

# Pipe Trades Training Center

## Retention Plan

### April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024

#### **Scope**

The Pipe Trades Training Center's primary mission is to empower piping professionals through education and apprenticeship. Not only does the Training Center become very invested personally and financially with each apprentice that we initiate, our contractors and union business office also become invested in each apprentice also. The investment per apprentice is roughly \$16,000 per year for training, so it is in everyone's best interest to retain our apprentices. Pipe Trades Training Center recognizes that people leave our program for many different reasons, so we approach retention from several different directions. These are training, mentorship, core benefits, and culture.

#### **Training**

Training is at the core of what we do. We take individuals that may have little or no experience in the trades to a level of mastery in five years. This cannot be done without a well-designed program that includes benchmarks at periodic intervals and built in assessments. The construction industry is constantly evolving with new materials and processes being introduced and the PTTC ensures that we stay at the forefront of new technology. We do this by having tool manufacturers and material distributors speak to our student body annually. Also, half of our board of directors represent the employers and we use their input to shape our training. Not only do we offer training related to fieldwork, but we also offer training in financial literacy and retirement planning. This helps ensure that our apprentices are making wise decisions that will benefit them in the future. The training we offer is head and shoulders above what any of our competitors provide, and we know that if we take a training first approach our retention will be high.

#### **Mentorship**

The Pipe Trades Training Center's apprenticeship programs are an extreme commitment and often like nothing our apprentices have ever experienced. There are very high expectations both at the Training Center and on the jobsite accompanied by a 90-page student handbook full of rules and policies. We understand that this can be a very difficult to acclimate to and can create stress for our apprentices. We have structured our management staff so that each program has its own coordinator. This coordinator is responsible for mentoring the apprentices in their program. We have laid out steps of

progressive discipline in the student handbook so that all apprentices are aware of the process. The coordinators form relationships with their apprentices and take an open-door approach to mentoring. Coordinators provide coaching based off performance evaluations from the field and from instructor feedback. Coordinators also make periodic jobsite visits to talk to field foreman and provide jobsite coaching as well. The PTTC also created a peer-to-peer mentoring program in which senior apprentices volunteer their time to mentor incoming 1<sup>st</sup> year apprentices. We have found that this approach leads to a higher rate of success for our apprentices and better retention.

### **Core Benefits**

The Pipe Trades Training Center is in the Silicon Valley in California, one of the highest costs of living areas in the country. We would be foolish to think that compensation and benefits didn't play a part in whether we can retain our people or not. Apprenticeship truly is a combination of on-the-job experience and classroom education. 9000 on-the-job-work hours are required for completion of our program which is broken into ten 900-hour segments. Through our affiliation with local union 393 and multiple contractor associations, employment is provided from day one of apprenticeship. We offer a starting pay of \$73/hour total package with full benefits after 90 days. We have a progressive pay scale that increases substantially every 6 months. Upon graduation from our program apprentices can expect to earn a \$123/hour total package that includes excellent medical benefits and multiple retirement plans. Additionally, every three years our union collectively bargains for a new contract. Apprentices are made aware of this process and are allowed to vote once they enter their 4<sup>th</sup> year of apprenticeship. This gives them a voice and vested interest in participating in their future. Graduation is the beginning of our apprentices' careers and the ground level of which many opportunities can present themselves. We make apprentices aware of other career possibilities such as being a Foreman, General Foreman, or Senior General Foreman. Opportunities also exist out of the field for example in Project Estimating, Project Management, or Detailing. Management roles such as Business Agent or Business Manager are also a possibility, along with roles at the Training Center like Instructor, Coordinator, or Director of Training. There are various journey level classes we offer to help spur these options which we make apprentices aware of. We feel that our high wages, excellent benefits, and the potential for upward mobility contributes to our high retention.

### **Culture**

We understand that the construction culture can be very different and hard to acclimate to for apprentices coming from different industries. Being a member of Local 393 also means being a member of a brotherhood/sisterhood. During orientation we review labor history

and the fight of working people in this country. We teach that unions exist for the primary purpose of many individuals joining together to have one common voice and fight for common interests. We promote community building through our community service requirements and give apprentices opportunities to attend monthly union meetings, which provides networking opportunities. Apprentices remain with the same cohort for all 4 – 5 years of their apprenticeship, which creates a bond that they will carry with them for the rest of their careers. We offer mental health and wellness seminars and peer support meetings monthly that are open not only to apprentices but also their families. We host an open house for all incoming apprentices to give them an opportunity to bring their spouses and children to the school and showcase what they do. We also hold an annual apprentice contest in which apprentices compete amongst each other for the opportunity to represent Local 393 at the state competition. This friendly rivalry, along with everything else we do, promotes community and inclusiveness which we believe leads to retention.

### **Faculty and Student Input**

Each year in February, the retention plan is posted on our website under the Student and Faculty portals. Students and Faculty are notified through email that the plan is available for review. This provides an opportunity for feedback prior to Board Approval in April.

### **Annual Review**

This plan is reviewed annually by the JATC, the standard 16 committee, the apprenticeship council, and through quarterly instructor meetings as an opportunity for evaluation and feedback. Changes are noted and each January the plan is revised and put before the board of directors for approval.

### **Shared Results**

Results from student and faculty feedback is collected through apprentice council and faculty meetings. Additionally, we have an anonymous suggestion box in which we collect feedback. All collected data is shared with the Board during regularly scheduled meetings.