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ABC Chairman's Message: Gould launches daytime electrical pilot

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John Cruz

It's sometimes hard to keep up with the pace of change in the construction industry, but we have no choice if we are to continue to succeed. The changes aren't just about technology; to successfully confront ongoing labor shortages, we must change the way we train.

To address these new demands, the Gould Construction Institute (GCI) will launch a pilot program this fall with a hands-on shop component that will offer a daytime option for apprentice training in the electrical trade, in addition to the traditional evening program. We are launching this pilot based on the success of similar daytime programs in a number of other ABC chapters, including the Keystone Chapter in Pennsylvania, which has generously shared insights and best practices with us.

An increasing number of apprentices now prefer daytime training over driving to class after a long and strenuous day of work. At the same time, difficulty recruiting part-time teachers has reached a breaking point due to high demand for construction services and the fact that teachers can earn far more in the field. The new pilot program will feature a full-time teacher rather than existing model of working or retired tradespeople who teach evening courses part-time.

We anticipate that daytime training with full-time instructors will bring better results for both students and member firms. The new training model will allow us to make improvements to instruction based on student needs, standardize learning objectives for the entire program and ensure that the objectives stay consistent so we can provide a clear educational path for our students to progress from one level to the next.

Beginning with a pilot will give GCI time to review the impacts of the change and make modifications to maximize its effectiveness. We anticipate launching a similar pilot in year two (Fall 2023) for Sheet Metal and for the remainder of the trades we teach in Fall 2024. Three years of evolution of the training model would provide adequate time to better understand the facility and financial needs that accompany the switch to day training with hands-on experience for all trades.

The popularity of vocational education is resurgent, and it's no surprise. It offers the opportunity to earn while you learn and provides the training needed for lucrative careers that are in great demand – all at a fraction of the cost (and associated debt) of a four-year degree.

At the Gould Construction Institute, we are excited to begin on this new journey and work diligently to make the changes needed to keep our apprenticeship training program strong. We look forward to another successful school year and to the exciting developments ahead! For details and registration information for the new electrical pilot program, visit abcma.org.

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