apprenticeship and one that includes an associate's degree from Ivy Tech depends on an individual's goals, circumstances, and long-term vision. For me, the value of the associate's degree far outweighs the extra time and effort it requires. In a competitive, evolving industry like construction, the combination of hands-on experience and formal education provides not only immediate job readiness but also the tools for future growth and leadership. Choosing the longer path may delay short-term gains, but it lays a stronger foundation for a rewarding, adaptable, and sustainable career in the building trades.

## References

The Center For Construction Research And Training. (2018). *Construction Chart Book (6th edition): Education and Training – Educational Attainment and Internet Usage in Construction and Other Industries*. CPWR. <https://www.cpwr.com/research/data-center/the-construction-chart-book/chart-book-6th-edition-education-and-training-educational-attainment-and-internet-usage-in-construction-and-other-industries/>