

We have two daughters and that means sibling rivalry. No matter how hard we try as parents, one of the two always thinks she is not getting as much as her sister. Those of you who grew up with a sibling near your own age may recall this feeling yourself – that your brother or sister is getting more (insert desired thing here) from your parents than you are. I'm the baby of my family. If I have heard it once I have heard it 1000 times that, "You let him get away with anything!"

That was only because, as Tommy Smothers often said, Mom liked me best. Sorry Brother Scott. You know it's true. (I would put in an emoji here to show that I was kidding but, as Mom's favorite, I don't think that is necessary.)

Jen and I try our best to spend the same for presents for each, divide our time equally, attend both girls' shows and performances, and on and on. Despite our best efforts to equalize all we can between the girls at our house, I still feel the sibling jealousy between them from time to time. That's human nature, I guess.

At Neosho County Community College we have a service area that encompasses Neosho County, of course, but also Franklin County and the northern half of Anderson County. While a vote of the public in 1968 created NCCC to serve the people of the home county, the State Legislature later added the other counties to our area of responsibility and asked us to serve them as well, and we happily agreed.

NCCC has worked very hard to adequately provide a great learning experience, community support, and workforce generation in all parts of our service area. We even changed our mission statement "To enrich our communities and our students' lives" in order to make it clear that there is more than one community that we serve. But the struggle to spread the love equally in the service area is a bit more difficult than with my daughters.

NCCC is significantly supported by the taxpayers of Neosho County. As a result, it has always been politically difficult to spend any money from the general fund on offering classes in Franklin or Anderson counties, especially in the early days. Early on NCCC had no real presence in Franklin County and was using whatever space it could find to offer classes and the nursing program. We were in an old Jr. High, a mini-mall and other locations until the early 1990s. That's when the Board decided to build a simple pre-fab metal building in Ottawa.

It was politically dangerous for the trustees to build this early campus, and rightfully so. The taxpayers of Neosho County did not want their money to be going to build a building in another county. That is why the college began charging a building fee and an out-district fee. The building fee is fairly self-explanatory. The money for the fee went to pay for the construction and upkeep of the building in Ottawa. The out-district fee is extra per-credit-hour charge for anyone who does not reside in Neosho County. Those from outside the taxing district have never paid property taxes to the college, so we reserve our lowest rates for those who have supported us.

Revenue from the out-district fee is used for many things both in Neosho County and in the service area as a whole. In Neosho County it has been used for capital improvements to the Chanute Campus. It helped pay for new science labs in Chanute, as well as renovated nursing labs, and the newest addition, the Ross Lane facility. NCCC, unlike many community colleges, does not charge a separate capital outlay mill levy which helps with costs associated with building upkeep and maintenance and new construction. Instead, we use the revenue from this out-district fee to renovate our buildings. This

allows us to be a good steward of the college, state, and county building investments while also keeping taxes lower in our home county.

For many years the metal building at Ottawa served the college well, but, there was a clear difference in the quality of facility that the Chanute student enjoyed, versus the quality of facility that the northern service area student was using. The classrooms were smaller in this building. The library was not good at all. The labs, especially the nursing simulation lab, while quite functional, left a lot to be desired. Faculty all shared an office, as did most of the business office personnel, which made private conversations with students nearly impossible. And to top it off the parking lot was significantly undersized. Still, we helped a lot of students in that building get their degrees, become nurses, and enter the workforce.

However, the Trustees were concerned about that significant difference in facility quality, but also were very much aware of the politics of spending general fund money outside the county.

So in 2010 the Trustees voted to invest funds from the out district and building fee to create a brand new 52,000 square foot campus in Ottawa to better equalize the experience. The bond payment for the building was set up to be paid by the building and out-district fees both then and now. No Neosho County tax money, or even State aid, was used in the construction or in the bond payment today.

That was nine years ago and the campus is still going strong. It boasts a state of the art nursing simulated hospital, a wonderful Teaching and Learning Center, larger classrooms, bigger parking lots and, yes, private offices for faculty and staff. We won a national award for its design but also for the way it was financed without tax dollars. In fact, we were even recognized for that financing on the floor of the Kansas Legislature.

Like my two daughters, the two main campuses of NCCC often are jealous of each other from time to time. While the Ottawa campus is generally much newer, the Chanute campus is bigger needs constant attention like the new heating and cooling system installed in 2017 and the planned dining hall renovation in summer of 2019. The student fees help pay for most of the renovations and additions. While unfortunate that we have to charge such fees, it helps keep the mill levy lower in Neosho County while allowing us to maintain and advance both campuses.

Now we have enrollment centers offering distinct programs in Garnett, LaHarpe, Lawrence, Chanute High School, Ottawa High School, and Yates Center. We try very hard to equalize the equipment and facility quality between those locations while being mindful of where the money comes from. Those centers outside the home county need to stand on their own fiscally, at least making back what they cost. This is only possible through some wonderful partnerships that allow us to use existing space at low or no cost, partners like USD 365, USD 497, Peaslee Tech, and USD 366. With their help we can provide needed programs to their students while being mindful of the Neosho County taxpayer.

We still hear, "the Trustees like you best" from time to time, mostly from employees of one campus or another. That's human nature. But, like my daughters, we still care for students equally, no matter where they are and do our best to show them that.

If you have any comments or questions about this or anything else, please contact me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).