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/ Sherrill Administration Celebrates 'National Apprenticeship Week' at Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, Highlighting New Jersey's Booming Apprenticeship Movement

# Sherrill Administration Celebrates 'National Apprenticeship Week' at Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, Highlighting New Jersey's Booming Apprenticeship Movement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2026

**TRENTON** – New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill joined Acting Labor Commissioner Kevin D. Jarvis today at [Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory](#) (PPPL) to kickoff "National Apprenticeship Week" and celebrate one of the state's most pioneering apprenticeship programs to mark the monthlong celebration of the innovative workforce model in April.

Notable event attendees included ; Juston Fontaine, Deputy Director for Operations, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science; Peter Schiffer, Princeton University's dean for research, PPPL Director Professor Steven Cowley, Michael Blatt, Office of Apprenticeship State Director, U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), Andrew Zwicker, PPPL Head of Public Engagement & Workforce Development, and NJ State Senator; representatives from Princeton University, the New Jersey Artificial Intelligence Hub (NJ AI Hub) and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges; along with members of PPPL's executive management leadership team.

National Apprenticeship Week, recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor, runs from April 26 through May 2. New Jersey expands upon this theme, by observing the entire month of April as "Apprenticeship Month," when statewide efforts showcase the value of earn-and-learn career pathways.

At the heart of today's celebration is PPPL's groundbreaking registered apprenticeship program in fusion energy and engineering, a first of its kind in the nation. Launched in 2019 with support from the US Department of Energy and the New Jersey Department of Labor's (NJDOL) Growing Apprenticeship in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS) grant program, the initiative trains technicians to build and operate fusion reactors, the leading edge of clean, carbon-free energy development. PPPL's inaugural apprenticeship class graduated in November 2023, with the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) providing critical GAINS funding to PPPL for the fifth consecutive year.

PPPL holds the national distinction of being a U.S. Department of Labor Apprenticeship Ambassador, the only employer in the country to hold that designation in the field of fusion energy and engineering. Most recently, PPPL became the first employer partner in New Jersey's trailblazing artificial intelligence apprenticeship, the Machine Learning Data Scientist program, sponsored by the New Jersey Council of County Colleges.



"What is happening at PPPL is national-level workforce development, right here in New Jersey – and this is exactly the kind of forward-thinking partnerships we need to build a strong economy that works for everyone," **said Acting Labor Commissioner Jarvis**. "The apprenticeship model has a proven history of connecting workers to meaningful careers, and we are leveraging this to open doors in emerging industries across the Garden State. By adapting this time-tested approach to meet workforce demands, we are ensuring that the apprenticeship model continues to serve as a bridge between learning and earning for workers of today and tomorrow."

"Apprenticeship is not just a workforce priority – it is a cornerstone of New Jersey's economic future," **said Governor Sherrill**. "We are committed to empowering Garden State workers with the in-demand, cutting-edge skills that drive innovation and keep our state competitive. Pathways like those at PPPL prove that when we invest in earn-and-learn opportunities, we build more than careers – we build the foundation our state and country will stand on for generations to come."

"PPL has long been a leader not only in fusion science but in cultivating the next generation of highly skilled technicians and scientists," **said PPPL's Director Professor Steven Cowley**. "This apprenticeship is a model for how we can connect cutting-edge research with real career opportunities right here in New Jersey. I am proud to support this program and the workers it empowers."

Apprenticeship programs offer participants a guaranteed wage from day one, with increases as skills develop, and culminate in a nationally recognized, portable credential. Programs typically run one to four years, and participants work during the entire experience. Nationally, apprenticeship graduates earn an average starting salary of \$80,000 upon program completion, with 90 percent of graduates remaining employed after program completion. Over a worker's lifetime, apprenticeship graduates earn on average \$300,000 more than their peers who did not pursue this career pathway.

For small and large employers alike, apprenticeship provides a pipeline to talent and the ability to build a workforce that meets their precise needs, with unique opportunities to instill organizational culture that helps with employee retention and strengthens the local, state and regional economy.

Since the NJDOL Office of Apprenticeship was first established in 2018, New Jersey has invested approximately \$115 million in grant funding to develop apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and work-based learning programs. That investment has produced:

- More than 1,600 new Registered Apprenticeship programs, representing a 170 percent increase since 2018;
- 27,693 newly onboarded apprentices statewide; and
- 10,811 currently active apprentices across 1,639 programs.

Among its most recent awards, NJDOL awarded eight new grants within the manufacturing sector totaling \$2,325,300 and 34 grants within the health care sector totaling \$15,939,027.

The Office of Apprenticeship administers several grant programs designed to expand and diversify apprenticeship opportunities across the state:

- **GAINS** (Growing Apprenticeship in Nontraditional Sectors) expands apprenticeship into high-growth industries such as healthcare, information technology, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing;
- **PACE** (Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education) prepares participants for apprenticeships and post-secondary training while removing economic barriers through stipends for childcare, transportation, and GED attainment;
- **YTTW** (Youth Transitions to Work) connects high school juniors and seniors and out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24 to high-skill, high-wage apprenticeships before they become disconnected from education and employment opportunities;
- **NJBUILD** is specifically designed to bring more women, minorities, and veterans into the construction trades; and
- **NJPLACE** is a degree apprenticeship model through which participants earn college credits and an apprentice wage simultaneously.

The Office of Apprenticeship has also advanced several landmark Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) to broaden the scope of apprenticeship in New Jersey:

**The College Credit for Apprenticeship Initiative**, in partnership with Thomas Edison State University: A 2025 MOU through which NJDOL provides \$5 million over three years to develop college-credit pathways for registered apprenticeship programs, integrating workforce training with academic credentials including associate and bachelor's degrees.

**The Teacher Apprenticeship Program**, in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Education: Unveiled on Apprenticeship Day 2025, this initiative is backed by an \$800,000 NJDOL grant to establish new USDOL-approved registered teacher apprenticeship programs. Ramapo College and Rutgers University in New Brunswick each received \$400,000. Ramapo College currently has 30 USDOL-registered apprentices enrolled in a K–12 Teacher occupation program, and Rutgers University has 35 USDOL-registered apprentices.

Throughout April, employers, educational institutions, and community organizations across the state have hosted events celebrating apprenticeships and expanding awareness of available pathways. Participating organizations have included Mercer County Community College Vocational School, the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), PPPL, New Jersey Health Care Employees District 1199J, and Thomas Edison College, among many others, each demonstrating the multifaceted approach to the apprenticeship model across the Garden State's industries and regions.

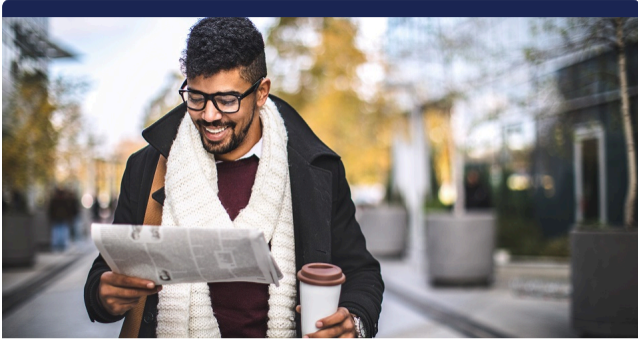
For more information on National Apprenticeship Week, visit the U.S. Department of Labor [website](#).

For more information on the New Jersey Office of Apprenticeship, visit [apprenticeship.nj.gov](http://apprenticeship.nj.gov).

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