

Welcome back! The family is gathered once again... I know even those of us who have been here all summer feel like it's a fresh start at the beginning of the Fall term. I must commend those involved in developing this year's faculty in-service. If you were directly involved in planning or will be presenting sessions today or tomorrow, would you please stand? Thank you for such a fine job! The topics are timely, interesting, and spot on with many of the areas we need to address this year.

Welcome to our 25th Anniversary year! This is going to be an exciting time as we celebrate on our history and embrace a new vision for our next quarter-century. Do you remember when you were 25? Young, innocent, on the verge of becoming an independent adult; blithely striking out to change the world?

NTCC is at a similar juncture. We have been preoccupied with building this college for the first quarter-century, persisting through challenges which made some question whether we would survive at all. Now we find ourselves in a different place – a place of leadership in this region; a valued resource and an object of great pride for our communities. We are now ready to assume a role beyond even that we have had in the past.

Last year I told you, “we ain't poor!” By that I meant we had enough resources to meet our mission and address areas needing improvement. If you recall, I said:

We have two distinct personalities ...

On the one hand, we know the academic excellence of this institution and its history of quality.

But on the other hand, we believe we are financially poor; that the best explanation for anything we're not doing is that “there's no money.”

We use our poverty to explain things that should be different, but are not!

But in the past year we have begun to leave behind the “poor me” syndrome. Consider a few of the things we've accomplished in the last 12 months:

- SACS accreditation of the Hanson-Sewell Center and accreditation for several programs
- Administrative reorganization which will allow us to focus more attention on our core mission – instruction – while bringing much needed resources to the student services units.
- A new Strategic Plan which grew out of your input and which a number of you worked intensively on throughout last Spring (more on this in a few minutes)
- A more open approach to Dual Credit which has already resulted in the gratitude of our school partners, as well as significant enrollment growth
- Major progress on our deferred maintenance needs of this campus. We have completed a campuswide assessment of the condition of our facilities and will soon complete our cleanup of the hallways in Math/Science and Humanities. More on this in a few minutes.
- Strengthened partnerships with our Morris and Cass County ISDs, which include a presence of our own – Tolita Tettleton – on each of their campuses weekly. This brings NTCC to the

communities of Daingerfield and Hughes Springs, and puts us on the Pewitt ISD campus, as well. Over the summer we have reached an agreement with the Naples City Council to share a different facility with Head Start and the Community. This arrangement will create an NTCC presence right on Hwy 67, lower our facility costs, and allow us to place the old hospital building up for sale. This move is our answer to a looming \$600K facilities maintenance cost at the hospital building but with the added bonus of keeping our outreach services and visibility in one of the anchor communities we serve.

- Survived a legislative session which resulted in a significant increase in funding during a time when most states gave higher education major cuts
- Found our place on the national scene. Consider this – community colleges were discussed openly and favorably in Austin, some of the best relationships with state legislators we’ve had in years. The comptroller made community colleges her cornerstone issue in a major report entitled, “Texas Works!” The President announced community colleges as one of his major initiatives, requesting \$12 billion in support for us. And lastly, we will be the setting for a new sitcom this fall, “The Community”. More visibility than any time in our history!!!

Last year was also the year we received two major acknowledgements which should make us all proud:

1. You may recall participating in a web survey conducted by the Chronicle of Higher Education last Fall? Comparing your responses about NTCC as an employer to those of your peers across the country – The Chronicle identified NTCC as one of the top 3 colleges in two different categories related to employee satisfaction. This was very gratifying to the Board of Trustees and myself – we will work hard to improve further, but at this time we now hold the distinction as one of the “Great places to work” in Higher Education!
2. Also last fall we received word, out of the blue, that NTCC had been identified in a major study by the Pell Institute as one of the top 5 community colleges in Texas at the task of recruiting, educating, and transferring at-risk students to the university. When we got the details this past July, we found out NTCC is 2nd in the state in our success with these students.

This was not an “award” but rather a study intended to identify ‘best practices’ to be replicated by other colleges who are not enjoying our level of success.

