

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Central Community College | 2025



Maximizes Student and Community Success



Welcome

Over the past academic year, CCC is thrilled to announce our continued growth of college certificates (over 1500), diplomas (over 650) and degrees (over 700) earned by our students, knowing that almost 90% of the graduates will stay to work or continue their education in central Nebraska communities. The breadth of programs and services available throughout our 25 counties comes from broad support of private and public funding. The CCC Foundation has demonstrated outstanding stewardship of dollars raised and invested in our activities, so we are thankful for this partnership. Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can be of assistance in making your ideas a reality for the betterment of central Nebraska.

Matt Gotschall
Central Community College
College President



TRAVEL DISCOUNTS



Hi there, CCC alumni and friends. We think you're pretty great, which is why we've got some awesome travel discounts just for you. Check them out and start planning your next adventure today.

www.alumnibenefits.org/cccneb



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NEBRASKA TRANSFER INITIATIVE

The annual meeting of the Nebraska Transfer Initiative (NTI) was held in November at Central Community College–Grand Island. The NTI began in 1995 and ensures that course syllabi, learning outcomes, course objectives and competencies at the state’s community colleges are consistent. The goal, according to administrators, is a seamless transfer of courses among community colleges and ideally at Nebraska’s four-year institutions.

“The work of our Nebraska community colleges through NTI makes good on our promise to ensure Nebraska students have local opportunities to learn in or near their hometowns and take those credits to a four-year institution if that is their educational

goal,” said Dr. Candace Walton, CCC vice president of innovation and instruction.

In his welcome to faculty and college administrators, CCC President Dr. Matt Gotschall shared how all five of his daughters took CCC courses offered as part of the Nebraska Transfer Initiative and had success transferring those credits to both public and private universities in Nebraska.

“This is something we want for every student in Nebraska, to be able to start at any college in Nebraska, and be able to transfer without losing credits, time or money in the process,” Gotschall said.



Three Successful Decades

The Nebraska Transfer Initiative reviews all courses at Nebraska community colleges over a three-year period. The Nebraska Transfer Initiative (NTI) meets in the fall term each year at Central Community College–Grand Island. Faculty from disciplines from accounting to theater meet on a three-year rotation to review their courses and agree upon common course elements. The collaboration ensures course syllabi, learning outcomes, course objectives and competencies at the state’s community colleges are consistent and transferable to Nebraska’s four-year institutions.

In the past 30 years, NTI has successfully articulated more than 50 courses across Nebraska’s community colleges, state colleges and universities. In addition, 31 statewide common courses are articulated across Nebraska’s community colleges which include courses like early childhood education and criminal justice.

NTI began in 1995 in response to a Postsecondary Education Study Committee’s recommendation that “Nebraska’s colleges and universities should collaborate in the development of a statewide agreement and policy on (a) the transfer of college-level credit, and (b) the transfer of the Associate of Arts degree as fulfilling both the general education requirements of the receiving institution, and the requirements for entrance to the junior class.”

Challenges and Opportunities for Nebraska Higher Education ... A Call to Action, Final Report to the LB 247 Postsecondary Education Study Committee, November 1990.

NTI is led by Nebraska community colleges with 27 Nebraska institutions participating in the agreement. More information can be found online at statewidecourses.org.



COMMENCEMENT

ceremonies

CCC Celebrates Graduation Day
Central Community College held commencement ceremonies on May 9 with **533** graduates taking part. Both the Grand Island Campus and Hastings Campus graduations were held at the Heartland Events Center while the Columbus Campus commencement was held at the Raider Fieldhouse.

CCC's graduation featured a first as **11 GED** graduates took part, five each at Grand Island and Columbus and one at Hastings. GED stands for "General Education Development," more commonly called high school equivalency. GED is one of the programs available through CCC's adult education program.

Keynote addresses at all three campuses were delivered by CCC's Outstanding Alumni Award recipients: Quelbin Izaguirre, Columbus; Paulina Ortega, Grand Island; and Alex Kemnitz, Hastings. A recap of each ceremony follows.

Columbus
The focus of Izaguirre's address was happiness, saying it's something he never thought he would achieve and calls it "the most underrated thing in the achievement walk."

