

# Here's another exciting opportunity for students

During the 2016-17 school year, the Randolph County School System (RCSS) engaged in Apprenticeship Randolph. This exciting new program is aimed at providing additional opportunities for students after high school graduation. Twelve local companies agreed to serve as industry partners to our high schools, to host our students as apprentices approved through a very tough application/selection process, and to provide financial support for the completion of the students' education at Randolph Community College (RCC).

Apprenticeship Randolph is an exciting opportunity for our students. High school juniors and seniors are eligible to apply to participate in this program. The process starts with a student attending at least one industry open house at one of the partner companies, followed by the completion of an application. Next, the student must be selected to participate in orientation week at RCC. During this stage, the student will undergo a very rigorous evaluation/assessment, while also being observed by representatives from all of the industry partners. After the completion of orientation week, the industry partners select students for a six-week pre-apprenticeship experience. Finally, the companies make decisions in terms of whether or not to accept students as apprentices.

The benefits of Apprenticeship Randolph are numerous. As an apprentice, the student's day involves time in the classroom as well as work on a job site. While still in high school, the apprentice completes his/her high school diploma through enrollment in courses on his/her high school's campus and courses at RCC. These classes meet the high

## COLUMN



**Dr. Stephen Gainey**

school graduation requirements and count toward a student's "Associate of Applied Science Degree in Manufacturing Technology" from RCC. North Carolina's Career and College Promise Program allows our apprentices to take classes at RCC without having to pay tuition, and our school system pays for

the textbooks required for these courses. After graduation from high school, tuition costs for the remaining courses to be taken by an apprentice at RCC are covered by a tuition waiver provided for Registered Youth Apprentices Programs. After high school graduation, the apprentice's host company pays for his/her textbooks and the tools/materials needed for his/her college classes.

In addition to the wonderful academic opportunities provided by this program, students receive invaluable on-the-job training. As an apprentice, the student learns the work of his/her company, the skills needed to be successful at his/her work site, and how to be a productive employee. RCSS is proud to work in conjunction with Apprenticeship Randolph to provide quality educational opportunities and experiences to our apprentices at no cost to the students or their families.

During the apprenticeship, the student's initial pay rate is \$9 per hour. Upon completion of the program three to four years after high school graduation, a student's pay rate increases to \$13.50 per hour, the apprentice will have earned an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Manufacturing Technology and a Journeyman's Certificate, and the student will transition to a full-time job with the company for which he/she served as an apprentice.

On Aug. 10, Apprenticeship Randolph hosted its first signing event at RCC

for the students selected to be an apprentice for one of our partner companies. The event was attended by representatives from the host companies, the apprentices, family members and friends of the apprentices, and school system staff members. As superintendent, I was very proud to watch each of our students sign a commitment form with representatives from the different companies. This night showcased 16 wonderful RCSS students with bright futures.

Our school system has worked with Apprenticeship Randolph and another one of our very supportive community partners, Randolph Communications, to create a video to showcase this exciting program. This video will be released on Dec. 16 on the school system's webpage, [randolph.k12.nc.us](http://randolph.k12.nc.us), Facebook page and Twitter account. I encourage everyone to view this video to learn more about this exciting program, especially due to its ability to provide great future opportunities for students while also contributing to the workforce of numerous local companies.

Apprenticeship Randolph is a great reflection of the high level of teamwork within our community. Our school system is very appreciative of the partner companies who joined this program. I personally want to thank the leaders of these organizations for their willingness to participate, Dr. Robert Shackelford and his staff at RCC for continuing to partner with our school system to provide educational opportunities to aid our students in their future endeavors, and all of the school-level staff members for their efforts to promote this program to our students. Details about this program, including the names of the industry partners/local companies involved in it, can be found at [apprenticeshiprandolph.com](http://apprenticeshiprandolph.com).

■ **Dr. Stephen Gainey**  
is superintendent of the Randolph County School System.