Thank you – CIS, 21st Century, Upward Bound, and Developmental Education staff for your tireless work on behalf of the most disadvantaged in our community. Thank you, instructors and professors, for your diligent and caring efforts to stimulate learning in each student. Thank you, advisors, for your work facilitating the transfer process for those of our students who aspire to a university degree. And thank you to each one of you when you take a personal interest in the people we serve. The daily work can test us, frustrate us, even wear us down. But at times like this when we can look up and see a glimpse of the impact of our collective work, it should make us proud of this college and humbled that we have been granted meaningful work.

Now let me turn my attention to this next year.

Change – much change – will continue to mark our experience in 2010. Folks, change at NTCC isn't new...but its also not going away. The pace of change may actually escalate in the world around us and we must match it stride for stride if we are to be successful.

1. Enrollment – we've been well ahead of last year all summer. Summer II was up 10%. As of this morning, we're up 35% over this point last yr. That won't hold, but we'll certainly be up. I'm getting reports of capacity limitations from a number of programs and departments and I know Dr. Clinton is working hard with all of you to accommodate as many of these students as possible. This is what we do, folks, we teach. At times like this, with a hard recession and unemployment above 13% in Morris County alone, we will be stretched. But let's be grateful for the work and help each other do everything in our power to take care of students. Thanks from Dr. Traylor's crew to all of you who have helped so generously with College Connection. They will definitely need you through regular registration later this week...don't forget them!
2. Budget – in place and we're comparably well off. Net +\$180K in state appropriations for this year, enrollment up, tuition/fees up mean we were able to build into the budget certain items that are quite important. All employees will receive a step pay increase and, depending on the final Fall enrollment numbers, the board has made arrangements for a mid-year pay raise. I will have a separate forum to look at the budget in some detail – come if you're interested. We will talk at that time about what we expect to happen to our funding levels over the next two years.

I'll talk about the proportionality legislative fight at that time; suffice it to say we came within a breath of getting everything we wanted on that matter. Instead, we got half but believe we're positioned well to take another run at it next time.

3. Strategic Plan – now that we have a plan, we need to translate it into the action plans that will guide our daily activities in the future. I have appointed a new standing committee – Strategic Plan Review Committee ("SPaRC" for short). This committee will meet monthly during Fall/Spring and continually review our progress toward the goals we have set. They will provide reports to the board of trustees and annually recommend any modifications to the plan. They will also review the plethora of external accountability reports that continually check our performance (Perkins, State Accountability measures, IPEDS, program accreditation reports, etc.) It is their job to be fully apprised as to the operations and performance of this College. They serve as a "check and balance" to the administration of the college as it relates to our strategic plan. The administration is responsible for "doing" and SPRC is responsible for "reviewing and recommending" – continually seeking improvements. Dr. Mary Hearron has graciously agreed to chair this committee, which I consider one of the most important at the College.

We are going to leave behind the old "operational plans process" and replace it with something completely different. My overriding goal with Institutional Effectiveness is to end up with a process that actually matters – one that helps each of us do our jobs and moves the college

forward toward our strategic vision. To accomplish this we are changing virtually everything about the process.

Action plans will be developed by Thanksgiving and, in many cases, we have already begun to follow the path articulated in the Plan. If you want to know where we're going – look at the plan. It's on the Strategic Plan website under "About NTCC".

Let me make one thing very clear – this is not a futile exercise. We will be flexible, but we will use this plan and the performance measures that grow out of it to guide all we do in the future. It will affect instruction, student and outreach services, administrative services, institutional advancement, and the President's office.

I will hold a separate forum during the first couple weeks of school to review the Strategic Plan in some detail. I would encourage you to attend, if at all possible.