Izaguirre's journey to happiness began in his home country of Honduras, the second poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. He said his family lived on less than a dollar a day. At age 3, Izaguirre contracted kidney disease and doctors told his parents that he would make it to age 6 and die. The news didn't sit well with his father, who walked 2,520

miles to California to find better health care. Izaguirre and his family eventually joined his father in Compton, Calif., which is notorious for being a very dangerous area. Two weeks after the death of his aunt, Izaguirre's family moved to Columbus, where she had lived. Though he said he was dragged to Columbus, Izaguirre said it was the greatest thing. He graduated from high school in Columbus and, following a stint in the U.S. Army, he enrolled at CCC-Columbus.

"This is where I fell in love with business, and I fell in love with economics," said Izaguirre, who went on to graduate from Wayne State College and the University of Nebraska-Omaha. **"CCC gave me a strong foundation to continue my education."**

Izaguirre encouraged the graduates to focus on four things that have brought him true fulfillment: faith, family, friends and meaningful work. "If you center your life around faith, family, friends and meaningful work, you won't just chase happiness, you will live it just like I am," Izaguirre said.

Grand Island
As a 2021 Grand Island Campus graduate, Ortega opened her address with a bit of amazement. **"I never imagined that just a few short years after earning my degree, I'd be back here on this stage celebrating not only my own journey but yours as well,"** said Ortega, who earned a human services degree.

Ortega said she arrived at CCC-Grand Island with hopes, questions and a desire to grow but discovered much more. "I found mentors who believed in me, peers who challenged me

and a community that showed me the true value of support and service," Ortega said.

Since 2023, Ortega has been employed at the Grand Island Campus as the apprenticeship coordinator. In this role, she connects businesses with apprentices seeking on-the-job training, a salary and a credential upon completion. She said the apprenticeship program is more than just a training program, it's a bridge between education and opportunity.

"What makes this work so meaningful is witnessing potential become purpose," said Ortega. "I see students gain confidence as they apply their skills in real-world settings. I watch them become contributors, leaders, advocates for themselves. That's not just inspiring, it's a reminder of why community colleges like ours matter so deeply."

Ortega also reminded the graduates that commencement is both a culmination and a beginning. "Whether your next step is a job, another degree or something entirely different, you already have the tools to succeed," Ortega said. "Your time here has prepared you not only with knowledge, but with resilience, empathy and the ability to adapt. These are qualities that will carry you far."

Hastings
Kemnitz based his address on the many tools he received, from his days at CCC-Hastings, not the tangible tools, but the intangible tools that can't be bought or sold. He said he uses

the intangible tools each day as a teacher at Grand Island Senior High School.

"My many instructors taught me to be a good mentor; they modeled how to teach," said Kemnitz, who majored in advanced manufacturing design technology. "My time as an RA (resident assistant) taught me conflict management. My time as a tutor in the Academic Success Center taught me how to listen."

Kemnitz later shared a conversation he recently had with the mother of one of his students who wanted her child to attend a university. He said the mother explained that she had earned a two-year degree from another college in another state that she had never used. Kemnitz also said the mother didn't want people to look down on her child for attending a community college. Initially, Kemnitz said he felt sorry for the mother for not using the tools she acquired at her college. However, her words provided the impetus for his charge to the graduates.

"Leave here as an ambassador for CCC," said Kemnitz. "Leave as a skilled professional, ready to give back and take on that challenge and ready to use the many tools you've been given to show the world what CCC is and what we can do with our community college educations."

Outstanding Alumni

Nominate an OUTSTANDING ALUMNI

Calling all CCC enthusiasts and proud alumni! Nominate an extraordinary CCC graduate for the 2026 Outstanding Alumni Award. Celebrate those whose lives have been transformed by Central Community College and who have excelled in their personal, professional, and community endeavors. Recognize CCC graduates who embody the mission to "Maximize Student and Community Success" with their achievements, resilience, and contributions to their community. Nominate using our online form and ensure all fields are completed. The deadline is February 24, 2026. Let's showcase the incredible impact of our alumni.

Nominate an Outstanding Alumn
thecccfoundation.org/alumni/



[outstanding-alumni-award.html](https://thecccfoundation.org/alumni/)



Quelbin
Izaguirre

Columbus
Campus

Quelbin Izaguirre began his academic journey at Central Community College-Columbus, where he earned both an associate of arts and an associate of science degree. He went on to complete a bachelor's degree in business administration from Wayne State College and later earned a master's degree in economics from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Izaguirre's strong educational foundation equipped him with the skills to promote sustainable development and economic empowerment in the communities he serves.

As Chief Operating Officer of NeighborWorks Northeast Nebraska, Izaguirre plays a pivotal role in expanding access to safe, affordable housing. Under his leadership, the organization has helped more than 1,000 families in northeast Nebraska achieve homeownership and housing stability.

