

NEWSROOM

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SCHOOL BOARD

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Read time: about 3 min

Editor's note: President Kelly gave the following remarks after being recognized by the Newport News School Board at their February 20, 2024 meeting.

Good evening!

Thank you Superintendent Mitchell and Chairman Surles-Law and thank you Chris, for the kind introduction.

My wife Angie and I are so appreciative of the opportunity to be here with you tonight. We come from families of educators. My dad was a NYC Public School History Teacher and both of Angie's parents taught public school in Vermont. We know how important education is and we value the hard work that our teachers, administrators, and staff put in day in and day out to serve and support the youth of our community.

As I finish up my first 8 months in the role of President of Christopher Newport University, I have worked to listen and learn about the needs of our University and our Community. It is clear to me that we have an opportunity to strengthen our ties with the City of Newport News and the Peninsula overall and I thank you for the opportunity to be with you tonight to share with you some of the efforts that are underway to ensure we truly are Newport News' Hometown University.

Here are some of the other ways we connect with your schools and we are always on the lookout for more opportunities.

Our Community Captains program is our Flagship program. The program is entering its sixth year and to date we have helped to prepare 125 NNPS students for college.

Community Captains is an early admission, two-year college and life readiness program focused on helping students succeed after high school. The Community Captains receive two years of free, on-campus learning opportunities at Christopher Newport – and even take a free class for college credit. Those Community Captains who enroll at Christopher Newport receive continued success coaching and other support and are eligible for a number of scholarships.

So far, we have worked with almost 350 students since the program's inception. There is also a local service component. Community Captains have built and delivered approximately 80 beds to NNPS students who were "bedless". Another service day is coming up on March 9th when the Community Captains will beautify a neighborhood block. Brandon Jones, a local Newport News resident and CNU Graduate leads this effort and I am grateful to him for his dedication to our hometown.

And there is some exciting Community Captain news happening this December ... we will graduate our First Community Captain from CNU and there are more in the first cohort of students who will graduate in May of '25.

Our Master of Arts in Teaching five-year program is a pipeline, providing well-prepared teachers to serve in your schools. Our partnership with you provides valuable opportunities for our students.

Each fall, NNPS extends job offers complete with signing bonuses to our future teachers. I had the opportunity to stop by the event this year and the excitement in the room was overwhelming. I thank the Newport News Public Schools for having such confidence in our teacher preparation programs. We are also thankful to Kim Hammond and Nina Farrish for serving on our Teacher Preparation Council and to the many NNPS administrators and teachers who open their schools and classrooms to our pre-service teachers, providing valuable and formative clinical experiences as they prepare to become licensed teachers.

We also connect with Newport News Public Schools in less formal ways. On Friday April 12, the Ferguson Center will be hosting the first ever Newport News Public Schools Music Festival and we're looking forward to greeting 2,000 students, parents and teachers.

We also have another Community Walk coming up. Some of you joined us for our walk in October from our campus to Riverside Elementary School. It was a wonderful day, made even better by a performance by Riverside's drumline.

Our next walk is tentatively scheduled for Friday, March 22 and we will be walking to Hidenwood Elementary. We'll have invitations to you to join us as soon as the arrangements are finalized.

Finally, I encourage every Newport News high school student to consider following in Chris's footsteps and go to college at their hometown university.

I need your help to make this a reality, I am committed to ensuring CNU is the most inclusive campus possible. Every student has the right to feel like they truly belong on our campus and we are working to create a culture of inclusion and a sense of belonging for every Captain. And I know the women and men in this room tonight have tremendous influence on the young students in our community. Please encourage them to check out their Hometown University and provide them the opportunity to follow in Chris's footsteps.

Angie and I thank you for this honor and giving us a few minutes to tell our story. Let me close by saying our campus is open to you - come to a game, come to a show, come just to walk around and enjoy the atmosphere.

Thank you again - and - because we have some Captains in the room - let me end as we always do with a ... GO Captains!