

One of the issues we homeowners face is the constant need and want to remodel our homes. I blame the HGTV for inspiring my family to want to improve our house. That free channel has cost me a lot! Recently, we remodeled our kitchen. It's one of those ideas that sounds good, and then you realize what that means. For instance, for seven weeks or so we had no kitchen. That meant no stove, no dishwasher, no running water. We washed our dishes in the bathroom and set up a microwave and George Foreman Grill in the dining room. Of course the circuits in that room were not designed for that so we could operate many things at the same time without throwing the breaker. I felt like I was in a scene from the old Green Acres show, "Liza, don't plug in two yellow cords and a red at the same time!"

The College is also renovating some areas this summer. Like my fellow homeowners, we have a responsibility to maintain and advance our taxpayer's investment. But also, studies show that the look and feel of the campus is still then number one factor in a student's decision of which institution of higher learning to choose.

There are big changes on the way at both the Chanute and Ottawa campuses. In Chanute we are investing about \$1 million dollars in our facilities. In Rowland Hall, which is home to our health care, business, and computer departments, we are spending about \$800,000 to install a simulated hospital for all of our health care programs. The hospital will have 11 beds, with 3 of those being in special rooms, complete with simulated "robot" patients and one-way mirrors for instructors to watch the students conduct the simulations. It will have exam rooms for medical assisting classes, a nurse's station, medication storage, and an operating bay with two tables for our new surgical technology program that starts Fall 2012. It will even have a special bathroom for our certified nurse aid students to learn proper technique for helping the elderly.

For the business program in Rowland, there will be new faculty offices in the front of Rowland and remodeled classrooms. Tom Byler of the Small Business Development Center will move into the business program area for better integration between the SBDC and NCCC.

In Chapman Library, we are bringing that building up to full ADA compliance with a brand new enlarged elevator and new bathrooms in both the library and downstairs in the Center for Academic and Vocational Excellence (the CAVE).

In Ottawa we are completing the building by working through the "punch list" and putting in two turning lanes on K-68. That will cost about \$575,000 for those lanes.

Weather and suppliers permitting, we should have all of these advancements done by the time classes start in the fall. Ben Smith, the Vice President for Operations who is in charge of all of these projects, always gives a little smile when people ask him, "What do you guys at the College even do during the summer? You're closed, right?" Not hardly. Classes are still in session and renovation, maintenance,

reporting, hiring and budgeting overflow our days. In many ways, it is our busiest time of the year!

Where are we getting the money for all of these renovations? Donations, bequests and the sale of the old Ottawa campus make up a large percentage of these funds, followed by federal grant funds, student fees and some money from the College budget. Gone are the days when local taxpayers would just foot the bill for such advancements. Now we must be creative and find many sources of revenue in addition to tax dollars if we are to advance the institution.

And we are not done yet! You may have read that we will be moving the softball field to the opposite corner of the property and building bathrooms and a concession stand for youth soccer. We will be doing that renovation during the academic year. We hope to play on the new field come Spring 2012. Notice I said "hope".

At Ottawa we will be completing our second science lab in the fall. It should be ready by January. That one is being paid for with federal grant dollars too.

Then in the coming years we will be gutting our science labs in Stoltz Hall and renovating those. The designs even include a human cadaver lab for our Anatomy and Physiology classes. Creepy, yes, but needed by all of our health care programs to provide the best possible educational experience for our students.

Our new kitchen is done at the Inbody house. When we first began, reducing the room to wall studs and floor joists, I'll admit, I was worried. But it turned out great. When the renovations are done this summer, I'm sure I will be equally proud of our new learning spaces for the students. I hope you will be too.

As always I welcome your comments and questions at binbody@neosho.edu.