

Spring is a time of rebirth and rejuvenation. It is great to see the trees greening up again and flowers pushing up in the yard. We also have a mole family pushing up in our yard this year. I'm not happy about that. It's time to see if the mower survived the winter, open the attic fan cover, clean out the gutters and prepare for another year of growing and development.

At Neosho County Community College our rebirth often comes in the form of job changes. It is not unusual for NCCC to see a turnover rate as high as 30% of its fulltime employees, which means lots of goodbyes and hellos. There is a great deal of change in higher education on a routine basis. I'll give you an example.

Studies put average tenure of a college president at about seven years which isn't very long. Here's how that plays out in Kansas. I have been president at NCCC for only four years and nine months now. Come July 1 2015, I will be tied for fifth in the state among the 19 community college presidents in longest tenure at their current job. Yeah, that's some serious turnover. Of course the average age of a college president in the United States is up to 60.7 so many are retiring. I'm 47 so I have a few years to go. Happily for me, the Trustees have renewed my contract through at least June 2019 and I am very grateful for their support! Sadly, while I'm one of the younger Kansas community college presidents, I'm the one without hair. I don't think that is fair at all.

This spring we are saying goodbye to several NCCC employees who have truly made a difference. Several are moving on to bigger institutions or bigger positions, while others are retiring after years of phenomenal service to the college. We have lost several folks this year, such as Amber Burge, our Athletic Director and Dr. Tony Brown, who has moved on to Baker University. Here are several other folks that are leaving our NCCC family.

Emily Kasprzak, our Theatre Instructor, is leaving us for a job at the University of Saint Mary in Leavenworth. Emily injected such energy and enthusiasm into that program, putting on wonderful shows such as the recent "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum." The attendance for our shows was way up and more and more students and community members were involved. She even wrote a play about the history of Chanute. Her classes were popular and her students learned a great deal. She made quite a difference in the short time she was here.

One of the two vice presidents of the college is moving on too. Jim Genandt has been with NCCC for the past four years. In that time his team helped us through our reaccreditation process, opened the Eastern Kansas Rural Technology Center in Garnett, created the HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) program, wrote successful grants, and, coming this fall, will offer new technology classes in Lawrence, Kansas. He, Sarah Robb and Marie Garner helped create a new strategic plan for the college to help propel us into the future. Jim is quick to say that all of these accomplishments were team efforts, but, as the team leader, he deserves credit too. Jim will be the new President at Manhattan Area Technical College and we wish him all the best there.

NCCC also lost a couple of employees that personify our college. Terri Dale is retiring from Neosho County Community College after 27 years of tireless service. She has served as the Administrative Assistant for the President through five different presidents and two interims. Along the way she helped

out in the cashier's office and on the switchboard as well as serving as the athletic administrative assistant. She also served as Clerk of the Board for many years. (At Neosho, folks have to wear a lot of hats and fulfill lots of different roles. Terri always has lent a hand where needed.) Most recently she was promoted to HR Director. Terri has made such a difference at our college and will be greatly missed.

Another NCCC Legend is stepping down this year. Charles Babb is retiring after 24 years of service. Charles taught computers and mathematics to scores of students over that time. He started our local chapter of the national Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society for two-year colleges, which is thriving today. He helped to create our honors program, developed the computer information systems curriculum, and put in hundreds of hours of community service. He even started our late night breakfast for students before finals, a tradition that continues to this day. Along the way Charles won Employee of the Year from students and Advisor of the Year from the national office of Phi Theta Kappa.

I want to thank all those who have worked at the college and have moved on. I have said it many times, the College may be eternal but the employees are all temps. I'm currently reading resumes and scheduling interviews for replacements. It is sad to see people go, but it is exciting to see what the hiring process will bring – possible new ideas, new enthusiasm, and new direction. The College will endure with the addition of new faces.

It is up to each employee, whether for 4 or 27 years, to make a difference in the lives of students and the community while they have the chance. I want to personally thank not just those mentioned in this article but all those who have worked at NCCC and helped us advance our mission to enrich our communities and our students' lives. You have made a difference. The ripple effect of your time with us will extend for years because you have helped people live a better life. Thank you all for your service. And remember, once a Panther, always a Panther!

I welcome your comments and questions at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).