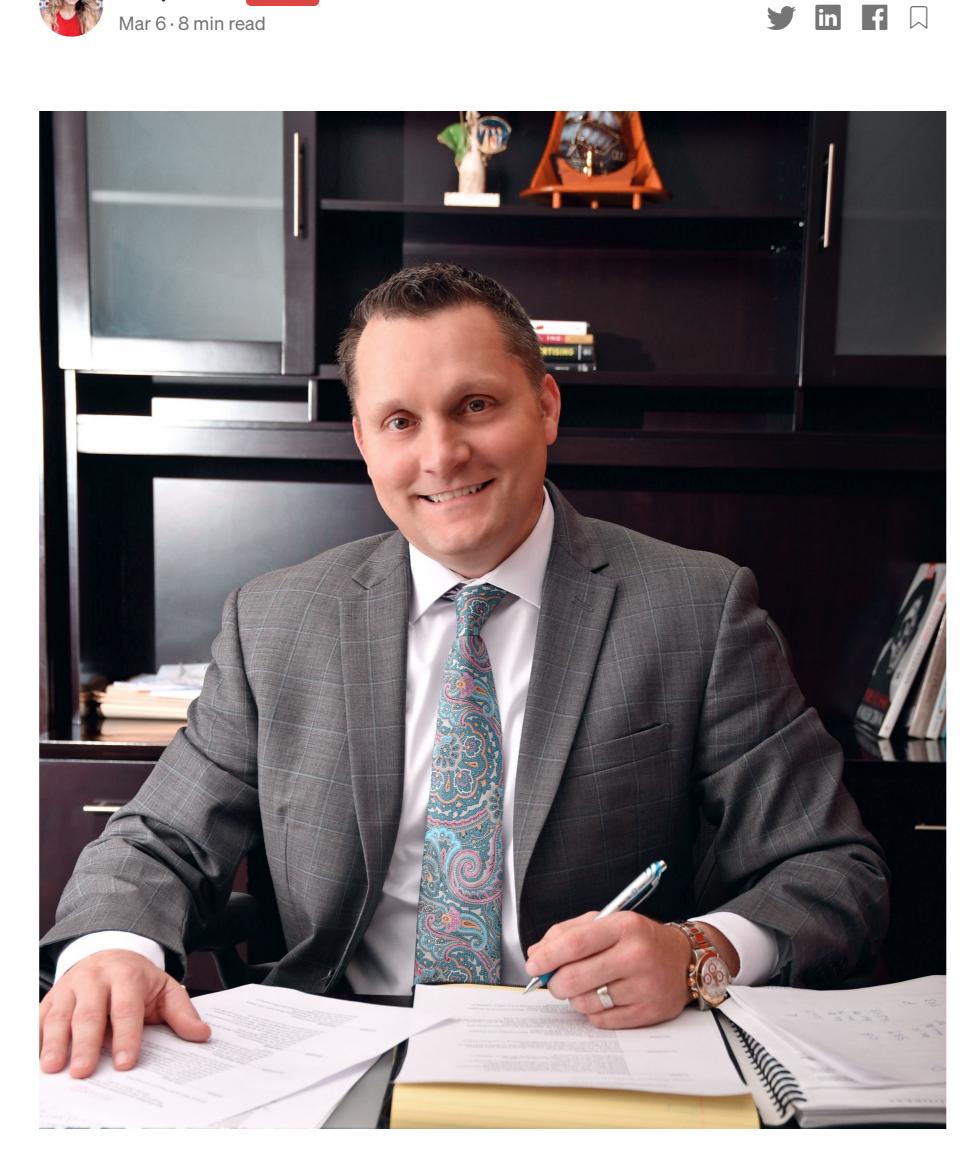
A AUTHORITY MAGAZINE Dr. James Michael Burkett of Florida Technical College: 5 Things You Need To Know To Be A Highly Effective Educator or





Being an educator is creating a living legacy. We may never build the Eiffel Tower or Great Pyramid, but the legacy of an educator goes on in every student they impact. That is powerful and gives meaning to our work.

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AS A Highly Effective Educator", I had the pleasure to interview Dr. James Michael Burkett.

