

A company is only as good as its employees. This is a maxim that I have heard many times, though I'm not sure who to rightly attribute it to. Steve Jobs of Apple, JW Marriott of the hotel chain, Jack Welch of GE, and Tony Hsieh from Zappos are among many, many others, who all have things to say about how important having great employees is if one wants to have a great company.

As a leader of Neosho County Community College it is my job to help my employees be as good as they can be. As JW Marriott said, "If you take care of your employees they will take care of the customers and the business will take care of itself."

In a year's time we have about 550 employees at the College ranging from part-time student workers, to adjunct instructors, to 165 fulltime employees. Some are employed by NCCC directly through the general fund, others work through a federal program or state grant but are still, just as much a Panther. I value them greatly. It is through their devotion to their area, academic discipline, and our students that NCCC has done so well.

So how are our students doing? You have often read in this column how NCCC students are among the best in the state in the percentage that graduate or successfully transfer to a university. You have also read how our graduates have a higher first-year salary than all of the university graduates and almost all of the community college graduates. (Only KU Med students make more their first year out of college than NCCC students. We are essentially tied with Pratt for the highest among the community colleges.)

Another measure we focus on is student satisfaction. To paraphrase Mr. Marriott, if you take care of the student, the college will take care of itself. The Board of Trustees has asked me to focus on student service to make sure our Panthers learn, but also have a great experience utilizing the various functions of the college.

We measure student satisfaction with a tool known as Noel Levitz. It's a nationally-normed survey that can compare how satisfied our students are with colleges across the state or the country. We have been conducting that survey at NCCC every other year since 2000.

There are 40 standard items measured on the survey and every year we have seen gains in almost all of them. This year we had remarkable results! From advising, to financial aid, to building and grounds, to instructional and administration satisfaction, we were well above state and national average in 24 of 40 items. In fact, 14 of the 24 items above national average were the highest score you can receive from Noel Levitz! More than that, we were at sixteen year highs in comparison with past scores at NCCC! Our students are much more satisfied with the College now than in any year we have conducted the survey. Wow!

How do we get such great results? Our incredible employees. Every day they do everything they can to help students learn and have a wonderful experience in all aspects of the college. They are amazing employees at work every day. But outside their normal work for NCCC, they have been pretty amazing too. I thought I would tell you about a few of them that accomplished a great deal, not only on campus in their various roles, but also off campus in their disciplines. It is through these accomplishments that they can further enrich our students' experiences.

You may have read about Antwon Hicks, our assistant track coach, who has qualified for the Nigerian Olympic Team! Last week he set the Nigerian national record in the 110 meter hurdles and was the 12th fastest in the world! I hope you will root for him when he “goes for the gold” in Rio next month. NCCC track students are learning from an Olympian. That is outstanding!

This year our vocal music instructor, Alan Murray, won a Grammy Award - his second! Besides teaching for us, Alan sings with the Kansas City Chorale and they won the Grammy for Best Choral Performance. It is great to have that kind of talent and ability to help students learn and progress in their musical abilities!

Lindsay Reustle is one of our newest instructors at NCCC. She teaches biology. Just this month she co-authored a work selected to be published in an important peer-reviewed journal, Developmental Biology. As part of the experiments, she designed a new technique to successfully culture mouse embryonic hindbrains, and she was one of only a handful of people in the United States who had the skill to conduct those experiments. I don't pretend to know what that means, but it's a big deal in her field and I could not be more proud of her!

I also found out this summer that Ottawa nursing instructor Susan Rhodes has been nominated for Kansas March of Dimes Nurse of the Year in Women's Health. Wow! Susan does such an excellent job with our students, it is so great that the March of Dimes is recognizing her for it.

Kyle Bures is the coordinator of the Teaching and Learning Center at the Ottawa campus, as well as a published writer. He has authored articles for national publication on the best ways to advise students. And just this month he had an article published in Runner's World magazine – a man of many talents.

These are just a few recent examples of just how wonderful our employees are at Neosho County Community College. Almost weekly I get a card or an email about a wonderful interaction a student or community member had with one of our employees. Please keep those cards and emails coming! I use those to enter the employee in the Service Award competition we have three times a year. We try to reward employees for going that extra mile for you and our students. If you want to nominate an employee for a Service Award you can also go to our website here:

www.neosho.edu/serviceawards.aspx

Thanks for letting me brag a bit about my wonderful employees. I'm very proud of what they accomplish. I am most proud about who they are as people.

If you want to send along a note about an employee here that you are proud of or have any other comment or question please contact me at binbody@neosho.edu.