4. 25th Anniversary Year - ...we will have our first silver anniversary activity this coming Tuesday morning, Aug 25th, as we entertain honored guests from around the area. We will have campus tours and free hot dogs for students and staff. Please wear your red t-shirts this Wednesday (the first day of registration) and Tuesday.
5. \$25 million Capital Campaign. We will achieve this goal this year! Thanks to each of you who give now to the NTCC Foundation. The Foundation supports our efforts and it is right that we should give and support her. I give monthly from my paycheck, as well as support in other ways. I know many of you also give monthly – if you do not yet do so, I encourage you to sign up this month; it doesn't have to be a big amount. There is a verse in the Old Testament that I think expresses a wise truth: "Steady plodding brings prosperity" That is true about saving for the future and it is true about giving. Giving a small amount every month yields a surprisingly large result.
6. \$2.5 million Ag Complex will come out of the ground this Fall and be completed in the Spring. We had hoped to bring the project in certified as a LEED building. Now we think its possible to reach the Silver or perhaps even Gold level of certification! I met last week with an engineering firm volunteering to donate additional resources to that project because they want to be associated with it. That's a good indication we are working on a timely project!
7. Pandemic flu taskforce – do not kid yourself about this one. The threat to disruption of our college is great. Mandatory closure would be a mess and we need to be ready to handle such matters, if they arise.
 - a. Dean Brock is our point person and she has a team working with her to finalize a response plan. Please pay attention to messages on this topic.
 - b. Housekeeping is instituting a cleaning plan designed specifically to reduce the risk of flu infection. If someone you know of comes down with the H1N1 flu and has been spending time in your area, let housekeeping know. They have a "bomb" which can disinfect locations, but they can't use it if they don't know of the need.

What do we need from you?

- c. Practice good hygiene – wash your hands often, stay home if you're sick
 - d. Faculty – be sure you have backup plans regarding classwork and grades. Build it right into your curriculum plans so you don't have to scramble if something pops up.
 - e. Everyone - please pay attention to instructional emails and memos we will provide to communicate our plans as they unfold.
8. Parking – we are securing the campus parking lots beginning this term. What that means is that any vehicle parked on campus, except during public events at the Whatley and sports complex, must be tagged with a parking sticker. If you do not have your vehicle tagged, please do it this week! You can get a second tag if you have more than one vehicle you bring to campus.

Why is this important? This is a part of a series of steps we need to take to secure this campus and provide an appropriate level of safety for you and our students. If campus security cannot tell who should be on campus and who should not, it is almost impossible to preempt problems before they begin. Employees get their stickers from HR; students from the Business Office.

9. Security – while we're on the general topic, let me mention we had a tornado/fire training this summer and it will be repeated during this InService. Please note the new building maps and be sure you know what is expected of you in the event of these type of emergencies. We will expand our training this year to include personal safety-active shooter and other crises. We plan to hold our first safety drill later this year. In today's world it is simply expected that a college will handle emergencies with professionalism. Even though we don't have a certified police force, we still need to be ready to handle whatever shows up. This past year two East Texas colleges had students shot/killed on campus. We have had more incidents than we would like to admit, including a tornado literally hanging over the Whatley Center last spring. This matter needs your attention and participation when training opportunities arise.
10. Facility Improvements – you hopefully have seen the hallways in IT, Math/Science and Humanities. I think they look much better than before – thanks to Plant Services! To follow will be the polished concrete floors. We have decided the improvements to the looks of the buildings, and the ease of care/lowered maintenance costs are strong enough positives to warrant the possibility of slightly increased noise. Thanks to Danny, we found an effective way to reduce noise and will use it in the Math/Science and Humanities buildings, if needed. Also, we will seek funding to do the same upgrades to the Business/Technology building later this year.

Next, we will replace the control system for our utilities across this campus (most buildings) and install a geo-thermal system to replace the old chillers. These improvements will cost around half a million dollars but will be financed utilizing the cost savings of reduced utilities costs w/ a payback of around 4-6 years. The improved controls will allow us to provide much improved temperature control in rooms across the college.

Note: to try to save \$25-30K that we need elsewhere, we are taking a chance with some very old, very fragile HVAC equipment. Any further failures will create noticeable problems with our heating and cooling system. We are trying to wait until a new generation of equipment becomes available this Spring – equipment that will save the college significant amounts of money annually on operations/maintenance. YOU CAN HELP us...by keeping your room thermostats to “0” and dressing to be comfortable with a bit warmer conditions.

I want to draw your attention to the improved look of the campus in general. Plant Services has done many things which, although they may not have cost huge amounts of money, did significantly improve the look. Lighting is fixed, hot water in places where it never ran before, the fountain finally working ...much cleanup around the Plant Services building, etc. We appreciate all the work, folks!

