

NCCC's Grade Card for 2014-2015

It was graduation last week and NCCC awarded 530 degrees and certificates! Wow! There are now so many new nurses, occupational therapy assistants, surgical technologists, certified nursing assistants, welders, health information technologists, certified construction workers, and on and on. Not to mention all of our Associate of Arts and Science degree holders who are typically on their way to the university for their next degree.

Besides their diploma, the students will also receive their grades from their classes. Discussion on the value of course grades rages on in the education community, both at the K-12 and higher education levels. Some see them as relics of the past that do a poor job of summing up all of the different outcomes a student has learned in a course. I guess I am "old school" in that I like grades. As a student I saw them as a goal to be reached and a measurement of not only my learning, but my determination and effort. Grades showed me where I needed to improve, but also allowed me a sense of satisfaction when I got the grade I thought I deserved.

I was a pretty high scoring student in college, but not the highest. In fact, I earned two Cs in my undergraduate career. Yeah, I'm not proud of those. One was in Elementary Statistics at Oklahoma State University. It was one of those auditorium classes, the only one I was dumb enough to take. So 300 of my best friends and I attempted to learn stats with an instructor that seemed not too excited to be there either. And the class had no required attendance policy. It was brutal listening to his lectures. I skipped a lot and missed some assignments. In the end, I pulled it together and with the help of some friends, taught myself the stats.

When I made a 100% on the final exam, I was accused of cheating. I had to do several problems in front of the instructor to prove I knew my stuff. He apologized for accusing me of academic dishonesty then got mad at me for blowing off the work that I clearly could have done. I earned that C. I got what I deserved. I didn't blow off work after that, and tried to maintain perfect attendance in the rest of my college classes. Lesson learned.

The College, too, grades itself in many different ways, trying to learn lessons and improve along the way. Chief among these grading methods is our Institutional Effectiveness Dashboard. It measures NCCC in many different ways against our mission and purposes statement. Are we really accomplishing the things we set out to do? This is what your elected Board of Trustees asks me every year. If you would like to see our dashboard or my yearly report to the Trustees, please go to our website at www.neosho.edu. Once you are there, use the A-Z index and find the President's Goal Report page under P and you can read all about it.

All in all, we had a great year at the College! I would give us an A- overall. We still have work to do in some areas, but in others we have had our best results in years!

Here are some accomplishments from that report that I am particularly proud of:

General Education success is measured each year through our robust assessment system. Last year, we increased our scores in all four of our defined categories of general education (Analytical Thinking [80%], Citizenship [91%], Communication [94%], and Healthy Lifestyle [93%]). Faculty members have been specifically engaged in the category of Analytical thinking and have increased this score from 72% in 2011-2012.

We implemented a Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) certificate and degree program at the Goppert Eastern Kansas Rural Technology Center located in Garnett. Staff completed the renovation of the HVAC classroom and lab. This was done almost entirely with grants and gifts!

The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) reaccredited the College for another 10 years. We are one of the few programs in Kansas to be accredited by this prestigious organization.

Every year the Kansas Board of Regents measures the percent of students who either graduate or successfully transfer on to a university. NCCC has once again earned the highest KBOR Student Success Index among the community colleges in Kansas (tied with Pratt). I'm VERY proud of this one!

NCCC graduates (tied with Pratt) earned more money their first year out of college than any other community college in the state and more than the students who earned bachelor degrees, over \$41,000 a year according to the Kansas Department of Labor. Wow! How's that for an economic engine!

We developed a fall 2015 schedule for allied health, construction technology, HVAC, and welding courses in Lawrence at Free State High School and the Peaslee Center. This is a new area for us to offer classes and we are very excited for the future at Lawrence!

It was a great year for community service! The Ottawa campus was presented with the 2014 Volunteer of the Year award by the Franklin County Historical Society. The Chanute Campus received the volunteer award from Chanute Main Street for the "Cover the Earth with Kindness" event which resulted in substantial donations to area food banks.

The NCCC Foundation increased the number of endowed scholarships and was able to increase the funds given in scholarships. It also increased the number of people who are interested in donating to the College. It was the best year for the Foundation since the last year of the deferred tax credits.

We completed an \$884,000 renovation of four science labs in Stoltz Hall with addition of a new prep lab. And we added the of new Natural Science Exhibit glass wall in Stoltz Hall for all of our living specimens.

NCCC completed the renovation of Chapman Learning Center (CLC) with additional classroom and four new offices/meeting rooms. And we added the new coffee bar and offer 24-hour swipe-card access to the Center for students, a first for Kansas community colleges.

We added new Safety Officer positions at both campuses replacing our past contracted service. In just a few short months we have seen a marked improvement employee and student satisfaction with this change and have expanded hours for safety officers on campus.

One of the key indicators of success for any college is retention of students, or how many students come back for another year. Community college retention is always low as many students are not trying to get an associates degree. A large number only plan to stay for one year, then go on to a university, or are involved in a one-year certificate program and don't have a reason to come back for a second year. But some do plan on staying and finishing that two-year degree. I'm very happy to report that our retention rate, or the percentage of students who returned for a second year, was up 8% over the previous year at 52%.

Fiscally the college had a very strong year. We refinanced the residence hall bonds to certificates of participation freeing over \$670,000 in designated funds and saving the College an additional \$1 million through lower interest rates over the next three years. After June 30th of this year we will have completed our goal of having 20% of our general fund in reserve. Those of you who remember what the College finances were like 12 years ago should be very pleased to hear this. It has taken a long time to achieve this goal.

Beyond these moneys, we have also set aside what may be required to pay back Ash Grove due to their protests for 2012 and 2013 tax years, about \$2.7 million total. We are also in good shape to withstand the very recent unexpected developments regarding their 2014 taxes, all without impacting day-to-day operations. We have been cutting back in many ways over the last few years in departmental budgets while raising tuition and fees to the students in order to prepare for this moment. There are twelve fewer positions at the College than there were two years ago, mostly achieved through attrition (the normal resignations and retirements we have every year, and just not rehiring those positions) but a few through not renewing employee contracts.

Next month I'll give you part two of this article where I'll discuss the many successes of the athletic department for 2014-2015. SPOILER ALERT: It was another great year there too!

I'm very proud of all my employees who helped make all of this happen! I want to say a special thank you to those employees who won't be with us next year due to retirements or are moving on to their next jobs. You will be missed! Thank you all for your service. Thanks to our wonderful Board of Trustees, whose leadership and vision for NCCC makes all of this happen year after year. You give up so much of your time and energy to this institution. I am truly thankful for all of you.

And a special thanks to you, our constituents, who support our College in ways large and small that made all of this success this year possible.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at binbody@neosho.edu.