Beyond his professional achievements, Izaguirre is a dedicated community advocate. He currently serves on the boards of several nonprofit organizations, including the Central Community College Foundation, Discover Hope International Church, the Nebraska Housing Developers Association, Centro Hispano, and the Columbus Area Children's Museum. He is also an active member of the Commodores in Columbus, supporting initiatives that strengthen local businesses and civic engagement.

At home, Izaguirre enjoys life with his wife, Danica, and their three children. His unwavering commitment to service and community development continues to inspire those around him, creating a lasting impact across the region.



Paulina
Ortega

Grand Island
Campus

Paulina Ortega is a dedicated professional whose passion for service and community engagement shines through in every aspect of her work. A 2021 graduate of Central Community College-Grand Island, she earned an associate of applied science degree in human services. Since 2023, Ortega has served as the apprenticeship coordinator at CCC, where she collaborates with instructors, students, and local businesses to create impactful on-the-job learning experiences that strengthen the Grand Island community.

Before stepping into her current role, Ortega served with AmeriCorps, where she supported community organizations including the Salvation Army, Goodwill, and The Zone—an after-school program for middle school students. She continues to give back through volunteer work with the YWCA in Hastings, where she helps pack meals for those experiencing homelessness.

In addition to her professional and volunteer commitments, Ortega is an entrepreneur. She is the proud owner of Los Forasteros Snacks, LLC, a mobile bar service offering unique treats like mini pancakes, strawberries and cream cups, and savory corn and nachos. Paulina also manages social media and event bookings for her own business and supports two other local businesses with their online presence.

She and her husband, Michael, open their hearts and home to foster children, providing a nurturing and supportive environment for youth in need. Ortega's unwavering dedication to building stronger communities makes her a true asset to the region and an inspiration to all who know her.



Alex
Kemnitz

Hastings
Campus

Alex Kemnitz is a passionate educator and advocate for technical education whose journey began at Central Community College-Hastings. He graduated in 2018 with an associate of applied science degree in advanced manufacturing design technology before transferring to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to pursue a degree in skilled and technical science education. He later earned a master of arts in educational administration from the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Since then, Kemnitz has dedicated his career to teaching robotics and engineering at the Academies of Grand Island Senior High School, where he's affectionately known as "King Nerd." He is committed to building an inclusive, engaging, and rigorous learning environment where students of all backgrounds can thrive in STEM fields. Under his leadership, the robotics and engineering program has grown into a dynamic space for innovation and discovery.

Kemnitz also supports student growth beyond the classroom. He serves as head coach of the 8151 Islander Robotics team through the VEX Robotics Organization and is a state officer advisor and board member for SkillsUSA Nebraska, a career and technical student organization that empowers students to become world-class workers and leaders.

Throughout his professional journey, Kemnitz credits much of his success to his formative years at CCC, where he was not only a student but also a tutor and resident assistant. Those experiences helped shape both his character and his career.

Outside of work, Kemnitz enjoys gardening and spending quality time with his wife, Bethany. His passion for teaching and dedication to career and technical education continues to inspire the next generation of innovators and problem solvers.

VOLLEYBALL HALL OF FAME

Mary Young

Central Community College volleyball coach and athletic director, Mary Young, was named to the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Hall of Fame.

Young completed her 28th year as head coach of the CCC volleyball squad in 2024-25 and stepped into the role of athletic director in 2019. Young's coaching record is 800-432.

Under her leadership, the Raiders have won 17 Nebraska Community College Athletic Conference (NCCAC) championships, 14 Region 9 championships, and appeared in 12 NJCAA national tournaments. Young has been named American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) West Region Coach of the Year three times, NCCAC Coach of the Year 14 times, and NJCAA Region 9 Coach of the Year 16 times. She also received the NJCAA Sportsmanship Award in 2014 and was an Omaha World-Herald Midlands Coach of the Year finalist in 2018.

"I'm incredibly grateful for this recognition and for the opportunity to work in community college athletics and the volleyball community," Young said. *"Being inducted into the NJCAA Volleyball Hall of Fame is truly an honor and it reflects the incredible players, colleagues and mentors I've had throughout my career. I've been fortunate to have unwavering support from Central Community College and my family who shaped my approach and guided me along the way."*

Throughout her career, Young has coached 97 All-



NCCAC players, 90 All-Region 9 players, 25 NJCAA All-Americans and three AVCA All-Americans.

