

I don't have a lot of hobbies. I don't build things or exercise very much. I don't collect things, compete in activities, or follow professional or intercollegiate sports (other than the Panthers, of course). I don't hunt or fish, birdwatch, conduct amateur meteorology, or do crossword puzzles. What do I do for fun? I research, plan and execute.

For instance, each year about Christmas time I begin planning our vacation for the next summer. Over the next month I will survey the family for ideas, research each possible destination and its activities, and provide cost estimates. Once decided, I will begin to book hotel rooms and flights, if necessary, using a variety of services and alert systems to get the best deal possible. When the vacation comes months later, it usually goes off like clockwork. I know I have found the best deal I could find and that we didn't miss out on something because we tried to reserve it too late.

When I go to make a large purchase, like a car for instance, I will research many makes and models, then organize the information into a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet contains a weighted rating system I devised to help find the right car for me.

I have detailed spreadsheets on retirement savings which I update regularly. It's not looking too good right now on the retirement savings – thanks Wall Street.

This hobby of researching, planning, and spreadsheet creation drives my wife a little crazy. First, like everyone who has a hobby, I like to talk about my hobby and share what I have learned or what I'm excited about. Unfortunately, Jennifer does not share my enthusiasm for researching and planning. After about the third or fourth conversation about possible hotels in the Branson area, she will cut me off and say, "You just pick it!" She REALLY hates talking about retirement planning as it is hopefully years away and for her it is not too exciting to talk about expected rates of return or the advantages of Roth vs. traditional IRAs.

The second reason she is not enthusiastic about my hobby is that she likes being spontaneous. I believe that spontaneity has its time and its place. (That's a joke I stole from the movie *The Sure Thing*.) Spontaneity is the nemesis of the planner! So I have to respect her wishes by putting "unplanned time" in the vacation schedule spreadsheet (secretly, I have that planned too, just in case she can't find something she is interested in. I then suggest it as "what if we..." and she gets excited that I'm being spontaneous.)

The planning usually pays off in many ways. I had fun learning about various things from cars to vacation spots to financial planning, and then we execute the plan and it usually goes off well. Fun is had or I get a car that's best for me, etc. and I believe that I did all I could to maximize that expenditure of time, energy and money.

At the college this planning hobby pays off. Many of the college staff share my affinity for researching, planning and executing. We have detailed plans that lay out what future technology we will invest in, what the campuses will look like 20 or more years from now, what renovations need to be made as facilities and equipment age, what academic programs we are thinking of launching, and on and on. All of these plans are posted on our website if you would like to see them.

And it is most exciting to execute those plans. Years ago we planned an outdoor water feature and this spring we will begin construction of that water feature. It will be 100% paid for by donations and if the plans are right, will be very beautiful! It will be located next to the Chapman Learning Center in our little circle drive and could be finished by this summer.

Also over the spring and summer we will be doing some renovations to the Student Union adding a “Starbucks style” coffee lounge attached to the bookstore and some updating of the bookstore itself. If you have been to the Union you may remember the former Kansas Works Office. Kansas Works went to part-time service and moved to the basement of Chapman Learning Center, returning that space to us. The area will be renovated to create the coffee shop. Former Panthers may recall that there is a fireplace back there and that will be reopened! Coffee, tea, and cappuccino are free to students at NCCC so we hope they will like this nice place to enjoy their beverage. The funds from book sales will pay for this updating of the bookstore and should cost about \$25,000.

Lastly, and on an entirely different scale, will be an addition at Hudson Field, our baseball facility. The facility will feature a locker room, concession stand, officials’ changing room, press box, and most importantly for our fans, restrooms! Right now fans have to walk to the Student Union to use the restrooms. The cost will be about \$635,000 and will be paid, for the most part, by our out-district fee – charges to students who live outside Neosho County. We charge a bit more per credit hour for those students who come from outside the county as they and their families have not supported the college through direct taxation as folks from inside the county have. We are also asking for donations to make this facility happen. If you are interested in being a part of this plan, please contact Coach Steve Murry or Director of Development Claudia Christiansen. We would very much appreciate your help!

Over the next few months you’ll see in the Board action bids for the construction. We hope to start as soon as the baseball season ends and hope to have it ready by fall when the team returns.

After talking and planning for months and sometimes years I am so excited to see these changes taking place. With the Board of Trustees’ direction, the college planning and your help we continue to maintain and advance this institution.

I’ll admit, researching and planning may be boring to a lot of people, but the execution is awesome!

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