

## Parker Sends Off Class of 2017

"Don't ever forget your experience at this college and how it shaped you," urged Stephen E. Parker, alumnus and graduation speaker for Southside Virginia Community College's Commencement held May 13, 2017 on the John H. Daniel Campus under clearing skies. A crowd of approximately 2,500 people attended the annual event.

Stephen E. Parker performs his cool job in Washington D.C., the beating heart of the United States of America. Growing up in rural Prince Edward County, Virginia, Parker never envisioned being able to go to college, much less becoming immersed in the political capital of the nation.

As Director, Education and Workforce, for the National Governor's Association (NGA), he directs policy and advocacy for education and workforce issues, including early childhood, K-12 and postsecondary education, workforce development, and child nutrition. He is responsible for the development and implementation of governors' strategic priorities through the Education and Workforce Committee. Parker is the liaison between governors and the federal government on education, human services, and workforce issues.

Parker led the process to create the governors' plan to re-design the federal education system, released in 2015. He developed and executed NGA's campaign to re-write federal K-12 education policy, which ultimately resulted in passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act and governors' first endorsement of any federal legislation in twenty years.

Prior to working for the nations' governors, Parker served as Senior Special Assistant to Governor Timothy M. Kaine where he managed statewide public awareness campaigns across more than 15 agencies.

Parker noted that he was raised by a single mother who struggled to make ends meet and he had no expectations of being able to attend college.

"If there was no money for food, then there certainly would be no money for college. I was destined to join my mother and her parents as the third generation in my family to never attend college."

Thanks to the local community college and financial assistance from federal and state sources, Parker became the first college graduate in his family and two years ago, his mother became the second, also graduating from SVCC.

He serves on the SVCC Foundation board. He also received his bachelor's degree at Longwood University and completed postgraduate work in political leadership at the University of Virginia and public policy at the College of William and Mary.