

It's Thanksgiving season again. And no, it is NOT pre-Christmas! At the Inbody household we are not allowed to watch Christmas movies, sing holiday songs, or put up any decorations until the day AFTER Thanksgiving. Pundits on TV news often talk about the "War on Christmas," but I think Thanksgiving is the one that has been truly decimated – by Christmas. The Turkey Brigade has already flown the white flag in that war and Santa has declared victory. Remember "Black Friday?" That's over now. If you know me, you know I LOVE the Christmas season, but holiday commercials in October!?! Come on! Halloween, you better start building up the defenses. You're next, pal. The reindeer are on the march and they are hungry for candy corn.

Ok – rant over. I do enjoy Thanksgiving, and not just the family, food, and football (not necessarily in that order depending on who's playing or coming over). It's a great time to be thankful for all of the great things in your life.

As President of NCCC I have had some wonderful things to be thankful for this year. Recently NCCC measured itself against over 300 other community colleges in the country through the National Community College Benchmarking Project. The study compares NCCC on all kinds of factors including pass rates and course completion. I am very proud that NCCC scored in the highest category possible in the study – the top 15% – for retention of students and degree completion!

This evidence was confirmed by a new measure that the Kansas Board of Regents is using call "Student Success Index." Basically, this score measures how many of your students had a positive ending to their time at our college. Those that are still enrolled, got a degree/certificate, enrolled in a four-year college or completed a four-year degree are counted in the colleges favor. Those who drop out are not. NCCC had a score of 73% on the first look at this new metric – which is VERY high.

Our students are staying in school and completing at a tremendous rate! I am so thankful to our faculty and staff that helped NCCC reach this incredible level of success. They have done such an excellent job!

I am also thankful for several individuals in Chanute that have fully endowed three new scholarships in the last few months! They have given enough money to the NCCC Foundation that the interest from those gifts will pay for three student scholarships for the foreseeable future. Wow! That's truly the gift that lasts forever. In Ottawa, if this fourth Scholarship Gala goes well there, we will have raised enough through the galas to endow a scholarship for that campus! Thanks in advance for that wonderful gift.

I am thankful for the leadership of the Board of Trustees of NCCC who had the foresight and drive to be the best college we can be to continue with our facilities master plan. This year we have renovated one 1968 science lab and added a cadaver lab. Next year we will renovate another two 1968 labs with more renovation to come in future years.

On that note, let me just say that the Board gives so much of their time, talent, and energy to the College in the course of a year. I give them so much to read about NCCC. A short meeting is about two hours long and have gone a LOT longer (not because of my monthly President's Report, though. Ok maybe.) They participate in retreats like the one last Tuesday that went for three hours. They attend trainings and statewide trustee meetings (sometimes in Colby – yeah, six hours from here). NCCC asks a lot from our Trustees. Trustees are unpaid, but not devalued. They matter so much to the present and future of NCCC. Thank you Chairman Dave Peter, Vice Chair Kevin Berthot, Charlie Boaz, Pat Griffith,

Lori Kiblinger, and Dennis Peters. You make a difference in so many lives to the people of Neosho, Franklin, and Anderson Counties and well beyond.

I am thankful for the Kansas Legislature creating and Governor Brownback signing Senate Bill 155 that effectively pays for the tuition costs of high school students concurrently enrolled in technical education courses through their local community college. We have seen a tremendous increase in technical education enrollment thanks to SB 155 and, more importantly, new opportunities arising in school districts across our service area and beyond! There are many good paying jobs out there if the prospective employee has technical skills. Studies show that if a person holds a certification in an occupational area of study their chances of ever being on government assistance drops dramatically. That one bill and the \$12 million that the State of Kansas put toward technical education has already impacted thousands of students across the state and our service area and this year will impact thousands more. It means employment for lots of Kansans and less people on assistance. I am very thankful that in an era of cutbacks and “starving the government” that our elected officials had the courage to create something new that is going to help so many.

I do want to invite you to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony at the Chanute Campus on December 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:15 pm (notice that this is AFTER Thanksgiving – I am a man of principle). The Royster Middle School Vocal Plus will perform and we will have treats in the Chapman Learning Center immediately following the tree lighting. Thanks to Lance Burnett for having Vocal Plus perform again this year!

At the Inbody home Virtual Santa should make another appearance in our front room window the day after Thanksgiving. Last year we got a Letter to Santa in our mail slot from a little girl who thought St. Nick lived at our house on 8<sup>th</sup> street, thanks to Virtual Santa. We had a lot of fun replying to that letter, so this year we have added a “Letters to Santa” mailbox for anyone else that might like to drop off a letter.

This year we are hosting Thanksgiving for Jennifer’s family. We’ll have a house full of relatives and I’m making the turkey. With all the preparations, cooking, and visiting I hope I don’t forget to say thanks for everything good in my life – chief among them my wife Jennifer, and my girls Abrielle and Alayna. I am also thankful for the wonderful communities of our service area that give true meaning to the phrase “quality of life.” From the Inbody’s to you and yours, have a Happy Thanksgiving!

As always, I am thankful for your thoughts and questions at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).