Dr. James Michael Burkett has an extensive background in higher education and a life-long commitment to public service. He is a Marine Corps Veteran and former Police Lieutenant. He has more than a decade of experience in higher education as an instructor, Program Director, Dean of Academics, and Campus President before being named President of Florida Technical College and the DAVE School in December of 2016. During his tenure Florida Technical College has added blended learning options, Spanish only programs, expanded trades and hospitality program offerings, and achieved MSCHE accreditation as an academic unit of National University College, among other innovations in academic offerings.

As a non-traditional student himself, who began college after his service in the Marine Corps and while working full time and raising his son as a single parent. Dr. James Michael Burkett's mission is to ensure that "non-traditional students" have the same educational opportunities to help them be part of a well-qualified workforce.

Dr. Burkett graduated with high honors with an Associate's degree in General Studies from Daytona Beach Community College, and then graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelors in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Florida. Dr. Burkett continued his education by earning a Master's of Business Administration from the New England College of Business and Finance, a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Central Florida and a Masters in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Florida. He completed his academic journey by earning a PhD from Capella University.

"Building and Advancing Professionals Through Hands-on Education and Employment Opportunities"

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Can you share the "backstory" behind what brought you to this particular career path?

P rior to immersing myself in the higher education industry and taking the helm of Florida Technical College, an academic unit of NUC University, I joined the U.S. Marine Corps right after high school. Like most of the students I serve today, I took a non-traditional route to pursue my undergraduate, masters and PhD, and I did it while juggling work and parenthood. Yes, I was a single dad, working and studying full time. That's why I can relate to the sacrifices students make daily to better their lives.

Initially, I started doing training both in the military as a shooting coach in

the Marine Corps and then later in law enforcement when working at the police academy, teaching in mission critical areas like firearms, defensive tactics and emergency vehicle operations. I later continued to perform advanced training for law enforcement officers on narcotic investigations and tactical operations. I also worked with a youth offender program for seven years called "Teen Court", where I taught young, first-time offenders and their guardians about relationships with the police, the law and the dangers of drug use. As I completed advanced degrees, I began to teach academic courses as an

adjunct professor. I was offered the opportunity to teach full time in a new program, Crime Scene Technology at Keiser University. That was the beginning of my full-time academic career. I firmly believe that education is the great equalizer. My mission is to ensure

that "non-traditional students", just like I was, have the same educational

opportunities to help them be part of a well-qualified workforce. Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since

you started working on education? Can you tell us what lesson you learned from that?

Success stories are always my favorite. We all have to overcome obstacles to achieve our goals, but knowing that our students are entrusting us with their future and their time, it a powerful responsibility...I always look at it like that and never forget what an impact we make on lives. That always helps you stay focused and to always give your 100% effort because it could be the difference in changing someone's life.

Are you working on any exciting new projects now? How do you think that will help people?

Yes, we are rejuvenating the concept of technical education. Our "new blueprint for success" meshes the rapidly-evolving local workforce needs to students' passions. In 2018, we introduced a curriculum fully taught in Spanish, which has served as a life changer for Hispanics in Florida. The blueprint provides skill-focused education and hands-on training that leads students to employable careers.

We have been working diligently on crafting programs that fit the needs of

the career landscape of today and tomorrow. We've also worked hard to provide students with options to continue their education and grow in their chosen fields. For some technical programs, those initial programs can be terminal....and that makes it more challenging for them to earn a Bachelors' or Masters' degree later on. I have worked hard to create a career path that allows them to maximize their time and effort, while working on the initial technical diploma to later transform it into an advanced degree.

In the meantime, we are re-imagining the technical college experience. We promote volunteering as a training ground for honing students' skills. I believe that community service helps students become competent, employable and gives them the benefit of practicing real-world skills. This is crucial, especially for Spanish-speaking students from the Caribbean, Central and South America, where the community component does not play a significant role in their professional careers.

Ok, thank you for that. Let's now jump to the main focus of our interview. From your point of view, how would you rate the results of the US education system?