And now, let me speak about the “big picture” – where are we heading and what are we trying to accomplish?

Imagine a college which in the next few years becomes a “living, learning environment” where everything the eye can see teaches and all our activities contribute to learning. Our new mission statement says we “exist to provide responsible learning opportunities.” We want to meet that mission with everything we have and do.

Our community will learn when they take a class, participate in a continuing education opportunity, attend a lecture, or enjoy a concert. But even when they visit our campus and simply walk around they will be learning. Water features will teach wise use of our most valuable regional resource. Various methods of agricultural cultivation are displayed – and explained – as they walk, jog or bike around our 400 acres. Working closely with our school partners, the College provides the opportunity for every high school student to graduate with a job-ready skill. Students will enjoy expanded options to earn a baccalaureate degree right here on our campus. Even we will learn from each other as the College offers oncampus lecture series hosting guest lecturers – but usually using our own faculty and staff sharing from their talents and learning.

A lecture on the history of relations between the United States and countries in the Middle East can deepen our understanding of current world events. Nursing instructors can help us learn practical ways to minimize infection in our own homes. Math faculty can hold staff tutorials about basic statistical procedures like calculating percentages or multiplying fractions so those of us who haven’t done that in 20 years can get a refresher. Instructors from the new Shelby program can explain the emerging alternative fuel cars and discuss the pros and cons of each. The possibilities are limitless – and can be available to the community as well as the College family.

Our shared conversations and interests will bring greater overlap in curriculum as faculty spend more time talking to their peers about student learning. Workforce programs whose students struggle with writing will join forces with developmental education faculty and English faculty to create more effective ways to bring up their writing skills. Programs of study whose students are not performing well may ask

the coaches what they are doing that is preserving such high GPAs among our student athletes. We may look at our successes with the Honors program and ask how other learning communities might make our students more successful.

Personal lifestyles will change. We will modify the way we work at the college to encourage healthy living. How can we interject more physical activities into our day? How can we make eating well a fun part of our lives? We have plentiful access to fresh produce? We have a culinary school? As we saw today, we have great cooks? Can't all of us benefit from our association with the College?

This is what NTCC will look like if we rise to the challenges that exist today and if we meet them by learning to *live* differently, not just teach different subjects. Our vision is that this college will embrace the new world in which we find ourselves and will consciously, deliberately, and with great enthusiasm work to become this living, learning environment where the quality of life in East Texas improves over the next decade, due in no small part to the presence of NTCC.

Some of you may be saying – but where is the classroom? Where is the priority on the student? The answer is this – our greatest challenge with our students is NOT the quality of our syllabi or the didactic skills of our faculty. Our greatest challenge is to engage our students; to grab 'em by the heart and wake 'em up – we're not playing here...we are not simply a license or ticket to a job. We are engaged in an urgent task of preparing students for LIFE! Students need an environment that exudes that message; one in which we LIVE by the principles we preach in the classroom. We need to teach with our lives as much as with our words. And that means we must use everything we have to do it. Our classroom time, our hallways, our grounds, the advising meetings, our awards dinners, chance meetings at the grocery store...and folks, that will not happen – it cannot happen – if we simply enroll a student, toss 'em in a class and tell the instructor to do their thing. It takes all of us...that is the vision for this college. We will LIVE according to the values embedded deep within our higher education traditions; mutual respect, honesty, discourse and debate, respect for truth and wisdom, and a love of learning.

Is this a place YOU want to work? I certainly hope so - this vision has grown out of your dreams and wishes!

Those of you who are new to our team this year, we welcome you with open arms to the NTCC family. We are pleased and excited about the gifts, knowledge and enthusiasm you bring to us. Let me invite you to deliberately set forth to get to know your colleagues, some of whom have been here for twenty or more years. I know I have already learned much by watching, listening to, and learning from this talented and experienced bunch of folks.

And those of you who are our experienced faculty and staff– please adopt our newest members and bring them into the fold with the best of East Texas hospitality.

Folks, let's rise to the opportunity, take our 400 acres, combine it with our educational expertise, cultivate our regional partnerships, and bring into full view a college that is alive with energy and activity. Lets have another great year!