

Not all of my ideas are great ones. I'll admit that. As President and with my Executive Committee, we spend a good deal of time coming up with ideas to advance the college and to avoid and correct problems. Sometimes the ideas are great, and sometimes they are not.

Case in point - here's a recent idea I had as a thoughtful husband. I'll let you be the judge if it was good or bad. My wife, Jennifer, got a free sample of "age defying serum," a cream that women apply to ahh...well... areas of the face where wrinkles might form (not on my wife, of course, because she is perpetually 29). One morning she says, "I think I would like more of this. With the small free sample you really can't get an idea that it is working or not. You need to put it on longer." So I filed that information away.

Jen is the state assessment coordinator for Royster Middle School in Chanute and state assessments are not going very well this year. Kansas is piloting a new test and a new online testing system and it has been plagued with technical difficulties. One day in the future the system might be great, but from the stories I have heard nearly every night at dinner, it has a ways to go. Anyway, I thought it would be nice to get her a small gift to cheer her up from all these issues at work.

So I get her this "age defying serum" that she mentioned and package it up with a card that read, "For all of the wrinkles that state assessments put on." Then I brought it to Royster and gave it to the office staff for her there. I waited for the call of, "Ahhh! Thank you!" However, the response I got was unexpected. "Wrinkle Cream!?! You gave me Wrinkle Cream!?!!" Yeah. Not the reaction I was hoping for. Some ideas are good, and some not so good.

During this Kansas legislative session one idea looks like it is going to be a real winner, in my opinion. Just signed into law this week is the GED Accelerator. I provided testimony before a Senate committee for this bill and was part of the group that helped shape it, so I feel doubly proud that it made it into law.

It is financially difficult for a GED student. They have to pay to take the GED test which is often difficult for these students. Due to changes recent in the federal financial aid system, they can't get help to go to a technical program or college in general until after they complete the GED. That means they need a good deal of money before they can get a GED and a technical certificate so that they can get a job and earn a good deal of money. It's a vicious circle. Enter the new GED Accelerator.

The GED Accelerator is a \$2 million pilot program that helps people get their high school diploma while earning a technical certificate at the same time. It provides money for students to take the GED exam when they are ready (which costs upwards of \$150 dollars) and helps colleges pay for scholarships to get them enrolled in technical areas like health care, welding, construction, etc. And for each GED or technical certificate that is completed the college earns money that will be used to support the technical program and to scholarship the next group of students.

The reason I went to work for a community college 22 years ago, and why I have stayed, is to combat poverty and ignorance. Often times, these two terrible things go hand in hand. With the GED Accelerator we will be battling both. Kansans who might have difficulty with basic math or with reading might wind up with a diploma, an industry recognized technical certificate, and a good paying job. All

because of an idea, hard work to get that idea made into law, and legislators like Senators Steve Abrams, Ty Masterson, Tom Arpke, and all those who voted in favor, who took this idea and made it happen.

This idea, with the backing of the State of Kansas, will help the GED students out of poverty, and their children along with them. The GED Accelerator is just a pilot, which means that NCCC and our fellow community colleges need to get to work to prove that these funds will do what we think they will do. If we can prove that it works, then perhaps it can continue on past the pilot stage and be more permanent, legislature willing, of course. We are off and running!

I sent Jen a dozen roses this week with a card that read, "Better than wrinkle cream?" I think all is forgiven for now. They say that it's the thought that counts, but not when it comes to wrinkle cream. That's a bad idea.

If you have any comments or questions about this column or anything else about NCCC, please email me at binbody@neosho.edu.