The Power of Lifelong Learning

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I t’s truly an honor to accept this award on behalf of the employees and leadership team of United Technologies. The list of people who have been recognized with the Advocacy Award is very impressive and UTC is thrilled to join this distinguished group.

Let me start this afternoon by complimenting the Board, Executive Committee and members of the National Association of Independent Colleges & Universities for hosting this luncheon and, more importantly, by thanking you for the really great work you’ve done supporting higher education. At UTC, we share your belief in the transformative power of education. We also recognize that a highly educated workforce is critical to our future success, so we appreciate the work you do to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education.

I’d also like to recognize the members of Congress and other government officials who joined us today. Your presence highlights the very important role government plays in supporting higher education.

I think everyone in this room will agree with me that competing in a complex and fast-changing global market requires a workforce that embraces lifelong learning. This means that employee education and training must be considered a lifelong commitment. It is a process that involves training and retraining – continuing well past initial entry into the labor market.

Creating an environment where lifelong learning can be embraced requires the commitment of leaders in business, higher education and government. I’d like to talk very briefly about the roles each of us must play.

First, private industry must lead the way by raising the bar on employee education programs. While corporations cannot offer lifelong employment, they can – and should – provide employees meaningful opportunities to expand their skills. The UTC Employee Scholar Program does that. It ensures that every person we hire has an opportunity to succeed and to advance their career across UTC – whether it’s servicing Otis elevators, designing Carrier cooling systems or assembling Sikorsky Black Hawk helicopters or Pratt & Whitney jet engines.

In my opinion, our Employee Scholar Program is a key differentiator and an effective recruiting tool; but I welcome competition from our peers in this area as it would mean greater success for our industries and broader economic growth.

Unfortunately, investment in employee education by private industry alone is not enough. Leaders in higher education also have a critical role to play when it comes to making education affordable. Simply put, if the price of education continues to outpace the cost of living, a college degree will become too expensive to pursue. Even with financial aid packages, the cost of higher education is becoming unsustainable for individuals, families and corporations like UTC that support lifelong learning. I know that many colleges and universities have taken steps to address rising higher education costs. I applaud you for these efforts and encourage all of you to continue to look for innovative ways to reduce costs – whether it’s bringing more technology into the classroom or bringing greater energy efficiency to your student housing and campuses.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, government has a role to play in promoting lifelong learning – starting with the tax policy for employer-provided benefits. This policy should be clear and certain. Tax exemptions for employee scholars should cover both undergraduate and graduate degrees. They should also be indexed for
inflation and allow individuals to pursue education in subjects outside their current jobs. Also, since degrees take time to earn, education tax exemptions should be enacted permanently to allow employee scholars to plan their futures. Federal policies should encourage, not discourage, individuals to continue their education.

I’d like to close my remarks today by recognizing the accomplishments of the thousands of UTC Employee Scholars. Our employees have made the program the success it is, and they continue to convince us of the value of funding education. I see it every day as our colleagues bring their newfound knowledge back to the office or shop floor to solve the problems of today and develop the technologies of tomorrow.

Our Scholars are truly amazing individuals and they share some characteristics. All of them have taken responsibility for their own careers. They all have the desire to better themselves and the self-discipline to take on the extra burden of going to school while they continue to work. Their dedication and sacrifice has made them better at their current positions and more capable of adapting to change in the global business environment.

There is no obligation for employees to remain at UTC upon completion of a degree paid for by the Employee Scholar Program, but I’m pleased that the vast majority do. They’ve helped UTC advance its goal of having the highest-skilled workforce and made us a more productive and better company. As for those who have left UTC, they are making significant contributions in our communities – some as teachers and guidance counselors and others as entrepreneurs and business owners.

There are many success stories of personal and professional achievement that accompany the 32,000 degrees awarded through the Employee Scholar Program, and I’d like to share just a few of these stories today through a short video. The common themes you’ll see are: first, how education can and does change lives, for the scholars as well as their families; and how our scholars have used education to embrace the future.

On behalf of United Technologies, thank you again for recognizing the UTC Employee Scholar Program – and thank you for all you do to support quality higher education for all.

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the impact of weather conditions and the financial condition of our customers and suppliers; delays and disruption in delivery of materials and services from suppliers; new business opportunities; cost reduction efforts and restructuring costs and savings and other consequences thereof; the scope, nature or impact of acquisition and divestiture activity, including integration of acquired businesses into our existing businesses; the development, production and support of advanced technologies and new products and services; the anticipated benefits of diversification and balance of operations across product lines, regions and industries; the impact of the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements, and labor disputes; the outcome of legal proceedings and other contingencies; future repurchases of common stock; future levels of indebtedness and capital and research and development spending; future availability of credit; pension plan assumptions and future contributions; and the effect of changes in tax, environmental and other laws and regulations in the United States and other countries in which we operate. All forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties that may cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied in the forward-looking statements. For additional information identifying factors that may cause actual results to vary materially from those stated in the forward-looking statements, see our reports on Forms 10-K, 10-Q and 8-K filed with the SEC from time to time, including, but not limited to, the information included in UTC’s Forms 10-K and 10-Q under the headings “Business,” “Risk Factors,” “Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations” and “Legal Proceedings” and in the notes to the financial statements included in UTC’s Forms 10-K and 10-Q.