

I'll admit it, I am a technophile. I love technology and gadgets of all types. For instance, I collect wrist watches that do various tricks like playing videos, or atomic clock synchronization. I'm a victim of too many James Bond movies, I guess. I am my own Q Branch. This love of technology comes from my belief that technology can help us improve our world (and the fact that it often lights up).

There will never be a technological substitution for a caring, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic instructor paired with an engaged motivated student. However, technology does have the power to augment so many aspects of the educational process and improve the student's overall college experience.

Many years ago the college began charging a technology fee to students in order to provide adequate resources to advance their technological needs. It is one of the purposes of NCCC that we prepare our students to live and work in our modern society and that means a high level of literacy in technology. That fee helps the College provide these resources for students. With great pride I can tell you that NCCC is one of the most technologically advanced community colleges in Kansas. Here are just a few examples of some of the advanced capabilities NCCC students enjoy.

Our library boasts over 80,000 electronic books for "checkout" through a myriad of electronic devices. Gone are the days of traveling to the main campus to look up a book through the Dewey Decimal System, looking for it on the shelf and praying that someone didn't check it out before you. Now students can download it 24 hours a day from their home anywhere in the world. We have countless full-text articles in many different databases also accessible from anywhere even through a smartphone. I remember filling my pockets with hundreds of nickels to run off copies of articles that I spent hours tracking down. Now they can get the articles in seconds from hundreds of research journals. The Chapman Library does not have to carry a subscription to each individual journal, or store hundreds of back issues. We just pay our fee and link the database to our website. Students are so lucky today! We even have many video databases so instructors don't have to have DVDs or tapes of films to show in class. They can just access the database in the classroom or through their online classes. Amazing!

Our classrooms still resemble the classes of old with a wipe board and colored markers instead of a chalk board. But now we have projectors and SmartBoards in every NCCC classroom. The SmartBoard allows the instructor to bring up anything from a computer and electronically write on it in front of the class. They can bring up a map of Europe during WWII and draw the Allied advance or a picture of a heart and show the blood flow through the chambers. Each drawing that the instructor does during class can be saved and posted on a class website for the students to download later.

Every section of every course has its own website where instructors can post supplemental materials, create assignments, lead class forum discussions, and chat one-on-one with the students. The system is called InsideNC and it is fully integrated with all aspects of the student's files. So students can enroll in classes, see their current grades, check their bill, get important announcements and work on their assignments, all on the same website. We even offer "live" tutoring on a myriad of subjects through this site. In the coming months, we will be offering 24 hour technical support for students who may be having an issue with the site. Our data shows that the most popular time students are working on InsideNC is 2am so 24 hour help is needed. At least "pulling an all-nighter" hasn't changed over the years.

With so much relying on the internet at NCCC, we have added many ways students can access it. We offer Wi-Fi or wireless internet connectivity everywhere on Chanute and Ottawa campuses, even outside between the buildings at Chanute. You can sit on the grass outside and surf the web! There are

many open computer labs in several buildings for students to use. NCCC-Chanute enjoys wonderful internet connectivity through our available bandwidth (the amount of connectivity) and we are in the process of greatly improving our bandwidth at the Ottawa campus with an eye to achieving 100 mbps. (That's really fast by the way!)

To guard against plagiarism, we have an online service called Turn-It-In.com. Students upload their papers to this service and it checks the contents of that paper against the entire internet and every paper ever turned into the service from the hundreds of colleges and universities that subscribe to it. If students attempt to "copy and paste" someone else's work into their paper, this service will detect that and notifies the instructor to investigate further.

We also excel in safety technology. There are 90 cameras at the Chanute campus and 32 at Ottawa watching hallways, rooms, and parking lots, all of them recording on hard drives accessible from any location with password protection of course. Some cameras are very special and have the capability to follow movement on their own. These century-guard cameras can even notify security when someone appears to be "casing" the area with erratic motion. The cameras have solved many issues that would have escaped our notice before.

For emergencies, we use the RAVE system. This service notifies students of important information such as a weather warning or other emergency. RAVE sends a text message to their phones, sends an email to their account, post emergency notices on the website, sends a verbal alert to stations placed around campus, and even takes over all computers on the campus network to display the information. All of this nearly simultaneously! If something bad were to happen, students will know about it very quickly.

We are in the process of changing many of our locks to "access control" where employees and students use a proximity ID card to open certain doors on campus such as the front door of the residence hall. This lets the students in but unexpected visitors out. We don't have to worry about lost keys anymore. If a card is lost, we just deactivate it and issue a new one! No more changing hundreds of locks!

Our newest technology will be electronic way-finding. We will be stationing touch screens on campus that contain interactive maps of the college so that visitors can type in a person or department they are looking for and the map will show them the way.

We are very proud of our level of technology at NCCC and are always looking at ways to improve the student's experience. Many thanks goes to NCCC's own Q Branch - Ben Smith, Kerry Ranabargar, Jon Siebert, Dwight Smith, Marie Gardner, Susan Weisenberger, Donna Shumway, and Devin Meyers who maintain and advance our excellent technology!

As always I welcome your thoughts and questions at binbody@neosho.edu.