

It's November once again. The Inbodys are planning to get together this year in Oklahoma, something that we weren't able to do last year. But thanks to vaccines, booster shots, and some unfortunate natural immunity though breakthrough cases, we will be back in one room again for the holidays.

My Mom has been planning this day for about two years now so she is excited. I'm excited for her ice cream pumpkin pie, a family favorite. Occasionally an extra pie gets made and finds its way home with me. That's a lot to be thankful for right there!

I usually write this November article listing folks I'm thankful for at the college, and there are many. Staff, faculty, and administration have all done another excellent job this year performing their duties despite another year of COVID protocols and difficult times. I greatly appreciate them. But if you'll allow me I would like to focus on a few very special people that I'm especially thankful for.

Neosho County Community College is not run by me and my team. Sure, the day-to-day operations are, but the folks truly responsible are our six-member Board of Trustees. They are elected on four-year terms from Neosho County residents. The position is unpaid. In fact, you have to pay a fee just to get your name on the ballot to run for the position.

The time commitment is significant. You have to attend monthly board meetings of course, which can last up to four hours on occasion. If a board member tells you the length of the meeting is because of my President's Report, that's an exaggeration. I'm short and to the point in all my communication. Case in point - this monthly article. It's not a "Wall of Text" or "about 200 words too long." It's a finely crafted heavily edited exercise in succinct communication. Ok, maybe it takes me something like 15 minutes to give a 2 minute welcome speech, but once I get to talking about the college it's hard to leave things out. There's so much good going on!

Besides the monthly meetings there are also required board retreats twice a year for three hours or so. They are sent thick board packets of action items before each meeting and have the occasional report to review - light reading such as accreditation reviews, bid specification, and the yearly college audit.

They are expected to attend trainings to be a better trustee, usually multi-day events. Two board members attend regular meetings from outside organizations like the Kansas Association of Community College Trustees or the NCCC Foundation.

They go into executive sessions about performance reviews where someone's job is on the line, or union negotiations, or the occasional lawsuit. The pressure can be significant during these sessions as you can imagine.

They get stopped in Walmart or at dinner at a restaurant, peppered with questions about the college. Or they get the occasional letter where someone did not care for a decision the administration made.

All of this happens when things are going well, like they are now. Imagine if we were embroiled in a controversy like at a few other colleges – institutions dealing with accreditation issues, program terminations, ex-presidents suing the board, CEO turnover, etc. The board would have to be at the center of that controversy.

Did I mention it is unpaid, and that they are doing it because they love the college and the impact it is having in the community? Well, it is and they are.

For all of their leadership and commitment to NCCC, its employees, students and outreach, I truly appreciate our Board of Trustees – Chair Dennis Peters, Vice Chair Lori Kiblinger, David Peter, Kevin Berthot, Charlie Boaz, and Jenny Westerman. They have served and continue to serve with distinction and I greatly appreciate them. I'll focus on three whose terms expire at the end of the year.

Congratulations to Charlie Boaz re-elected to the board this year. Charlie first joined the board in 2007 and I'm looking forward to working with him through another term. Charlie is a strong advocate of the college and takes his role as trustee very seriously. He also knows just about EVERYBODY in Chanute and beyond. Think of him as a reverse Will Rodgers. Will Rodgers famously said, "I never met a man I didn't like." With Charlie, everyone who meets him likes him very much. Those connections with the community have really paid dividends to the college over the years.

Two of our current members are going off the board in January, Jenny and Kevin. Jenny Westerman has been on the board for six years. She has brought a wonderful perspective to the meetings that I greatly appreciate. Her experiences working for Greenbush helping children and their families has been a tremendous benefit to the board. She is always prepared and made every effort to be a great board member. Thank you for your six years of service, Jenny!

Kevin Berthot has been on the board for 20 years! He has been Vice Chair of the board in the past and has seen us through some dark times. Some of you may remember the days when the college was at the center of controversy. It was standing room only at our board meetings. We were on probation from our accreditor and had very little reserves in the bank. Kevin and Dave are the last trustees who are still on the board now that led us through those dark times. Kevin has seen three different presidents in his tenure, me included. Kevin, thank you for all you have done for NCCC!

Soon we will have two newly elected trustees Martha McCoy and Bryan Shultz. Congratulations to them and welcome to the board! They will be sworn in at the January trustees meeting and begin their training to be a board member. I appreciate anyone who puts their name on a ballot especially for the right reasons of wanting to help. I look forward to working with Martha and Bryan in the new year!

When I was Vice President I sometimes found it hard to please my boss, the President. But as President I have six bosses to please. I thought when I made the transition to CEO that it would be the most challenging part of the job – keeping not just one but six people satisfied all the time. It has turned out to be the most enjoyable part of my job. Each trustee has had the best interest of the college and its mission first and foremost in their minds and that has made all the difference.

So with a heart of gratitude and appreciation I say thank you to those who have served as trustee, those who are currently serving, and to those who are about to serve. Together you have helped so many students meet their educational goals, and greatly enriched our communities.

And now, ice cream pumpkin pie!

If you have any question about this subject, want to swap pie recipes, or anything else please contact me at binbody@neosho.edu.