There are a lot of gaps in the system. You don't have to look any further than the high school graduation rates to see that. In the past, there has been this perception that success is one size fits all, and that it means a four-year Liberal Arts degree. It doesn't...there are great opportunities from technical education that provide real value to not only students but to our society. Take a look at the list of essential workers published by the government during COVID-19 and see how many are the result of technical training as opposed to a four-year Liberal Arts degree. It is very telling.

students, especially for minorities, a demographic that typically faces more economic disadvantages when compared to other ethnic groups. The key is meeting students where they are, providing not only access to higher education but the incentives to alleviate their financial burdens. Our students, often overlooked by traditional institutions, need to complete

Our institution has become an engine of upward mobility for thousands of

their degree fast and that's precisely my goal, offering them the skills they need so they can be successful and able to provide for their families. The key to success is to close the gap by elevating the student experience in which we raise expectations by rewarding extraordinary efforts. By that, we do not mean a perfect SAT, but to recognize that in spite of their challenges, everyone from Hurricane Maria refugees to single moms with two jobs can seek new ways to educate themselves while serving others.

That is how we win the future, by recognizing their unlimited potential and leading them with integrity. Can you identify 5 areas of the US education system that are going

The shift in focus for K-12 to recognize that not all students need to be prepared for four years of college, at least not initially is a good start. Many

really great?

are offering trade academies to prepare students for careers in healthcare, construction trades and the hospitality industries. My belief is that this will help increase graduation rates and the long-term success of these students. There are even opportunities for their work in high school to translate to credit in the post-secondary realm. Another area that is going well is that students have a lot of choices. However, those choices seem to be at risk. I think that it is important that we provide verified information to students and allow them many options for their career. We then need to trust the individual to make their decision on what path they want to take. It's a life altering decision and should be made by the student, not someone else for them.

share your "5 Things You Need To Know To Be A Highly Effective Educator?" Please share a story or example for each. 1. Being an educator is a responsibility, not a privilege. Our jobs are to

Super. Here is the main question of our interview. Can you please

- serve the student and help them reach their goals, not ours. 2. There is no short cut to success. There are many great tools to help
- students learn and to help educators be successful, but the effective techniques all take work and time. 3. Each student is an individual and learns differently. It is critical to take
- inventory of each student and to customize your approach to what works for them. This requires an educator to be innovative and flexible. 4. Understand that your impact is beyond that of your subject matter. Students look up to their educators and observe everything you do. How you conduct yourself will help to shape them in a way well beyond the subject matter material you deliver. 5. Being an educator is creating a living legacy. We may never build the
- Eiffel Tower or Great Pyramid, but the legacy of an educator goes on in every student they impact. That is powerful and gives meaning to our work.

As you know, teachers play such a huge role in shaping young lives. What would you suggest needs to be done to attract top talent to the education field?

We need to better recognize that educators are high-level professionals.

They should be viewed in the same respect other fields like law and medicine. Without educators, we wouldn't have any lawyers or doctors. Recognition more than monetary compensation will increase the talent level in education. However, I do think we need to reevaluate the compensation for educators, particularly in the K-12 area.

Can you please give us your favorite "Life Lesson Quote"? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life? I can't recall the author, but the essence of the message was: "I do not need

to be right, I just want to get it right." This works for me and keeps me centered because an idea doesn't need to

be mine...it just needs to be the right idea. I also empower my staff to challenge decisions and think outside the box. In the end, we want the student to be successful and those great ideas come from all levels. It is important that we are strong enough to recognize those ideas and make changes, regardless of our initial ownership to a process or idea. We are blessed that some of the biggest names in Business, VC funding,

Sports, and Entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the US, with whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch, and why? He or she might just see this if we tag them :-) I would choose Tim Tebow. He was one of our commencement speakers a

few years ago and I have followed him since he was in high school, near my hometown in Jacksonville. He does such a great job in his motivational speeches that transcends sports. I would welcome the opportunity to interact with him personally.

How can our readers follow you on social media?

You can connect with me on LinkedIn it at Mike Burkett, PhD or follow the Florida Technical College Facebook @FloridaTechnicalCollege

3 claps

Penny Bauder

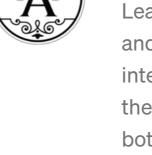
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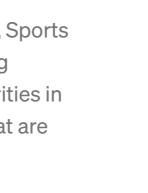


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