

NEWS RELEASE

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603 West Park Street, Sheldon, Iowa 51201
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NORTHWEST IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS IN 2016

Fifty and Forward!

Come celebrate 50 years of service to the region with Northwest Iowa Community College! NCC is your college, and as the new college logo says “Your Success is Our Story.” For a half century you have trusted NCC for quality, affordable instruction, and together we are planning for another 100 years (or more) of service to our community. NCC is truly your success story.

Size is not always a measure of success. While NCC is not the largest community college in Iowa, it is ranked nationally as one of the best community colleges in the nation. The Aspen Institute, The Best Schools, Create a Career, College Measures, CNNMoney, Community College Week, and the Chronicle of Higher Education have all honored NCC in the past few years for promoting student success. This is the work of college staff, along with area business and industry leaders, community leaders, educational partners, and citizens who contribute time and resources to support our students.

Before we look to the future, how about a quick look at the past. Do you remember 1966? The average cost of a new house was \$13,600, gas averaged \$.31 per gallon, and on April 27 the Iowa Legislature approved the application that established the Northwest Iowa Vocational School (NIVS).

But that wasn't the beginning of NCC; the history of the college goes back to discussions that started in 1959. According to newspaper records, leaders from around northwest Iowa met in Rock Rapids in September to discuss the possibility of a technical high school that would prepare students to enter the workforce upon graduation. Between 1960 and 1964 there were multiple discussions between communities and school districts, and it was decided that Sheldon would be the best place to locate the new school because it was geographically the center of the region.

In June 1963, Sheldon School Superintendent Ralph Borreson was informed by the Iowa Department of Instruction that federal funds were available to help start the vocational high school. The first day of class was January 27, 1964. During

the period 1964-66, three vocational programs were offered to students from 19 high schools in Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola and Sioux counties. The first class of 49 students met in rented facilities around downtown Sheldon. The first programs were auto mechanics, auto body and fender repair, and welding. The demand for programming and the need to include programs more suited to female students led the college to introduce office education as the fourth career option by the fall of 1965.

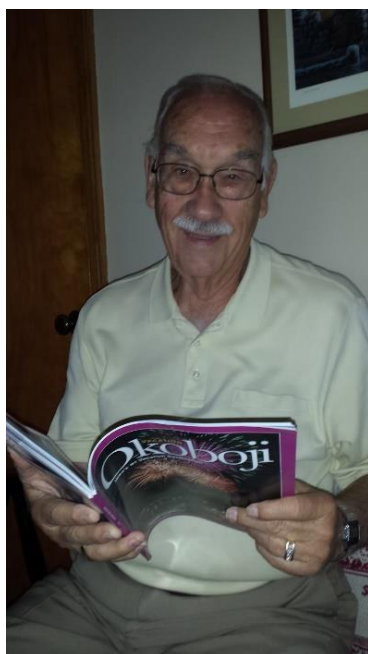
In July 1965 the Iowa State Legislature enacted Senate File 550, a statute which permitted the formation of area community colleges. The advisory council of the technical high school prepared the paperwork and submitted an application to the State Board of Public Instruction. In January 1966 they approved the application of Northwest Iowa Vocational School (NIVS) to become a community college. A board of seven directors was elected on April 20, 1966, representing seven districts throughout the region. Seven days later, the Northwest Iowa Vocational School was officially organized as the first Iowa community college.

Fast forward fifty years to the NCC of 2016. Today the college has more than 55 programs, more than 2,600 students, a robust concurrent enrollment option for high school students, and extensive non-credit training for citizens, business and industry. Your leadership and trust have made this possible, but now the college is looking to the future. It is time to celebrate Fifty and Forward!

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This is the first of several articles that will be submitted by the college throughout 2016.

Sidebar: Howard Borchard



How do you start an academic institution? There may be many different pathways, but at Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) it began with a group of six visionary school superintendents who saw the need for a new kind of education. Howard Borchard, Hartley, IA, is the only remaining member of the founding group.

Borchard was a member of the O'Brien County superintendents' group including Ralph Borreson (Sheldon), Ken Irwin (Sanborn), Don Dell (Paullina), Bill Divine (Primghar), and Jim Rody (Sutherland). These six men met monthly in the courthouse, calling themselves the O'Brien County School Masters. One day Superintendent Borreson (who later became the first 'president' of the college) said, "We need to do something different for those not really interested in our academic programs."

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Months of planning led to an agreement with the Iowa Department of Public Instruction who agreed to make funds available for to pilot a technical high school in Sheldon. Discussions continued, and expanded to include schools from the surrounding counties of Lyon, Osceola, and Sioux.

According to Borchard, “The group rented a couple of old buildings in Sheldon, hired two teachers and also Charlie Zink, a retired vocational ED teacher, who knocked on doors and begged for donated tools and materials. That’s how we started with two rental buildings. They went to the local school half days to take English and American History and senior English and American Government, so they graduated with two diplomas at two different graduations.” Borchard remembered the Rosenboom twins from Hartley, graduates of those first classes, who started and still run successful manufacturing and auto body businesses in Sheldon.

Borchard served on the NCC Board 1978-1990, also acting as chair. Since retirement he has become the town historian in Hartley and helped start and maintain the local museum.