On a national level, Young has served on several NJCAA committees including NJCAA DII volleyball and beach volleyball as well as chaired both committees. She has worked as assistant region director, region director and NJCAA Board of Regent members. Young is also credited with co-editing the writing of the legislation for the addition of beach volleyball as an NJCAA sport.

CCC ESPORTS RECEIVE NATIONAL TITLE RINGS



Central Community College athletics held a team national championship ring ceremony for the first time in its history.

On Feb. 7, during halftime of the North Platte Community College-CCC men's basketball game, four members of the 2024-25 esports team and head coach Lucas Lumbra received rings for winning national titles in Call of Duty: 4x4 and Call of Duty: MWIII Gunfight 2x2. Call of Duty: 4x4 members were Ethan Bryant, Jackson Peabody, Caleb Smith and Ayden Veik. Peabody and Veik comprised the Call of Duty: MWIII Gunfight 2x2 team.



"The ring ceremony was a phenomenal event and it was great to see our amazing students highlighted in such a manner," said Lumbra. "These events serve as further encouragement for continued growth and success within our program and we look forward to many more."

The head of each ring prominently features the Raiders logo with the words "National Champions." Each team member's game ID is on one side of the ring while on the other, the game they won the title in is inscribed.

"I am very grateful for the support of the Raider Booster Club, whose generosity made it possible to provide these incredible rings to honor the milestone of our national champions," said Mary Young, CCC athletics director. "Seeing the look on our team members' faces as they received their championship rings was a truly unforgettable moment. This achievement is not just a milestone for our esports team, but for Central Community College as it highlights the hard work, talent and commitment of our student-athletes."

The national championships rings were presented by CCC administrators and celebrated by students, families and fans across the region



CCC Alumnus, Administrator and Instructor Receive NCCA Awards

Central Community College graduate Quinn Webb, athletic director Mary Young and early childhood education instructor Jackie Zeckser received awards at the Nebraska Community College Association (NCCA) annual conference on November 3 and 4 in Norfolk.

Webb received the Distinguished Alumni Award for CCC, Young was presented with the Administrator or Staff Award and Zeckser received the Faculty Member Award. Webb earned an associate of applied science degree in criminal justice from Central Community College-Grand Island in 2003; graduated from the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Va., in 2010; and completed a bachelor of science degree at Wayne State College in 2021.



Quinn Webb's educational journey began at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he was a chemistry major and minored in criminal justice. However, he said he discovered that criminal justice was more fun than chemistry. Webb's discovery and life circumstances led him to enroll at CCC-Grand Island. He also began working at the Hall County Sheriff's office where he said he gained invaluable real-world experience as a law enforcement officer. He spent 20 years with the Hall County Sheriff's office, serving as a sergeant, captain and chief deputy.

Since 2020, Webb has been assistant director of the Hall County Department of Corrections and is responsible for overseeing its 80,000-square-foot facility, which houses 321 inmates and has 88 full-time employees. Under his leadership, Hall County Corrections has worked with CCC to implement programs that promote criminal justice careers and,

through its internship program, has certified several CCC students in corrections.

"It's a huge honor for me. I'm real proud of my education that I had with Central Community College," said Webb. "I'm also real proud of the professional relationship with my career that I've been able to develop with CCC and further other individuals' careers in criminal justice. It's an awesome privilege."

Mary Young serves as both the CCC athletics director and head coach of the Raiders volleyball team. She is also extensively involved in the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) and the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA).

Young is the current NJCAA senior women's administrator and serves on several of the organization's committees, including the championship events, sports governance and eligibility committees. She is a past president of the NJCAA Volleyball Coaches Association, Region 9 director and assistant director, and was an inaugural NJCAA Board of Regents member. Young was instrumental in the addition of beach volleyball as an NJCAA sport. She played a key role in negotiating the dual membership between the NJCAA and AVCA for volleyball coaches.

Earlier this year, Young was named a recipient of the 2024 George E. Killian Award of Excellence. The NJCAA annually presents the award to individuals who have demonstrated the ideals of volunteerism, achievement,



service, leadership and excellence.

Young earned her associate of arts degree from CCC-Columbus, a bachelor of science degree in recreation from the University of South Dakota and a master of science degree in counseling-student affairs from the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

"I am humbled to receive this award, especially knowing the many excellent administrators we have at CCC," Young said. "I am living proof of the impact community colleges make, and our work in our respective service areas is inspiring and incredible. This recognition reflects the shared dedication and hard work of our entire athletics department, our student-athletes and the CCC community. Each accomplishment we celebrate is built on a foundation of teamwork, passion and a commitment to supporting our students both on and off the court."

