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Synchrony Launches Free Skilled-Trades Degree Pathway for Employees

New program enables eligible employees to earn associate degrees in HVAC, electrical, welding and more with tuition covered by the company

Women in the Trades Forum convenes industry leaders to strengthen the pipeline for tech-enabled trade careers

WEST CHESTER, Ohio, July 8, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- At Synchrony's Women in the Trades forum, hosted with leading nonprofit partners, company leaders unveiled a new program enabling all U.S. employees, after three months of service, to earn a debt-free associate degree through community and technical college programs in high-demand fields like HVAC, electrical, plumbing and welding, building skills that support critical roles in data center operations and advanced mechanics.



Demand for these roles is accelerating, with [nearly 500,000 skilled trade jobs](#) unfilled today in the U.S., and by 2030, another [2.1 million more positions](#) could go unfilled. As smart systems, connected equipment and AI tools become standard, technicians are combining hands-on expertise with digital fluency, opening new opportunities in modern skilled trades.

"Skilled trades power our homes, businesses and local economies and provide an essential service to people and families, yet the talent gap is growing," said **Kelli Nesseth, Senior Vice President and GM at Synchrony**. "This program gives our people a debt-free associate degree pathway, building in-demand skills for the future across the industries we serve and opening doors, even to business ownership."

Held at Synchrony's Cincinnati-West Chester office, the Women in the Trades forum convened dozens of women leaders to share best practices in board-level training, mentorship and leadership, and to accelerate the next wave of skilled trade talent.

Behind the statistics are real families and neighborhoods. When technicians are scarce, urgent home repairs can take longer and cost more, delaying work that keeps homes safe and livable and putting basic fixes further out of reach for those who need them most. Filling these vital roles strengthens local economies and supports Synchrony's Home partners,

especially the small and medium-sized businesses hit hardest by the skills shortage, by reducing backlogs, responding faster and growing local talent pipelines with job-ready credentials aligned to employer needs.

"Synchrony's new tuition program and scholarship support are the investments we need to help more people, including women, enter high-demand trade careers," said **Jane Sidebottom, President of Women in HVACR (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration)**. "As the skills gap widens, building a job-ready pipeline is essential for the next generation of leaders and the customers and communities they'll serve."

Through a partnership with [Bright Horizons EdAssist](#), Synchrony employees can pursue trade-focused associate degrees through a network of more than 20 technical colleges, community colleges and trade-school programs. The program offers flexible options including paid apprenticeships, employer-based training and hybrid or on-campus models with hands-on lab and shop learning.

Women in Trades Forum: Building the Pipeline and Future Skills

Synchrony's Women in the Trades forum convened leaders across HVAC, home improvement and home services to share talent and leadership strategies. Participants also gained practical skills in women's financial health, marketing and AI, including a budgeting workshop hosted by Synchrony's new employee-led Financial Literacy Service Corps.

Attendees included leaders from [Women in HVACR](#), [Women in the Flooring Industry](#), and [National Women in Roofing](#); Bosch Home Comfort Group, Floor & Decor, Mitsubishi Electric Heating & Air Conditioning, Rheem, Roto-Rooter Plumbing & Water Cleanup and ServiceTitan; and trade professionals from technicians to small business owners.

Powering Skills for the Future

The new program builds on Synchrony's strong track record of preparing employees for future job-ready skills, while helping them pursue their personal and professional career goals through education, including:

- **Debt-free tuition:** Up to \$24K per year for degrees in high-demand fields, including education, health care and now skilled trades, building skills that power careers at Synchrony and across the industries the company serves
- **Tech certifications:** Up to \$9K annually towards 12+ credentials aligned to critical skills
- **Tech apprenticeships:** 12-month pathway for non-traditional talent into Synchrony tech roles such as information security, AI and tech supplier management

Building Pathways, Expanding Access in Communities

Synchrony continues to expand pathways to the skilled trades by supporting technical training. The Synchrony Foundation has donated \$150,000 to Women in HVACR for scholarships and nearly \$1 million to skilled trade programs nationwide since 2021. This work is part of Synchrony's Education as an Equalizer initiative to broaden access to education, skills training and financial literacy.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Why is Synchrony launching a debt-free skilled trades associate degree program for employees?

A1: Synchrony is expanding its employee tuition program in response to employee feedback and growing workforce needs. The company previously expanded tuition support to high-demand fields such as healthcare and education and is now adding skilled trades, including HVAC, electrical, plumbing and welding. The program also helps address the skilled trades shortage while supporting the industries and communities Synchrony serves, including many small and midsize businesses in the home ecosystem.

Q2: How does this initiative help address the skilled trades shortage?

A2: The program provides eligible employees with access to debt-free associate degrees through more than 20 community colleges, technical colleges and trade school programs. By helping employees gain job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials, the program supports workforce development in high-demand skilled trades while helping strengthen local talent pipelines that serve businesses and communities.

Q3: Who is eligible for the skilled trades associate degree program?

A3: Eligible U.S. employees can participate after three months of service. Through a partnership with Bright Horizons EdAssist, employees can pursue associate degrees in skilled trades including HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and welding through participating education providers, with flexible options including apprenticeships and hybrid learning.

Q4: How is Synchrony advancing skilled trades in communities?

A4: Synchrony is helping expand pathways into skilled trades through community investment and technical training. Since 2021, the Synchrony Foundation has donated nearly \$1 million to skilled trade programs nationwide, including \$150K to Women in HVACR for scholarships, as part of its Education as an Equalizer initiative.

About Synchrony

Synchrony (NYSE: SYF) is a leading consumer financing company that has been at the heart of American commerce and opportunity for nearly a century. Synchrony delivers credit and banking products that empower tens of millions of consumers to improve their financial lives and access what matters most. Leveraging innovative solutions that are shaping the future of retail commerce, Synchrony supports the growth and success of some of the nation's most respected brands, alongside hundreds of thousands of small and midsize businesses, including health and wellness providers. Committed to excellence in service and culture, Synchrony is honored to be ranked the #1 Best Company to Work For® in the U.S. by Fortune magazine and Great Place to Work®. For more information, visit www.synchrony.com.

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