

Have you ever looked back at something you wrote from your past, especially your distant past, and just...cringed? You might have found an old letter you wrote or maybe a paper from high school or college and thought, "Wow that was awful writing. And boy were my conclusions wrong."

We progress in writing skills the more we read and the more we write. I tell my students that although we have fancy plagiarism detection services, we really don't need them. There is a fairly noticeable difference between the paragraphs written by an 18-year-old who has all of three research papers under his belt and a professional writer with 20+ years of experience from whom you stole some passages.

But also our thoughts and conclusions in those old papers turn out to be just wrong. We were perhaps a little naïve years ago. The world can wise us up pretty quickly the longer we live and the more things we experience. You may look back at some of the things you thought in the past and say, "Geez, looking back, that was wildly optimistic." Or the data used to draw conclusions changed making our predictions of the future wrong.

Normally, when I sit down to write this column, I start with some news about the college I want to talk about. Then I try to think of an entertaining story that I can link to it, often about my Mother-in Law. Sorry Judy, but you are the source of so many great stories. Like the time you lost a shoe getting in the car on the way to a restaurant, then decided to fake that you hurt your foot so we wouldn't get kicked out of the restaurant for you not wearing two shoes, only to tell everyone at the restaurant that you really didn't hurt your foot. We didn't get kicked out, and later found the shoe in the driveway.

This time though, when looking for ideas I decided to look back on my past columns for some inspiration. I found an article I wrote in February 2011. It was about a new college funding formula that looked like it was going to be passed that year. In the article I explained how in 2011 we got compensated from the state – a flat rate per credit hour. Before the formula it didn't matter how expensive a particular class was to offer, we got compensated at the same rate. So we got the same money for offering very expensive nursing classes as we did for inexpensive lecture-based courses. NCCC was finally going to be fairly compensated for providing these high-cost programs that produce much-needed workers for the area and the state.

And the formula became law!

But nothing changed in our compensation.

Before it passed a "proviso" was added that froze the amount of money each college received and allowed what was to be a three-year period to get ready for the formula. Three years isn't bad. We will just hold on until 2014 and then we will see this finally happen.

Its 2022 now, and we are celebrating the 11th year of not using the formula for general enrollment. And in the 11 years NCCC has lost close to \$10 million in state aid that we earned through enrollments in high-need, high-wage, high-cost programs. For many years over that span Neosho had the unenviable distinction of being the most underfunded community college in the state according to the formula.

Brian(2011) probably should not have been so optimistic about the formula. He also overused commas in his writing.

However, this week the state budget was approved. So, at long last, here is Brian(2022) – with fewer commas- telling you that I’m cautiously optimistic that the formula will be turned on in 2022-2023. It’s a little more difficult for me to be excited this time. Once bitten, twice shy. However, after working for so long to see this moment I’m still pretty happy about it!

Come July 1, 2022 when the formula is turned on only 2 of the 19 presidents who worked to get the formula passed in 2011 will still be in office, me being one of them. NCCC has been proud to offer the programs that get students great paying jobs, like Nursing, OTA, Surgical Tech, Allied Health, Welding, Construction, HVAC, Electrical, Aerostructures, and many others. The formula makes keeping and advancing those programs easier. It also means that new programs that we have launched for Fall 2022, such as Dietary Manager and Diagnostic Medical Sonography, will be much more sustainable. It also makes it more attractive to add additional high-cost but highly-needed programs in the future. Plans are already underway there!

It will be nice after 11 years to receive what the formula says we should get. I remain hopeful that in future years the legislature can afford to keep funding the formula at 100%.

There is a significant workforce shortage right now. America’s and Kansas’ community colleges are important players in the effort to produce more skilled labor quickly. I am so grateful to the legislature for passing a budget that included full funding for our formula and to the governor for signing it! Thank you all!

This column is number 140 I have written as President of NCCC. (Thank you Chanute Tribune for the opportunity!) I’m sure there are more “cringey” articles among the other 139 that I wish I could rewrite now with different conclusions and perhaps fewer commas. I wish that article from 2011 was right. Who knows, I may be writing you years from now and saying how wrong Brian(2022) was.

However, I prefer to think I’ll be writing to you in the future to say what a monumental moment turning the formula on was and what a tremendous positive impact it had on NCCC, the State of Kansas, employers, and graduates! While I might be a little less naïve now, I remain optimistic about the future of Neosho County Community College!

If you have any comments or questions about this article, its use of commas, or anything else, feel free to write me at binbody@neosho.edu.