

# UFCW Local 655 offering free college to our partners and their families

By **DAVID COOK**  
President



**COOK**

I've spoken many times about the work we do here at Local 655 to show our partners the value of being in our union family. For those who have been with us for many years, that value becomes clearer all the time. Retirement benefits and high-quality healthcare are becoming more and more rare in non-union workplaces all the time. The protections we offer on the job and the contract that lays out your rights is well known to our long-term partners.

The younger generation of the workforce may not see the same value in these critical things. They may have healthcare through their parents, retirement feels a million years away and perhaps they've never needed their union rep to step in and protect them on the job.

That's why I could not be more thrilled to introduce one of the single best programs that have ever been offered to UFCW partners and their families. Thanks to the hard work of your union and its dedication to the value of higher education, any and all Local 655 partners along with their **spouses, parents, grandparents or children** can attend up to two years of college absolutely **100 percent free of charge**.

## THERE'S NO CATCH OR FINE PRINT

If you're thinking that there must be a catch or that this cannot be true, I understand. I was equally skeptical when I first heard about the Free College Benefit program. Several UFCW Locals in other states have already implemented this program with wonderful success.

I'm sure some of you might be skeptical and you naturally have some questions. That's why

I want to explain how this program will work and provide you all the information you need to check it out for yourself and enroll.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THIS PROGRAM?

Current Local 655 partners and their **dependents**, children, grandchildren, spouses and domestic partners and retired Local 655 partners.

## WHAT SCHOOLS CAN I ATTEND?

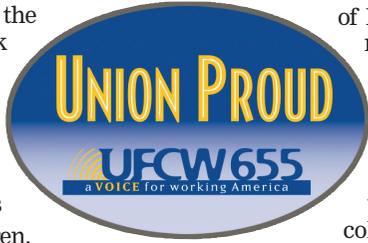
At this time, there are no Missouri schools participating in the program.

However, Eastern Gateway Community College (EGCC) in Ohio is a full and active participant and accepts any eligible out-of-state student for its online course programs.

These classes can be taken from anywhere as long as you have access to a computer and an Internet connection. Anything from a personal computer to the public library will give you full access to the course programs.

Eastern Gateway Community College is a public, open-access college located in Steubenville and Youngstown, Ohio. The college is part of the University System of Ohio, governed by the Ohio Department of Higher Education and regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, the accreditor of most public and private institutions in the Midwest. EGCC is committed to innovation and increasing quality educational opportunities for students all across the country. The staff of EGCC are proud union members represented by the Ohio Education Association.

EGCC is one of the fastest growing colleges in Ohio. The school received national recognition as a Dream Leader College, an American Association of Community Colleges School of Excellence and is recognized nationally for its efforts to prepare a diverse student population for career success.



The college is also transfer-friendly, which means they strive to accept previous college credits students may have earned elsewhere. Credits earned at EGCC can be transferred to other institutions across the country. The staff at the college is committed to helping students determine the right course of study that will help them continue their work at a college closer to their home.

UFCW Local 655 will be working in the coming weeks and months to persuade Missouri-based schools to enter this program for students who would prefer a brick-and-mortar school experience.

## IS IT REALLY 'FREE'?

Absolutely. Over 5,000 students have already enrolled through this program.

The Free College benefit will cover the cost of tuition, fees and e-books for EGCC's online programs.

Eligibility requires that potential students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as well as apply for and use any employer or military tuition reimbursement or assistance for which they are eligible. Once the FAFSA is completed, the college may require that additional documentation be submitted, for a process called "verification" that is required by the U.S. Department of Education. All partners must comply with the document requests by EGCC in order to complete the financial aid process to determine eligibility for federal aid.

## I HAVE A MILLION MORE QUESTIONS, HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

Make sure you visit [ufcwfreecollege.org](http://ufcwfreecollege.org) to get started and learn much more. But there are many other ways to get information;

- Contact an enrollment advisor by calling: **888-509-9009**.
- Speak to the EGCC financial aid department by calling: **740-266-9619**.
- Speak directly to the U.S. Department of Higher Education by calling: **800-621-3115**.
- Visit the EGCC website and see the college for yourself at: [www.egcc.edu](http://www.egcc.edu)

Obviously you'll have more questions about this program. Local 655 will be working hard over the next few weeks to communicate this program to our partners and discuss in detail the ways it can benefit you and your family. The most important thing anyone can do if they are interested in this program is to get engaged. Visit the websites above, call the numbers or reach out to your union rep at Local 655 to ask questions.

As your President, I am excited about this program and the potentially huge benefits it will have for our partners. As a partner in this union for more than 30 years, I am thrilled that we continue to find new ways to improve the lives of hard-working families across the country.

Education is the silver bullet to some of the toughest challenges of life. Education can reshape communities, reform lives, and lift individuals out of poverty. This program is aimed at doing just that.

Local 655 is and will always remain a family. We care for one another, and we want each other to have success. If this program means more of our partners get an education that gives them a brighter future, we consider that to be an important part of our mission to help improve the lives of our partners.



**AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY**

**FREE COLLEGE BENEFIT**



**GET AN EDUCATION**

**It's Free!**

**Learn more.**

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