Chief,

Congratulations on your selection! You come from a legacy of Chief Petty Officers who knew that in a crisis, circumstances often change, and the Chief must be prepared. You are now part of that legacy who must lead our Navy during extraordinary times.

Your responsibility as a Chief Petty Officer is to devote time to your Sailor’s technical training, education, physical and emotional health, and the health and safety of their families. Investing in your Sailors creates effective combat teams that possess the highest standards and will not accept failure. Your success as a leader is based on your ability to connect with those you lead.

You must be the technical expert...the ultimate authority on technical information, and should reward technical mastery in your Sailors. Embrace a life of continuous learning and impress this upon your Sailors. You must understand the hopes, dreams, and desires of your Sailors and help guide them down their path of life, both in and out of the Navy. Be relevant – if your Sailors are not coming to you for guidance or seeking assistance with their issues, you may not be relevant to them.

Chiefs develop leaders with strong character, unique perspectives, and absolute resilience. We are responsible for the all-around training of our personnel. We must effectively manage the talent of our diverse workforce to unleash their full potential at any given moment. Chiefs must fight their way through casualties as they occur and develop a team that is confident in their ability to do so. Chiefs challenge their Sailors and teams to not only be qualified, but proficient and confident.

Never accept a standard without understanding what the standard is or should be. There will be problems; when you see one, do not ignore it; act. Chiefs drive outcomes and do not create activity for the sake of activity. You must always strive to raise your standards and never be satisfied with the status quo.

You didn’t get here all on your own. Take time to thank your loved ones for their selfless sacrifice and support. My wife Evelyn is the one who gives me the greatest sense of purpose, inspiration, and who has made every moment of celebration that much sweeter!

Remember, you are here on purpose. You were chosen to be the leader our Navy needs. I know each of you are ready to take on this next challenge, succeed, and be the Chief. Initiation is not something you endure, it is a challenge you overcome to prepare you for what the Navy will ask and demand from you every day. Rise to that challenge. Welcome to the Mess.

James M. Honea
16th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy