

Thank you. That's a phrase we don't say enough these days. In an age when people can send a message instantaneously and often anonymously to nearly everyone else in the world that is on the network, what is shared is not always words of thanks. Often it's something the internet calls "trolling" or hateful comments meant to demoralize and demean. These are comments that no decent person would say face to face, but the dark cloak of the internet empowers people to let go of their humanity and be a jerk.

What's so odd is that the very act of trolling, which is supposed to make the sender feel good and the receiver bad, just doesn't work. Both wind up feeling bad.

For the past few years I have been studying the science of happiness. Since its inception psychiatrists and psychologists have studied depression, but it is only in recent years that they have turned their attention to what makes us happy. You can understand that. No one goes to their mental health professional and says, "Doc, I'm feeling awesome. Can you tell me why that is?"

I'm trying to discover that which makes people happy so I can apply that knowledge to Neosho County Community College to make it a happier place to work. This study has led me to that important phrase, "Thank you."

Those who have scientifically studied happiness say that one of the secrets to raising your happiness level is the concept of gratitude. If you show gratitude to those around you, you will be happier than those who do not. It can be as simple as keeping a gratitude journal. Just spend a few minutes a day writing down what you are grateful for and scientists say you will raise your happiness level.

However, one of the most powerful things you can do is say thank you to someone in a public way. You can write them a letter of gratitude and then, this is the important step, don't just send it, travel to them and read it to them. According to the researchers, this will have a long lasting effect on your happiness level. It's basically the opposite of trolling on the internet.

With that in mind I would like to publicly thank a group of people who have supported our institution and higher education in Kansas – our locally elected state officials that represent NCCC's service area. All of these people have something I will never have, the courage to put my name on a ballot. Being a member of the state legislature in Kansas is no picnic. They make about \$13,000 total for a five month legislative session, not the large salary that some people think. The other months of the year they go home and try to make a living at their regular jobs. They are citizen legislators, not fulltime politicians. In a lot of ways it is a thankless job where they receive a great number of upset comments and more than their fair share of trolling. So, I'm turning that around today, at least for this brief writing.

Senators Jeff King and Caryn Tyson and Representatives Kent Thompson and Blaine Finch have been very supportive of NCCC and have always listened when I had a comment or question. They take my phone calls and make time for me when I come to the Capitol to ask for their support on a variety of subjects. Sometimes they directly support us and sometimes the situation won't allow them to, but they are always wonderful to work with and for. Thank you all for what you have done to support higher education in Kansas and NCCC in particular.

I also want to send a huge thank you to our locally elected Board of Trustees – David Peter, Kevin Berthot, Charlie Boaz, Lori Kiblinger, Dennis Peters, and our newest member Jenny Westerman. Trustees receive no payment whatsoever. They have to endure reports and retreats and me droning on

and on for hours at the Board meetings. It's a huge time commitment but the Trustees truly love NCCC and want to see it advance its mission of enriching our communities and our students' lives.

Whew! This was great! I feel happier already! Give it a try yourself. Instead of trolling, say thank you. You'll make someone's day and make yourself happier to boot.

I think the world could use a bit more gratitude, don't you?

If you have any questions or comments (or to say thank you) please send your comments to [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu)