

Another academic year has started at the college, filled with the normal amounts of excitement and expectation. Each year is special in its own right for me. We often have new employees that I'm excited to see spring into action, or there is a new project on the horizon I'm looking forward seeing come to fruition, or there is a new program starting that brings new opportunities for our students. We have those items in abundance this year!

We have lots of new employees whom I'm excited to get to know and see what new outlooks and experiences they bring to the positions. We have made some amazing hires! Among the many hires we have added career and personal counseling services for our students with a licensed counselor now on staff. I am hopeful that students make use of this new resource.

In the category of projects, we have our new Ross Lane property that will be fully coming on line over the next six months as we add employee offices, athletic indoor practice space, and additional storage space. And we are in talks about other exciting uses for that facility, including future workforce programs.

We have just launched our new house on Lafayette with three students in residence. I'm excited to add that capability and options for our students! They will be able to have a place to stay over semester breaks when the college is closed, which is a great opportunity.

And we added a new location for our welding program – a fifth location! This one is at the new technical education center at Ottawa Public Schools. I am looking forward to seeing that program grow as our other programs have.

However, despite all these new aspects, one thing makes this start of the year extra-special for me personally. My daughter, Abrielle, is a new fulltime student at NCCC! I have always sympathized with what parents must feel like when their child goes to college, but now, I can empathize.

Abrielle has graduated from high school and has wisely chosen NCCC as her institution. Yes, you can assume I helped her with that decision. Although, I have to say she has been asserting her own decisions lately as well. She recently informed my wife, Jennifer, and me that as an 18-year-old she can make her own decisions. She announced that her first decision was that she can wear novelty socks and sandals if she wants to (one of her Mom's former no-no fashion rules). So if you see her wearing her sloth socks and sandals, please congratulate her on her first adult decision.

I have been part of college opening day as an educator for 27 years now. And while I am always happy about beginning the academic year, I have to say that it was becoming a little routine for me. Doing something 26 times in a row before will do that to you. But this year, I am seeing the process through her eyes as a new college student and it is very refreshing.

I am excited, nervous, anxious, concerned, and proud, all at the same time. It has been a wonderful reminder to me that each start of an academic year is somebody's first day on campus. It is the first day of a new life, even if the student stays at home while they attend. She will have so many new experiences both in and out of the classroom. She'll have opportunities to grow as a person to become more of who she wants and works to be, both personally and professionally.

Will she join a club? Explore a new college major? Make new life-long friends? Get inspired to help others? Learn from failure? Gain confidence from success? All of this and so much more lies in front of

her as she and all of our new students start this journey and we at Neosho County Community College are here to help make it awesome.

At NCCC we have an obligation to make that college experience extraordinary, to truly enrich our students' lives as our mission statement says. We have assembled an awesome group of faculty who care deeply about our students and want to see them succeed. We have a small army of staff members who are here to help students like Abrielle be successful in all aspects of student life, from required paperwork through extra-curricular activities, from free tutoring, to free printing, and even free cappuccino. And we will strive to treat all students like they are the President's daughter or son.

As parents Jen and I have tried to instill good moral values in our girls, a sense of civic duty, a strong work ethic, and, most importantly, a capacity to love and be loved. It's was always going to be difficult and exciting to see them start out on their own without us in their lives every minute of every day. We get to ease into that a bit as our oldest is living with us one more year to attend our local community college. Still, she is experiencing college for herself and is free to make her own decisions and learn from her own mistakes. I know NCCC will help her continue on her chosen path, and it's exciting to see.

Even if she is wearing novelty socks and sandals while she does it.

If you have any questions about this article or anything else feel free to contact me at binbody@neosho.edu.