

I have always believed that the most extreme time the College has gone through was 17 years ago when we were on probation from our accreditor. We all pulled together and made massive changes, many of which are still with us today. We came through that successfully, and with that in the rear view mirror I believed that we had the worst behind us. I was wrong.

If you have not already heard, Neosho County Community College has decided to spend an extra week of Spring Break for students and then, beginning March 30, we will be changing to remote instruction, online classes or other modality for all of our face-to-face and hybrid classes on the Chanute and Ottawa campuses. We have cancelled all events and visits to campus, including graduation. We have ended all non-essential travel as well. Other changes may be on the way as well as the situation develops.

It will be an extreme time for the college, its students, employees, and visitors. But, of course, extreme threats call for extreme measures. It will call for sacrifice by everyone.

Students may not see their instructors face-to-face again this semester. Spring sports lost the rest of the season. Instructors must convert all of the remaining material of their courses to online. Community groups and visitors have lost meeting space. Students will not cross the stage at graduation this May. Of course, our constituents are not the only ones who are sacrificing right now.

Alayna, my youngest daughter, is a high school senior. The recent developments means that she has lost a great many things. She was excited about prom, a traditional graduation ceremony, and the cruise we had planned this summer to celebrate her graduation. All apparently sacrificed now.

The night of the announcement from the Governor effectively shutting down the schools, I talked with her about losing all of those experiences. She said, "It's not the end of the world Dad." Her thoughts instead were of keeping her grandparents safe.

This conversation reminded me of the saying, "Love is Sacrifice." She was giving up some of what she had earned through thirteen years of hard work in public education, without tears or regret, because of the love of her grandparents. I guess Jen raised a pretty good kid, a kid who is about to become a wonderful woman.

Many who love us have sacrificed so much for our happiness, success, and well-being. We, in turn, have done the same for them and for the next generation. Service men and women, first responders, parents and grandparents, social workers, teachers, instructors, day care workers, those in the medical professions, and so many others all know what it means to willingly sacrifice for love of our fellow man. Now added to the group are people who working to keep essential services open, from grocery store employees, to utility providers, to gas station attendants. It is engrained in our culture. Most spiritual beliefs, such as Christianity, are based on the notion that Love is Sacrifice. It is the most redeeming trait of humanity, although not always practiced by everyone, often with horrific results. But those who sacrifice for love usually prevail.

Out of love for our most vulnerable, those of advancing years and those with medical conditions, who will suffer the greatest, I ask that those served by NCCC to sacrifice some of that service, at least for a time. It is my hope that our students, employees, and visitors willingly sacrifice without anger or regret for the love of others, to repay the sacrifices that many have made for you. Because they love you, and you love them.

In the days and weeks ahead we will be announcing the plan to facilitate course completion for classes offered this semester. Each instructor is or soon will be working to convert course material to online or to a method that conforms to CDC guidelines. We will also be putting in place methods to assure quality of learning as well.

Much of our coursework is already online, but this situation will be quite a challenge for “hands on” instruction classes like welding or construction. We are working with our school districts and tech centers on methods that allow students to complete, but greatly lower the chance of exposure to or spread of the coronavirus. While we are closed to face-to-face instruction we are still allowing some students to live in the residence halls while they work on methods to get home, especially for those from other countries. They will not be forced out.

I’m asking all of those who are served by the college or who work there to be understanding, persevere and keep in mind the reason why we are sacrificing.

Love.

If you have any question or comments about this column or anything else, please feel free to email me at binbody@neosho.edu.