

The big day is nearly here! On Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, we will close our “old” campus on Beech Street and move into our new facility at 900 East Logan in Ottawa and classes will resume after Spring Break on March 28<sup>th</sup> at the new facility. Employees are packing boxes, labeling things and getting everything ready. This project was a long time in the planning and it is so exciting to see it come to fruition.

I would like to take this opportunity to say goodbye to an old friend, our Beech Street campus and to tell you how we came to the decision to build the new campus.

In 2004 we had a good problem. Our 18,000 square foot facility in Ottawa was rapidly filling. We had grown from about 6,500 credit hours produced there in 1996 to over 15,000 credit hours produced in 2004. Our parking lot was too small, we were running out of classrooms, and we were thinking about expanding the programs offered at Ottawa. But we also knew that there was a big rift between the level of facilities at the Chanute campus with its many buildings and the level of the facility at the old Beech Street campus. The Beech campus was a metal building on very limited acreage. We wanted to make the Ottawa campus a quality facility, equal in service to our Chanute campus. After all, they are all NCCC students no matter where they are located.

Additionally, we wanted to attract students to the north campus, students that had a choice of what college to attend. Research tells us that the quality of the campus is one of the most important reasons students choose one college over another. Certainly, the Beech Street campus was not a selling point to prospective students.

As we added new programs and new faculty, space got tighter and tighter. Nearly all faculty share an office, which makes advising students privately difficult. The science faculty have their offices in the prep room of the labs surrounded by lab storage. Our office staff are crammed into two cubical areas with registration, financial aid, and the cashier all within a few feet of each other. Our tech person has her office in a converted janitor’s closet. On a busy day, and there are a lot of busy days, it was loud and stuffed with people. We were even scheduling classes in the library.

If we wanted to build something new, though, we wanted to make sure that we could comfortably afford it and that we would not use either state tax money or local tax money to build the building. So, in 2004, we began saving. I know that is a novel concept in this day and age, but we saved our fee money collected from students. Before we were ready to build we had saved \$1.6 million in student fees paid by students who live outside of Neosho County. (For Neosho County readers, remember that NCCC Ottawa returns to the College about \$1 million more in revenue than it spends each year. If this were a fast food chain, NCCC Ottawa would be our “Franchise of the Year” award recipient every year.)

We installed the online campus in 2004, too. That bought us time, as much of the enrollment at Ottawa switched from face-to-face to the online campus and growth slowed. With that extra time opportunities with local entities were fully explored, but in the end, it was decided by our Board of Trustees that we would move forward and in Nov. 2009 the plan was put into place to build our new campus. The total project is \$8.1 million dollars and is paid for with some donations, some grant funds, the sale of our Beech Street campus, but with the vast majority paid for by NCCC Ottawa students past, present, and

future through fees. It truly is the campus that students built. That is why it will be an Ottawa student that cuts the ribbon at the formal ceremony on May 5<sup>th</sup>. It's their campus.

In June 2010, we broke ground in an empty field and, incredibly, just 10 months later, 52,000 square feet are ready to go. Many classrooms, labs, offices (private offices!), bookstore, a 100 seat auditorium, The Teaching and Learning Center for tutoring and studying complete with a fireplace, and a simulated hospital, one of the first of its kind for Kansas – all primed and ready for students.

I walk through it now with its smell of fresh paint, thinking about one of my predecessors, President JC Sanders, and what he must have thought in 1968 when the main Chanute campus was nearly completed. He was a new president that year, too. I'll bet he was thinking about all of those students' lives that his new campus will change for the better, about all of the community members that the Chanute facility will serve. Its 43 years later and that campus has served so many people, changed so many lives, and given rise to this new campus in Ottawa. I think of the many students' lives the new campus will touch and how it will serve and enrich that community long after I am gone. It is a wonderful feeling to leave a mark.

I want to thank all of the Ottawa employees who had to put up with less than ideal working conditions at the old campus for many years. You have earned a better workplace. I want to thank our Board of Trustees for their vision to build this new facility. I want to thank our project leader Ben Smith and the members of the design team who put in many hours discussing and debating each and every decision. Thanks also goes to our team who did such a herculean effort to put the building up so quickly and with such quality, Lloyd Builders, Devore & Associates, both of Ottawa, Bartlett and West, and Health Facilities Group. But mostly I want to thank our students for choosing NCCC Ottawa. You made this possible.

On May 5<sup>th</sup> from 3-5pm we will have our Grand Opening Ceremony and ribbon cutting. I want to invite all of you to attend and get a tour of the new campus. It is stunning! Isn't it great when something so anticipated exceeds your expectations? Well, it has mine. Come on May 5<sup>th</sup>. I'll give you a tour and show you why.

Goodbye to our old campus at Beech. Thousands of students passed through its doors. Hundreds of nurses were created. Many hundreds more started there then completed a four-year degree elsewhere. It is like saying goodbye to a dear friend.

Hello to our new friend on Logan Street, one that will serve our mission of enriching our communities and our students' lives for years to come.