

# Press Release

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## **Ferrum College President Challenges PCHS 9<sup>th</sup> Graders To Set Their Sights on College**

Dr. Jennifer L. Braaten, President of Ferrum College, spoke to over 200 Patrick County High School 9<sup>th</sup> graders on Wednesday and urged them to begin now to prepare for college. She emphasized the importance of a college education in today's world. "If you want to compete for the good jobs, have your own apartment, buy your own car, and support the type of lifestyle that you desire, you will need to get a college education," stated Dr. Braaten.

Dr. Braaten's presentation was part of an annual PCHS "early college awareness" program sponsored by Clark Gas & Oil and supported by the Patrick County Education Foundation. Also part of this year's program was a campus visit to Ferrum College, held on April 29<sup>th</sup>. In her presentation, Dr. Braaten shared a story told by Microsoft chairman Bill Gates. While Microsoft receives vast numbers of job applications each year, Gates says that his company looks for 3 key characteristics when hiring—empathy, ethics and a rural background. According to Gates, Microsoft seeks employees from rural areas because of their strong sense of community—they know how to care for one another. That single characteristic can help place Patrick County High School graduates at a distinct advantage when applying for many of tomorrow's jobs, according to Dr. Braaten.

President of Ferrum College since 2002, Dr. Braaten shared with students that she was the first in her family to go to college and as a young person, saw it as a way to achieve the kind of life she wanted. In her closing remarks, she stressed the importance of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade as preparation for the future. Ninth grade is a “pivotal year.” It’s a time when you begin the serious work of laying the groundwork for your future and a time when you can make important choices and course corrections to ready yourself for college and beyond, concluded Braaten.

Clark Gas and Oil has sponsored a college speaker and campus visits for PCHS students since 1998. Over 70 ninth graders took part in this spring’s campus visit to Ferrum College. “We support College Day at PCHS and sponsor a campus tour to expose 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to the numerous opportunities to continue their education after high school graduation,” stated Blair Clark.

“The Patrick County Education Foundation has been pleased to have the opportunity to support and assist with these early college awareness presentations and campus visits since 2001. We are learning that the earlier kids get the opportunity to actually walk on a college campus, the more likely they are to later enroll in college,” said Susan Huff, Foundation College Access Advisor. “This is a great program and the Foundation is excited to be a part of it.”

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