

“A father works from sun to sun but a mother’s work is never done.” I can tell you whoever wrote that old chestnut did not have two daughters who enjoy performing that have to be taxied from dance lessons to play practice, and back and forth to school activities every evening. Then it is homework and finally off to bed. It can be never-ending.

I have A LOT of events in the evening at the College that have to be placed on my schedule as well. Athletic events, performing arts, travel for state meetings, etc. Between my two fulltime jobs, NCCC President and my more important job as Husband and Father, I quickly learned something: No matter where I am, I’m probably disappointing someone that I’m not somewhere else.

In the “old days,” with the exception of the residence halls, college and university campuses were ghost towns after about 3:30 in the afternoon each day. Sure there were some activities in the evenings but they were few and far between.

Things have progressed since then. Our students need to be engaged all the time. So we have lots of clubs and student government activities for them as well as sporting events to watch and participate in.

Our students NEVER stop. There is lots of evidence to prove that. One only needs to see hallway video from the residence halls to see that it doesn’t REALLY get quiet until about 4am. And the quiet only lasts about 2-3 hours and they are back up again to start another day. Remember when you had that much energy?

Our students are always active and so must we. All of our classes have an associated webpage which is available 24 hours a day. Students can get the handouts and presentation materials, read the syllabus, email their instructors, see their current grades, participate in online class discussions, even take tests and turn in papers whenever they want. Assignments are no longer due at the beginning of class on Thursday, for instance. They are due electronically by 11:55pm on the 25th. Students can turn it in when they want before the deadline but it needs to be in by the set time. (We had to stop using 12:00A.M. as a “due time” as many students were confused if that meant midnight tonight or tomorrow night or even noon in a few mistaken cases. “11:55pm on Oct. 25th” is pretty clear by comparison.)

Those who enroll in online education can take full advantage of a 24-hours-a-day schedule and learn when they want to. The classes are on a schedule to accomplish certain things by certain dates, but what time of day chosen to work on those classes is entirely up to the student. In fact, our most popular log-in time for our learning management system is 2:00A.M.

If students are going to be learning 24 hours a day, then we needed to offer support to match that. First, we have been moving to electronic databases for articles and books for our library. Online and face-to-face students alike can now access over 355,000 books, over 22,000 journals with their hundreds of thousands of articles, and even 71,000 instructional videos. We also offer a series of online instructional guides which contain video tutorials, sample documents, links to selected webpages, and other helpful resources to help them access this wealth of knowledge. Students can access this library information whenever they need to, on their schedule.

And on October 9th in Chanute we took this 24-hours-a-day concept one step further. Our library, the Chapman Learning Center, is now open all day and all night for our students. Current students can get a swipe card and let themselves into the building to use its many computers and study areas whenever they want. We have night safety officers who watch over the campus and look in on Chapman, as well as many video cameras both inside and outside the building to keep them safe while they learn.

This is part of a renovation of the first floor of Chapman to make it more attractive and useful to the students. We have moved admissions, advising and international student support to the first floor to centralize student support. The building already housed our tutoring service, so this has given them more room to work. Small study rooms are now available for reservation so that individual students or groups of students can get together and work as a team. We have added new furniture, both comfy and studious in the remodeled space.

Soon additional computers will be available in new study pods. And finally we are adding complementary coffee for our students to attract them to the space. It is going to be outstanding!

College is changing. In twenty years will we still have a fall and spring semester patterned after the agrarian calendar? Or will students just move from completing one class into enrolling in the next not waiting on the traditional first day of the semester to get started. Believe it or not, that's already possible in lots of different places. NCCC has classes running every day of the year, including Christmas Day, thanks to online and the 24/7 nature of the demand for learning.

As President, I better get used to the idea that if the college never rests then neither should I. But I wouldn't have it any other way! Excuse me, I have to go take someone to play practice.

If you have any comments or questions please feel free to write to me at binbody@neosho.edu.