

Back in 2001, I was hired for my very first job in higher education administration. I was going to be Dean of Arts and Sciences at a small community college in Michigan. Jen and I packed up the house, our one year old daughter and our Old English Sheepdog and headed to our new home and our new opportunities. It was going to be great! As we were packing the final items into the van, I received a call that due to a legal issue our house deal had fallen through. My job was starting in just a few days and I had no place to live.

We wound up getting a single room in a bed and breakfast not too far from the campus. That's right. Brian and Jen, baby Abrielle, and Kess the sheepdog all in one room with no access to a kitchen, a common bathroom we shared with the other guests, and no TV! A nightmare by my standards, especially no TV.

It was stressful time for the whole family. We were both starting new jobs and we were living out of suitcases as all of our house stuff was back in storage. We ate out every meal and had to stagger our bathroom time with strangers. But the whole time we knew we can get through this and there will be a time soon when it will be great.

It took almost two months to sort out the house issue. In fact, we wound up owning that beautiful bed and breakfast as our private home. (Even though I took down the bed and breakfast sign it didn't stop people from walking through our front door without knocking from time to time and asking to rent a room.)

All of the activity at the college this summer has brought back this memory of "powering through" a very uncomfortable situation in order to get to the great thing at the end. This summer has been very uncomfortable at the college but in the end, I know the fall semester is going to be great!

Preparations for the fall semester begin when the snow is still deep on the ground. Faculty members and department chairs submit schedules and the master course list from all of our different locations is shaped into one cohesive schedule. Dr. Sarah Robb (Congratulations Sarah!) and her staff create mock schedules to make sure students can get the classes they need at the times they need them.

We also begin planning the budget for the next year well before spring break and continuing through much of the summer. There are hours of meetings, many requests, and lots of paperwork that must be completed in order to put together the hundreds of individual budget lines that make up our master budget. We agonize over every dollar as resources are always limited and requests total more than we have. With the help of staff from across campus, we make those hard decisions to prioritize our resources and present the final budget to the board of trustees for approval.

Over in human resources, Karin Jacobson, Director of HR, helps supervisors across campus fill empty positions in time for fall. This has been an extreme year for the college in employee turnover. At one point, we had twenty four positions listed on our website to fill. Much of this turnover is due to a large number of retirements combined with a bevy of various personal reasons.

The faculty spend their summers taking classes themselves and attending conferences. They use this information to improve their lectures and teaching methodologies. They are always looking for new and better ways to present their materials and to make sure they are effective as they can be as instructors.

Every year, our custodial and maintenance staff takes advantage of the less populated campus over the summer to repair remodel and deeply clean all of our buildings and grounds. This summer, however, represents the most extreme year EVER in my fourteen years at the college. Those of you who have driven by the main campus in Chanute have probably seen an army of workers on a myriad of projects. This summer the college has: resurfaced and repainted all of its parking lots thanks to a generous gift from the Sunderland foundation, replaced the roof on the student union due to the hail storm (and will be replacing the roof on the residence hall later in the fall), added new sidewalks in front of Sander's hall, and we are renovating the President's office.

Those projects alone, besides the deep cleaning of the campus, would be plenty for any summer but we went a good deal further! Through our energy performance contract, we have replaced every light bulb on the Chanute campus with very long lasting LED lights. We have replaced toilets and flushers across campus to reduce water usage. We've installed a new computer control system for the heating and cooling and even improved the weather stripping and seals at each of our buildings in Chanute.

But that's not the big project! Through the Energy performance contract, we are also replacing our 50 year old heating and air conditioning in the four original buildings of the Chanute campus. These new units are incredibly energy efficient, whisper quiet and provide a great deal better temperature control than our 1968 models that served us so well for so long. That project is still underway and will finish up in October.

For those taking classes this summer, we asked students to "pardon our dust." It's been a noisy summer of workers drilling through walls, while banging on pipes, and power tools erupting everywhere. I greatly appreciate my staff and faculty as well as summer students putting up with everything that goes along with a renovation of this scale.

I can't express enough gratitude for everyone that helped out with these renovations. Project manager and Vice President of Operations, Ben Smith, has done an excellent job managing these projects. Kyle Seufert and his staff of maintenance and custodial workers have done a tremendous job putting the college back together as our construction teams complete the renovations.

If my point isn't clear from all this above, let me be clear here, it has been an EXTREME summer getting ready for fall! With all the new job openings and new personnel, the veteran employees have had to pull extra weight to get us ready for the new semester. The custodial and maintenance staff had inches of construction dust to remove from every classroom in the buildings and much work putting the classrooms back together. And everyone has had to work with the sound of high velocity drills puncturing concrete in the background. For everyone who has come to the college for a service and had to walk around construction materials, I say thank you for your patience and understanding.

When Jen and I finally got the last guest out of our bed and breakfast turned private home, we danced through every room (and cooked our own dinner). It was pure heaven. The beautiful home was worth the long annoyances. And when the last project is over at NCCC this fall I know it will all be worth it as well! It will be great!

If you have any comments or questions about this or want to tell me your own renovation nightmare story, please email me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu)