

**Mike Petters**  
**Newport News Apprentice School Graduation Remarks**  
**Feb. 27, 2010**

Thanks Matt.

I would also like to thank Bob Leber for his many years of service both to the Apprentice School and to workforce development across the state of Virginia.

Bob, you've been such an effective advocate for business and industry working together for workforce development, and you've put into place some significant initiatives that will benefit us for many years to come.

Thanks for everything.

And Everett Jordan, you've got some big shoes to fill, yet I'm confident that, as an apprentice school alumnus, you are more than prepared for the challenge.

I also want to recognize Tom Schievelbein, here today with his wife Betty.

As many of you know, Tom is the former president of Northrop Grumman Newport News.

Thanks Tom for being here today to show your support of the Apprentice graduates.

And speaking of special people let me now turn to our guests of honor – the Apprentice graduates.

This is a big day for you, for your families and for Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding as we welcome you into the fold.

A welcoming you've certainly earned.

So before I introduce our principal speaker today, I want to briefly share with you a few of my thoughts on this day of celebration.

First, you've done well and should be proud.

And you should know that I'm proud of you.

Apprentice graduates truly are the backbone of our shipyards.

You should walk taller and stand straighter with all that you've achieved.

Second, you've taken roles in an industry – you've entered into a profession no less -- which requires much of you.

Strength of character.

A desire to be part of something bigger than yourselves.

Fortitude under sometimes difficult and always demanding circumstances.

And the ability, foresight and confidence to choose the right path – even if it's the harder one.

It's what I expect of you.

It's what your teachers, your mentors and your families expect of you.

And I know it's what you expect from yourselves.

Because you are shipbuilders.

And because you are apprentice school graduates.

And in choosing to be those two things, you've demonstrated that you've also chosen the set of values associated with them.

The titles of shipbuilder and apprentice graduate convey a privilege – and a responsibility- to continue a legacy.

A legacy that's nearly 125 years old in Newport News.

A legacy of quality work – a legacy of ethics and integrity – a legacy of leadership.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office."

And, I should add, in a shipyard.

It's a huge responsibility.

And one I'm confident you can achieve.

I believe you have the potential to one day fill any of the seats here on this stage – including mine.

Your future beckons brightly.

In fact, I am thrilled by the possibilities in front of you.

And each day – even after more than two decades – I am still thrilled that -- together – we get to build some of the coolest things in the world.

Twenty years from now - I hope you are too.

Congratulations on this great achievement and day of celebration!

(pause)

And now it's my great pleasure to introduce your commencement speaker.

Dr. Glenn DuBois serves as chancellor of the Virginia Community College System.

He has oversight for 23 community colleges in the state.

Their 40 campuses serve more than 260,000 students.

That's 12 times as many students as the University of Virginia!

I know a lot of you currently take classes at Thomas Nelson and the other local community colleges, or maybe you plan to in the near future.

You have Dr. DuBois to thank for the strength and vitality of their programs.

Under his leadership, the VCCS has signed unprecedented guaranteed transfer agreements with more than two dozen public and private four-year institutions – what you may recognize as Tidewater's "From Here, Go Anywhere" campaign.

He's also enhanced the community colleges' workforce development services, and faced with statewide budget cuts, he's diversified the system's funding sources and doubled foundation-led private fundraising.

I had the pleasure of working with Dr. DuBois as a member of the State Board for Community Colleges, a position now held by Danny Hunley, an

Apprentice School graduate and Newport News' vice president of Operations and Trades.

Among other things, we worked closely to implement a virtual welding lab at Paul D. Camp Community College and two new advanced programs for the Apprentice School at Thomas Nelson: nuclear testing and cost engineering.

We also work hand-in-hand with the VCCS to recruit qualified students from all 23 community colleges for employment at the shipyard.

And finally, we've actively supported the VCCS' Career Pathways program and the Career Coaches program, which helps prepare high schools students for post-secondary educational opportunities and careers.

I can tell you that few people, if any, are more committed to providing affordable and accessible education to all Virginians, and I couldn't be more excited to have him here today to show off the value of our Apprentice School and its graduates.

He's a true professional and runs VCCS with great enthusiasm and effectiveness.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Dr. Glenn DuBois.