

It finally happened. I knew it was going to, that the day was inevitable, and that we were going to have to adjust. But also, it would make me long for the past, for simpler days now gone by. I'm talking about the dreaded holiday scheduling compromise with the in-laws.

The little core family of my wife and my two daughters have been together at Thanksgiving since our little family was formed 29 years ago, and grew a bit as the girls came along. Sometimes we would host the meal, but sometimes we would travel to a Grandma's house, be it my mom or my Mother-in-Law. However, the four of us would always be together.

But now, one daughter recently got married in April and the other is engaged to be married next March. That means the new or soon-to-be husbands have families to consider too. Why couldn't they both marry orphans? Is that too much to ask? (To be honest, the guys have great families that I like quite a lot. So all is good.)

As a result of these newly formed happy families, I get to celebrate Thanksgiving with them on a different day than Thursday.

Okay, it's not the end of the world. I know that Jen and I will adapt to being without the girls on the "big day" whenever that happens, be it Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc. I also know that what's important is that we are all together at some point. It's just that it is the first time this has happened, and first times are sometimes the hardest. I'll bet it wasn't easy for some of you the first time either.

I also know that missing them on the actual holiday will make me cherish the time we do have together. Change is part of life and so is adapting to that change to make the most of what time you do have. I am so fortunate to have them living close enough that we can see each other on a semi-regular basis. Not all families are that lucky. My wife and I are so fortunate to have the girls, and now their guys, around us for the time that we have them. So we will make the most of that time.

I got to thinking about all of the wonderful employees at the college. I have come to the realization that the college is permanent but all of its employees, me included, are temporary. I've been at the college over twenty years now and there are just a handful of employees who were there in 2003 that are still at the college now. The college has been around since 1936, so we have had a never-ending parade of new, experienced, and departing employees at any time. But along the way those folks have made a lasting impact on the college.

I told you awhile back that the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) was coming to town. That's the group that accredits the college so that the students' credits transfer from one institution to another, and allows us to have access to federal funding such as the Pell grant and the wonderful TRiO and Title III grants. The peer-reviewers from the HLC come here every 10 years to make sure the college is of quality.

Actually we do SO MANY reports for the HLC during that ten years, besides this big report. They hear from us on a yearly basis if not more often some years. So don't get the idea they only check up on us once a decade. It is a lot more often than that. It's just they come to town in person every 10 years and do a FULL re-accreditation.

Well, they came and went in September and wrote their own report on us. That report goes up through an approval process, which takes a LONG time. On Friday November, 17th I finally heard from them, just

in time for Thanksgiving. I am VERY excited to tell you that we got the highest score on that report that we could get – All criteria met with no follow up! They won't be back for another visit until 2033-2034 – I'll be 66 years old then. Yikes!

Things at the college have changed over the past ten years. Lots of wonderful folks have come and gone in that time, many I miss a great deal. But those folks left a lasting impression and helped us get this wonderful result from the re-accreditation process. I am so grateful to the employees from the past that helped make us what we are today.

I am also very grateful for our present employees and all of their hard work that was recognized by the HLC as well. These folks work tirelessly to make every student experience a great one. They are the reason that we are who we are as a college. They have made these great results happen.

Thanks to all of our trustees, both past and present over the past 10 years that put us on track to full re-accreditation. Your leadership has been invaluable.

A special thanks goes to our own Dr. Sarah Robb, who serves as our Accreditation Liaison Officer, as well as being the Vice President for Student Learning. It was her job to get the 85 single-spaced page report done as well as the hundreds of pages of evidence packaged for the HLC team. She did a fantastic job and helped us make the case that all is wonderful at NCCC. Thank you Sarah!

So I'm going to celebrate Thanksgiving on Wednesday this year. But instead of just the four of us, there are now six, as my new (and soon-to-be) sons-in-law will be there too. My family grows. And maybe someday there may be a little family member join us. Who knows? So I had to give up the Big Day, but I get a bigger family in trade. That's not a bad deal.

The college has lost some great employees over the years for one reason or another but have gotten new great employees to replace them. Together these employees have made a wonderful institution. That's not just me talking, that's the opinion of the Higher Learning Commission. Much as I have had to adapt to the changing time and make the best out of a new situation with new family members, so have our employees had to adapt to new situations, requirements, programs, technology, students, etc. Look how great they have done!

Thanks to all of our employees and board members, past and present, for making Neosho County Community College the best it can be! Now we start the next 10-year cycle and do it all over again!

Happy Thanksgiving from the Inbodys (and now also the Mannings and the Finufs)!