

HBI PACT Graduate Serves As a National Working Learner Advisory Council Member

HBI [PACT](#) graduate Chris Casanovas, who was recently appointed as a new member of the [ACT Foundation's Working Learner Advisory Council \(WLAC\)](#), has been busy in his new position. As one of only a few to serve, the council noted that Casanovas was selected in August from many strong applications that were received. He is currently a full-time union electrician and apprentice for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, a position he began after graduating from HBI's Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training program.

Casanovas attended his first meeting last month during the foundation's one-year anniversary celebration. He and five other new members spent time during the meeting and celebration to get to know each other as well as the 12 current members. The members range in age from 19-29.

The WLAC helps address the needs and challenges of working learners across the country. The members are described as "those who are engaged in some type of employment while also learning new skills in pursuit of greater economic freedom and overall life satisfaction." As a fast-growing segment of America's workforce, the council members are seen as key drivers of an emerging national learning economy.

"I'm enjoying it. I'm doing what they've asked me to do," said Casanovas. He realizes that he is part of a larger purpose. "Most importantly, I am a proud graduate and ambassador of HBI. I am part of something for the greater [good] of my community, our community," he explained.

Through the HBI PACT program, students gain the necessary skills to become trained and ready for work in the building industry. PACT helps close the gap between employers and a skilled and knowledgeable workforce to increase the number of qualified entry level workers in the industry. PACT program graduates are a resource for Home Builders Associations who are working to address labor shortages.

During Casanovas' first WLAC meeting, he says the council members received instructions to record and prepare to share what they do day-to-day in their careers. "We're working on assembling a design lab. We have a conference call today and I'm sure we will discuss this process."

The WLAC meets monthly to address topics such as learning opportunities for low-income workers, life satisfaction and outcomes, the role of technology innovation in their lives and other investment work underway at the foundation. The council represents diverse economic, ethnic, education and work backgrounds from across the nation. Members are also involved in developing digital storytelling projects that help share the working learners' career experiences and impact the design of innovative solutions for working learners.

"I'll be heading out to Austin, Texas, for a one-week intense time evaluation next month," Casanova said. "I'm looking forward to it."