

Starting new things can be very exciting, but also a little scary and confusing. Recently my daughter Abrielle started her new job as an elementary school counselor in Augusta. She texted me the morning of her first day of school telling me how nervous and excited she was. I told her the truth. I'm always nervous and excited to start the school year even after 32 years in higher education. There is so much going on that could go wrong, and so much that will go right. What will the year bring? Wonderful accomplishments by the students and employees of course, but also the possibility of terribly bad things.

That's life and the rollercoaster we all live on.

I will mention one story from Abrielle. She has always worked as an hourly employee, turning in a time card her whole working life. Her new boss was explaining that she was on contract until 3:30pm each school day. She then asked, "Ok, great, but how do I turn in my hours for pay if I stay after 3:30pm to get more work done?" Welcome to being a salaried employee, baby. She immediately called her mom who is a middle school counselor, "So you're telling me that all those times you worked past 5pm that was for free?!?" Well, not for free per se, but part of the job sometimes kiddo.

Another academic year at NCCC is starting! It's time once again to begin another fall semester at Neosho County Community College. We have a lot of exciting new things this year and have some great new students to share it with! And things are looking up!

While recently we have seen some years when the enrollment was down a bit (minus 1% last year) right now the enrollment looks really good! We ended the summer semester up 9% over last summer. And it looks like we will start the fall semester up a total of 12% over this time last year not counting our high school enrollments (which are way up too!). Those are impressive numbers!

We will have over 70 international students on campus this year and have added more personnel to help them get adjusted to NCCC and the United States. We have launched a record number of new programs at the Chanute Campus – Plumbing, Electrical, and Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning. Those new programs are at our Mitchell Career and Technology Center. Those labs are online and ready to go!

At Ottawa we will have our first fall semester for Diagnostic Medical Sonography (the folks that run the ultra-sound machine at the doctor's office). That program is up and running since spring but is in full swing now!

All of these new programs were made possible in part through a successful Title III grant - a \$2.25 million grant that help us renovate space, buy equipment and pay for program instructor salaries for the first few years until the programs can be self-sustaining. The grant also paid for a paralegal program that we started a few years ago! We are very grateful for this grant and all the good that it is doing.

Ok, I just glanced through this article and see that I have overused exclamation points. It reads like my formerly teenaged daughters used to talk – loud and excited! So, I'll try to cut down on them for the rest of the article.

We have been very fortunate with receiving a Kansas Challenge Grant through the Kansas Department of Commerce for work on the Mitchell Career and Technology Center. The "challenge" of the Challenge Grant is to match the funds from the state with other donations. Thanks to the very generous gift from

the Mitchells we were able to do just that – bringing in another \$1.5 million for the tech building. There we put on a new roof and built a fancy concrete parking lot. And soon we will be working on the new automotive lab – scheduled to open fall 2024 – all thanks to the Challenge Grant.

We had Move-In Day on Saturday, August 19, with many students from around the state and around the world took up residence for the year in one of our halls. They were filled with as much excitement as I am now! The energy from the students is always powerful. They are happy, excited, anxious, scared, sad, and confused all at the same time. It's quite a day! It would have been better if it wasn't 103 degrees, but overall a great day.

We are primed and ready for all these great students with wonderful employees, fantastic services and tremendous courses and programs. It's going to be another wonderful year!

I know that like Abrielle in her new job the year for the students will be filled with ups and downs, successes and hard lessons learned, laughter and tears, life-long memories and things they might want to forget.

That's the rollercoaster of life and we are ready for another ride!

If you have any questions about this article, or anything else, please contact me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).