

I have often heard that anticipation is often greater than the event itself. We work ourselves up being either scared of an upcoming painful event or incredibly excited about a future positive experience. People plan their vacations months in advance and get excited the whole time. But thinking about an upcoming painful doctor's appointment is like experiencing the pain over and over. Sometimes the anticipation is better than the event itself as it doesn't quite live up to our expectations.

Big positive things are on the horizon. I can see them coming! And I am very hopeful that they live up to my expectations. This upcoming academic is going to be a year full of wonderful milestones, both personal and for the College.

As for the personal milestones, I will turn "49 Plus One" this fall. I have always taken stock in my life on the round numbers and I will look forward to doing that again. When I turned 30 I started my doctorate degree at the University of Arkansas and became a father for the first time. When I turned 40 I decided to take the steps to become a college president. With "49 Plus One," ok, I give up - 50, what will I do? I'm sure I'll focus on some aspect of self-improvement.

Allow me an aside here for a piece of advice. I have not been feeling almost 50 until recently. I was in a local store buying something for my daughters when the sales clerk said, "These items are great for your girls! How old are your granddaughters now?" Ugh! Pro-tip here. Never ask a woman when her baby is due when you don't KNOW FOR SURE she is pregnant. And never ask a guy how old his granddaughters are unless you KNOW FOR SURE he has them. She meant well, so no harm, but now I know I'm almost 50. Ok, back on topic.

Also this academic year, my oldest girl, Abrielle, will be a high school senior. Those of you who have gone through that process with a child know what that is like. I'm told it is a whirlwind ending in quite the milestone of pride and tears. Like it or not, here it comes for Jen and me.

2017-2018 will be my eighth year as President of NCCC. This is a professional milestone for me in two ways. This will be my 15th year at NCCC. It's a nice number that will end in a lovely service plaque in May of 2018. For seven years I was Vice President for Student Learning at NCCC, beginning in 2003. Now, entering my eighth year as President, I will have been President here longer than VP.

In some ways that doesn't seem possible to me as these last seven years as President have flown by. The first seven as VP seemed a lot longer. Maybe it was how the college was in 2003, how every year was a real struggle in many ways as we fixed problem after problem while advancing the institution. I'm not saying every day is problem free now, but by comparison things are going so much better – better student retention and graduation rates, gaining grants, national awards, winning athletic programs, improved donations, strong accreditation, more public support, and on and on.

The second way it will be a big year professionally for me is that during this upcoming academic year I will become the second longest serving President in NCCC history. Dr. Sanders still has the honor of the longest term as President at 20 years. Dr. Vicky Smith, my mentor and predecessor, served for seven and a half years, putting her in second place currently. By the end of this year, I will have served eight years, Board willing of course. I have a LONG way to go to surpass Dr. Sanders' tenure, however!

For the College it will be a big exciting year! We have many new faculty members that will add new energy and life to our already wonderful faculty and I'm excited to see them on campus. We have new faculty in English, psychology, welding, and art and perhaps more coming. We have a new Cheer/Dance

Head Coach as well as a new Head Wrestling Coach. I'm quite pleased with the results of all of our searches! I think we have a great new group coming in!

We have new programs launching and expanding this year. We will begin offering welding in La Harpe, Kansas in a consortium with four local school districts and two other community colleges. We will be expanding our offerings in Lawrence at the Peaslee Center as well.

The Chanute Campus itself is getting a much needed face lift beginning this summer and continuing into fall. As I mentioned before in this column ALL the parking lots here will be resurfaced and some lingering problems fixed. (Did you know there is a natural spring under Lot 1 which erodes the lot quickly? Well, we have it, and it will be fixed!)

This week the Board voted to improve much of the energy consumption of the Chanute Campus by replacing every light bulb with LED lights, update water fixtures and...drum roll please...replace our 1968 heating and cooling system with a modern, quiet, fully functional system. That work will start almost immediately and should be complete by October. I am HIGHLY anticipating that new heating and cooling system!

So in the case of the campus upgrades and parking lots, please be understanding as we work through all of these changes. Updates are exciting, but they are often inconvenient, noisy, and dusty at the same time as anyone who has updated their homes knows. I anticipate some issues as the fall semester begins. I ask for your patience. I think the end result will be worth it!

So 2017-2018 will be a BIG YEAR! I am very excited about what lies ahead for NCCC and for me. I know it will live up to and surpass my anticipation, and I hope it will for you, too! If you have any questions about this column or anything else about the College, please email me at binbody@neosho.edu.