



Northrop Grumman Apprentices Strengthen America's Defense

“Northrop Grumman products are highly engineered and built over a long period of time, so we need to train employees who will be with us for the long haul, and also give them the opportunity to grow into leaders that will help shape future generations.”

Dr. Robert P. Leber
Director of Education and Workforce Development
Northrop Grumman

Despite the past few decades of explosive growth in technology and outsourcing of manufacturing, there is still strong demand and need for skilled craftsmen and a smart, skilled labor pool in the United States. Why? There are thousands of types of jobs that cannot be outsourced or sent overseas, and they will be done here in the United States for generations to come.

Building cutting-edge war ships is but one of those crafts, and teaching these highly specialized skills through an apprentice program is the most cost-effective and strategic way to ensure the highest-quality product and ongoing maintenance infrastructures in the industry. Northrop Grumman's Apprentice School is the gold standard in the field.

■ **Apprentice School: Education that Works**

Northrop Grumman's Apprentice School is an educational and career opportunity unlike any other, providing fully paid, comprehensive four- and five-year apprentice programs for students interested in shipbuilding careers.

Since 1919, the company's Apprentice School has produced more than 9,000 graduates. Currently 750 students strong, the Apprentice School was formed not just to teach the trade but also to create future leaders.

“Building and maintaining Navy-ordered nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines that will defend our country and keep peace in the world is not only a rewarding

experience but also an excellent opportunity for apprentices to learn about heavy manufacturing and construction in the most modern shipbuilding facility in the world,” said Robert Leber, Northrop Grumman's director of education and workforce development and head of the company's Apprentice School.

“Our company invests over \$100,000 per student in their training and education because we know the program works, and we believe it is the best way to develop the kind of workforce we know we need.”

A diverse applicant base (of which there is a 10-to-1 application-to-admissions rate) provides a well-rounded student body, including 135 women, in which there is ample opportunity for not just learning a trade or skill but also developing leadership skills.

The standard Apprentice School program is four years long, and if a student chooses to do so, he or she can earn an associate degree in engineering, engineering technology or business administration by taking on an additional fifth year of classes and skills training. All of the academic credit hours are taught at the school and are transferable through articulation agreements with local colleges and universities.

“Our Apprentice School builds three types of ‘ships’ — craftsmanship, scholarship and leadership.”

Dr. Robert Leber

■ Training for Life, Not Just Work

Because the Northrop Grumman Apprenticeship School is a unique combination of skills training, academics and leadership development, the program prepares students for life and adulthood, not just a job. The program also creates an unprecedented level of employee retention; in fact, five years after completing the program, 80 percent of graduates remain with the company. Today, more than 2,500 graduates of the Apprenticeship School are still in the Northrop Grumman workforce and serve in 240 different types of jobs at the company's operations in Newport News, up and down the ranks from nuclear pipe welders to senior executives.

How does Northrop Grumman create a sense of loyalty and a student body ready to learn? During the application process, admissions officials screen for readiness by checking an applicant's transcripts and conducting interviews so they can determine a candidate's readiness, basic communications skills and attitude. The Apprenticeship School also has a multilayered mentoring and

development program that acts, where necessary, as kind of a remediation triage system.

"Once they come through the door, they're ours," said Leber. "They have to want to do this, or they won't succeed. We have an incredibly strict and structured program, but at the same time, it's also conducted in a nurturing environment. We want our apprentices to succeed."

■ Where Do We Grow from Here?

Northrop Grumman plans to grow capacity for the program overall, upping the student body from 750 today to 1,000 in the next decade to address the upcoming increase in retirement by some of the older workforce. The school is enhancing its curriculum to cover areas of financial management, cost estimating and program management, because knowing how to oversee the manufacture of a multibillion-dollar warship requires special training, and the company's management believes their in-house expertise makes them best suited to train and develop their future leadership.

About Northrop Grumman

www.northropgrumman.com • www.apprenticeschool.com

Northrop Grumman Corporation is a global defense and technology company whose 120,000 employees provide innovative systems, products and solutions in information and services, electronics, aerospace, and shipbuilding to government and commercial customers worldwide.

About Corporate Voices for Working Families

Corporate Voices for Working Families is the leading national business membership organization representing the private sector on public and corporate policy issues involving working families. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we improve the lives of working families by developing and advancing innovative policies that reflect collaboration among the private sector, government and other stakeholders.

Find Out More

This case study is part of the comprehensive research report *The Ill-Prepared U.S. Workforce: Exploring the Challenges of Employer-Provided Workforce Readiness Training*. This research study and publications, other research studies and toolkits on a host of workforce readiness, flexibility, family economic stability, and work and family balance issues are available on the Corporate Voices Web site at www.corporatevoices.org.

1020 19th Street, NW
Suite 750
Washington, DC 20036

Phone: 202-467-8130
Fax: 202-467-8140

Blog: corporatevoices.wordpress.com
Twitter: @corporatevoices

www.corporatevoices.org