

The fall semester begins on Monday and I could not be more excited! It's so great to see the students arrive on campus, getting their books, looking for their classes and starting a whole new chapter to their lives. After a summer filled with budget meetings, committees, federal and state reports and all of the necessary evils of the job, it's so great to be reminded about why we do what we do – students and student success.

Our enrollment this year has stabilized since being down last year. Many of our older students who came to us after the recession started in 2008 to get retrained for new careers did just that and have gone back to work. In fact, in 2009 the year after the recession started NCCC had a 21% increase in enrollment. Now the economy is improving a bit and our enrollment last year indicates that with us starting the year down about 5%. For all 2015 we are flat in terms of enrollment when compared with 2014. We were able to “diversify” and offer more courses in new locations including at the Peaslee Center in Lawrence. There we will help bring a healthy group of technical education courses to Lawrence Public Schools and to adult students in the area.

This year we have many new faces at College in various positions. Several folks retired and others moved on to make way for new people and internal promotions. Hiring is always a mystery. You develop the best process you can of interviews, skill demonstrations, reference checks and the like to hire the best person you can. Still, you get surprises.

Once I had an employee come for their first day and all went well for the morning training, or so I thought. The person went to lunch, then called to say, “My keys are in my desk. I’m not coming back.” That was a short tenure at the college! The cake-taker was an instructor that had accepted a tentative offer to teach for us, an offer that must be confirmed from by the Board of Trustees, which, usually is no big deal. During the Board meeting, after she had been confirmed, I sent her a text message congratulating her on being officially hired. She texted back, “I resign.” Total time employed at the College: about 90 seconds.

Of course, along with these two hires we have folks like LuAnn Hauser who’s been with NCCC for 32 years. There’s also Ben Smith and Linda Jones who have been with us for 30 years. Me? I’m starting my 13<sup>th</sup> year at the College. My girls were 1 and 3 when we moved here and now I have an 8<sup>th</sup> grader and a sophomore. Time does fly.

We have made some great hires this summer including Kathy McMillian, our new Human Relations Director, Lindsay Reustle, biological science instructor, and Dusty Shaffer the new theatre instructor. In athletics we added Rafael Simmons as the head coach for soccer and Mindy Covey, the new head cheer coach. These folks have hit the ground running and I could not be more pleased. I love bringing in fresh faces with new ideas and new ways of looking at things. But we also love hiring from within.

At NCCC we require that every supervisor look for talent in their area and encourage that person to think about the possibility of being trained for a promotion. Essentially, we are charged with finding our replacement and preparing them for that transition. Sometimes this plan results in someone moving on to another job. For instance, my past Vice President for Student Learning is now a president at a

technical college in the state. I've lost several employees to other colleges as we have done our job getting them ready for that new position.

I don't mind it when they move on so much because I know who we hired in the first place. We believe in hiring ambitious people who want to move the College forward. While employed here they bring enthusiasm, drive, and a lot of great ideas. They often accomplish wonderful things while on staff. NCCC has opened new campuses, grown from the 18<sup>th</sup> largest community college to the 10<sup>th</sup> largest, led the State in student success measures, earned millions of dollars in grants, and won national awards. I have been told by State folks, "When we want something done, we call Neosho." It's our ambitious employees that make those things happen.

I know that the downside is that ambitious people do ambitious things, which may include moving on to a new college if we don't have a spot available for them at the right time. That's the price you sometimes pay for many years of ambitious work.

But often the transition works out great! We believe in promoting from within and we have made some great hires lately. Internally promoted employees understand the institution well, love the area they live in, have a sense of history of the college, and generally fit well with the employees. It makes for a great transition.

For instance, Sarah Robb, our new Vice President for Student Learning worked her way up from instructor, to coordinator, to now VP. She is going to be great! Mike Saddler, the new Athletic Director started out as an assistant coach and worked his way up the ladder as well. He took over a few months ago and has already made a huge impact in that department. Shareese Hicks was an assistant coach and now she's the head coach for track and cross country and we expect big things from her. And Kyle Seufert, who came to us as Assistant Maintenance Supervisor is now Director of Facilities and will keep all our campuses looking great!

Of course I love the "train your own replacement" policy as I was a direct benefactor of it. Our former President, Dr. Vicky Smith, started training me to be a president about three years before she moved on to her next job. As a result, when she left we did not have the awkward year of interim president(s) and long searches with all of the uncertainty that comes with it. The Board interviewed and promoted me within about a month after Dr. Smith announced her resignation. That was five years ago that I was named President, and, wow, it has been a fantastic journey! I am very grateful to her for helping me advance my career and, of course, to the Board of Trustees, for giving me the opportunity to lead Neosho County Community College.

I tell the staff and faculty that although the College has been here since 1936, all the employees, no matter how long we have served, are temps. It is our duty to make an impact on our students and our communities in our brief window of opportunity that we work here. We must make our mark on the 79 year history of NCCC, and leave a better, stronger College for the next group of temps that will take over. I have been honored to have been a part of that 79 year history and, Board of Trustees willing, I hope to keep making that mark for years to come.

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to email me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).