

The only thing that stays the same is change. I have certainly learned that recently. I have been having problems getting my contacts to focus properly in certain situations. Usually, if I blink a few times they rotate back in the right spot and I can see just fine. But recently, they just wouldn't focus right, especially when reading. I told this to my eye doctor who hinted that it might not be the fit of the contacts. You might have guessed it – the issue was “getting older” and the solution was bifocals. Ugh. He was right. Change happens.

Change is happening at Neosho County Community College this year as well. And those changes are for the better! We are seeing another enrollment increase for the college on opening day. That makes thirteen years in a row of opening day increases. Right now, we are up 6% over last fall, when we were up 17% over 2010 – wow! In fact, NCCC has grown by over 76% since fall 2003. That is a lot of welcome change.

We will be playing our first volleyball game on our new gym floor on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The floor looks great, as do the renovated bathrooms and the new “away” bleachers. The athletes will soon be enjoying their remodeled locker rooms. Our softball/youth soccer complex is nearing completion and I hope you will come later this fall to an open house and see the new facility. The road from 10<sup>th</sup> to Allen is nearly complete and should open soon. My favorite new addition, the Campus Tree, a Colorado Spruce, will be added later this fall to the drop off area near the library. It will look outstanding during the holidays this year!

Our new surgical technology program is open in Chanute and accepting students. We started this program in Ottawa and it has done well. This was part of a nearly \$2 million grant NCCC received a few years ago.

We launched a new Panther logo this year as well. There have been many panthers in the past and it was time to “freshen” the logo. So far I have heard many positive comments about the new symbol. There are so many positive changes at the College!

And we are not stopping with the changes. There is a lot in store for 2012-2013. The renovations at the Chanute campus continue as we turn our attention to our 44 year old science labs. Throughout this year, we will be designing the new labs as well as plans for renovation of the classrooms and bathrooms in Stoltz Hall scheduled to be completed in 2014.

In the past, we have invited the public to help us plan the future buildings at the College when we created our facility master plan. Soon I will be inviting you to give us your opinion on the grounds of the campus as we work on a landscaping master plan to shape future change at NCCC. The Trustees are looking for a structured plan for all of the proposed outdoor features including a possible small amphitheater, outdoor classroom(s), and a water feature. Part of that process is inviting you to a session where we talk about the Landscape Master Plan and get your feedback. This is everyone's campus to enjoy, and we want your opinion. Be looking for that invitation later this fall.

This year we will also be preparing for a visit from our accrediting organization, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Every 10 years the HLC evaluates how our college measures up against their five

criterion for accreditation. This year we will be composing a “self-study” showing evidence of how we meet and surpass those standards. In fall of 2013, a visiting team from the HLC will come to campus and confirm what we have written is true. This College has undergone a tremendous amount of change, a transformation really, over the past 9 years and I have complete faith that the peer review team will see all that we have done and be pleased.

This fall marks my 10<sup>th</sup> as an employee of Neosho County Community College. Back then, when I first arrived, I had more hair, about 80 more pounds, and no bifocals- that’s for sure. I certainly have undergone change. Some for the better, some, well, unavoidable.

I have seen a great deal of change over time at NCCC. Thanks to a great Board of Trustees, wonderful employees, and tremendous community support from you NCCC continues its successful journey to being the premier community college in Kansas.