

May is my second favorite month of the college year, when our students become our graduates and alumni. I still get chills watching them cross the stage, remembering what they were like when they started as new freshmen and seeing how much they have changed. This year was special as we had graduates from a new program at NCCC, Surgical Technology. I can still remember the meetings when a team of us wrote the grant to create that program. I can't tell you how proud I felt last Friday when those first surg tech students walked across the stage. From words on a grant application, to students graduating and getting great paying jobs – it was emotional for all of us involved in that project. Starting in fall, we bring the surgical technology major to the Chanute campus. Call Brenda Krumm at the College and she will get you started on this new major!

May is the “traditional” end of the academic year and a time to reflect on the great year the College has had. And our 75<sup>th</sup> year was great indeed! We ended with nearly 50,000 credit hours, up 10% over last year, an all-time college record! We added more students than any other community college in Kansas this fall. In fact, only Fort Hays and Wichita State added more students than NCCC! We will award 1,115 degrees and certificates this year. That is quite a number!

We completed an \$800,000 renovation of Rowland Hall adding a new simulated hospital and business center. The Board has begun a Chanute campus revitalization plan called “Our Time” that will update all facilities. We have begun that plan with a new softball/youth soccer complex and renovation of the gym, all scheduled to be completed when classes start in the fall. We also completed small additions and renovations, adding another science lab to the Ottawa campus, office suite and conference room in Stoltz Hall, and new high speed internet gaming lounge in the residence hall. The residence hall now features 10 gaming stations with the latest gear like XBOX 360 and PlayStation 3. (I'm afraid Ping-Pong and Pool are both out – saving the universe and being Kobe Bryant are in.)

On the athletic fields and courts the College was VERY successful this year! Excuse me a few paragraphs while I brag. I'm sure that you have heard about our baseball team winning regionals and are preparing for the JUCO World Series next weekend. But that is not all! Eight baseball players were named to All-Conference teams including Adam Giacalone who was named Conference MVP. Giacalone was named Conference Pitcher of the Week (2 times), National Pitcher of the Week, and Conference Hitter of the Week. Max Ising was named National and KJCCC Pitcher of the Week. Matt Strahm was the Conference Pitcher of the Week. Baseball has two players on the All-Region team and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Jayhawk Eastern Division. Steve Murry collected his 750<sup>th</sup> win and only needs 4 more to reach 800! Let's see if we can do that at the World Series.

Baseball wasn't the only team that made us proud this year. Wrestling had a National Champion, Jeff Vesta, and a third place finisher, LeRoy Barnes. Head Wrestling Coach Wayne Petterson was named Man of the Year by his fellow coaches. Wrestling finished 11<sup>th</sup> in the Nation.

Softball placed one on the All-Conference team. Three volleyball players were named to All-Conference teams with three All-District volleyball players. And we had one All-American

nominee in volleyball. Men's basketball had one student-athlete earn All-Region Selection. Two men's basketball players were named to All-Conference teams. Men's basketball finished third in the Kansas Jayhawk Eastern Division.

Women's basketball placed one on an All-Conference team. Track and field had five student-athletes qualify for Indoor Nationals and four student-athletes qualify for Outdoor Nationals. Cross Country had one selected to an All-Conference team with Leslie Rosario winning the Regional Championship and finishing 20<sup>th</sup> out of 268 student-athletes at Nationals!

Congratulations to our new Athletic Director, Amber Burdge, and her staff of coaches! What a year of awards and victories!

The awards didn't stop with athletics. NCCC won a national 2012 Bellwether Finalist Award for the design, financing, and implementation of the new Ottawa Campus from the Community College Futures Assembly. That same award got us recognized on the floor of the Kansas House of Representatives by Representative Gregory. Our welding student, Brandon Taylor, won State Champion, our fourth Welding State Champion in a row!

The College received over \$2 million in competitive government grants this year alone including the JIIST grant that helped fund the Spirit Aerosystems training program. And we just found out that our Talent Search grant that helps over 600 students with career guidance has just been funded for another 5 years! That's about \$1.25 million for that grant!

So in every way the College is improving, moving toward becoming the premier community college in Kansas, which is the Trustees' vision for NCCC. From enrollment, to awards, to athletic victories, to grants, and most importantly, student learning and graduates – Neosho County Community College had an excellent 2011-2012 academic year.

So all of this reflection makes May my second favorite month. My favorite, you ask? Well, some days I think it is June, when I take a week of vacation. But, in reality, it's August, when new students arrive and the excitement and promise of another year is palpable. And we begin again to build toward another awesome May!

Ok, maybe June is my third favorite.