

Sometimes you have to work in the rain. That's an old adage that I use on my girls from time to time when they want to wait for the optimal moment to get something done. If you are constantly waiting for the right moment then you don't often make progress. Often this is in conjunction with yard work. "It's too early/late to mow!" "My favorite show is on!" Or my favorite - "I don't want to get sweaty right now" and so on. I'll bet many of you parents have heard the same thing (or at least said these things to your parents back in the day).

There is also the notion that we have to work through distraction. Take for instance my wife Jennifer and the way she likes to paint. We have spent much of the summer inside painting instead of traveling, moving from room to room. One room has a set of French doors with 18 panes of glass framed in wood. With two doors and two sides to each door and two coats per frame that's 144 frames to paint.

Here is the Jennifer Inbody patented Don't-Get-in-Too-Big-of-a-Hurry Painting Method. Begin by preparing the workspace, drop cloths, paints, and brushes - about 10 minutes. Crucial to this preparation is getting the right playlist of music selected. A good 20 minutes will be needed here. Paint one frame. Just one. Then remember you need to call your Mom - spend one hour on that. Paint two more frames. Only two. Get into a text conversation with a co-worker on various topics of importance. At least a half hour will be needed. Paint two or three more frames then take a call from your sister - that's another hour. Then it is time to start dinner so you ask your husband to finish the other 138 frames, since you, "have it mostly done now."

At the College it is not the optimal time to start the semester, and with all that is going on in the world it is easy to get distracted. But, after given due attention to all of the critical items we must take into account, many of which I detailed in my last column, we still need to move forward as an institution. And I have some exciting advancements to tell you about despite 2020 and all it has to offer.

First, our STARS Grant that helps students who are at-risk with college completion was reinstated for another five years. That's about \$1.3 million in federal funds brought into our service area over five years to help students with additional services to get them graduated and on to their next challenge!

We are expanding our offerings of technical education classes at LaHarpe for all area school districts. Besides welding, we will now offer construction and allied health courses including certified nursing assistant.

At Ottawa we are adding the Heating Ventilation and Air-conditioning (HVAC) program to that campus for this fall as well! Thanks to funds from our foundation and some grant dollars we were able to create an HVAC lab in record time. That program is open for enrollment now!

I know this doesn't sound too exciting to many of you, but it's a big deal for me. We recently updated our main software that runs all of our student information, billing, payroll, accounting, requisitions admissions, registration, you name it, and we did it without major disruption in service. Other than the folks who work with the system every day, many employees and students never even noticed we changed. It happens "in the cloud" now and it all went swimmingly.

Our wonderful Grammy-winning music professor, Alan Murray, is restarting the band program this year! It will start out smaller but will grow over time. We are very excited to continue to offer instrumental courses to bring band back on campus again.

And looking further in the future we have currently secured about \$190,000 in grants from the USDA, Kansas Department of Commerce and the Carl Perkins Reserve Fund, all for the development of two new programs set to launch fall of 2021 – Aerostructures and Industrial Mechanical Technician. These new programs will be housed in our Ross Lane facility which is set for a visioning session of its own as we plan the next 5-10 years at that location. Our hopes are that Ross Lane will become a technical education center for the whole region, kicked off by these two new programs with more programs to come!

While we all wish that this was another “normal” semester and year, it is not. It may be some years before that happens, or the word normal may be redefined. But despite all that, Neosho County Community College remains committed to its mission to enrich our communities and our students’ lives. We will work in the rain and through distraction to keep innovating, keep progressing, and keep moving the college forward.

Now, I have to go back to painting the second coat on all those door frames. Sorry, I got distracted.

If you have any questions about this column or anything else please feel free to contact me at binbody@neosho.edu.