Jackie Zeckser has worked at Central Community College since 2008 when she served as an adjunct instructor. Three years later, she became a full-time early childhood education faculty member at the Hastings Campus where she remains. Zeckser also worked for 25 years at the Head Start program in Hastings and continues to serve as a board member.

Zeckser earned an associate of science degree in family and consumer science from CCC, followed by a bachelor of science degree in human service administration from Bellevue University. She then earned a master of science degree in early childhood education from Concordia University.

As a faculty member, Zeckser has worked with her collegewide peers in creating distance-delivered early childhood courses and student support for learners across CCC's 25-county service area. This includes early college/high school age, education transfer and nontraditional students. She also assists with multiple college-related activities such as Leap Frog Village, which is a free early childhood engagement program. Leap Frog Village

events are held at various times throughout the year and feature a meal and activities that help parents spend quality time with their children. Zeckser is also a member of CCC's CARE team and campus cleanup. In 2023, she was honored by her peers at CCC-Hastings with the Outstanding Service Award.

Active in the community, Zeckser volunteers her time providing in-service training for home child care providers as well as training required for Department of Health and Human Services licensing. She also serves on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln/Adams County Extension board; coordinates the SkillsUSA Nebraska competition for early childhood education; and volunteers her time with United Harvest, Prairie Loft and Lakeside Community Church.

"I am blessed because I have the privilege of teaching, mentoring and supporting students as well as a community committed to providing quality care and education to all children," said Zeckser. "This supports the families of children who know their children are being cared for, nurtured and guided through developmentally appropriate practices. Only when a child feels safe and secure can they learn and only when a parent knows that they are safe and secure can they go to their place of employment and be productive."



DISTINGUISHED FACULTY HONOR

Mach Receives Distinguished Faculty Honor

Emily Mach, a psychology instructor at Central Community College-Columbus, has been named a 2025 Dale P. Parnell Distinguished Faculty honoree by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

The award recognizes community college faculty who demonstrate passion for student success, show a willingness to support students both inside and outside the classroom, and go above and beyond to ensure learning outcomes. Recipients were honored at a luncheon during the AACC annual convention in Nashville.

Mach earned an associate degree from Kaskaskia College in Centralia, Illinois; a bachelor's degree in psychology from Eastern Illinois University in Charleston; and a master's degree in higher education and psychology from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Before joining CCC in 2015, Mach worked at the Community Resource Center in Centralia as a prevention specialist and school counselor. She also taught as an adjunct psychology instructor at Rend Lake College in Ina, Illinois, and at Kaskaskia College.

At CCC, Mach has served as adviser to the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and has participated in numerous college committees. She is a member of the American Psychological Association, the Society for the Teaching of Psychology and the Hopeful Horizons community coalition. She is trained in several American Foundation for Suicide Prevention programs, including Talk Saves Lives, It's



Real and Healing Conversations, and is completing training to provide QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention and intervention.

Her community involvement includes serving on the American Heart Association Go Red Planning Committee, the Platte Valley Playhouse Board, and as chair of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Out of the Darkness Walk. She is also active at St. Bonaventure Church and works as a swim coach and fitness instructor at the Columbus YMCA.

Mach and her husband, Ross, have two sons.

CCC BREAKS GROUND FOR AUTOMOTIVE CENTER

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on May 2 at Central Community College-Hastings for a new automotive careers training center (ACTC).

The 42,000-square-foot facility will be home to CCC's auto body technology and automotive technology programs. The new center will move from an 80-year-old building and will feature five classrooms, a welding lab, a parts and tools suite, and oils and liquid storage. "For 80 years, the current building has served both the Navy and Central Community College as a transportation repair hub," said CCC-Hastings President Dr. Chris Waddle. "Our new building will bring automotive technology and auto body technology programs to the standards of our industry partners and provide our students with a world-class educational opportunity."

Toby Stepanek, a first-year student in the automotive technology program, spoke to the gathering. While the new facility will be completed after his graduation from CCC, he said the impact of the new building is going to be huge for future automotive and auto body students. "Not only will it bring in new students and more, it will also help them advance in the automotive world by making it efficient and give them hands-on experience in the lab," Stepanek said.

The cost of the center is nearly \$23 million. The college will provide the majority of funding for the center's construction along with state-appropriated American Rescue Plan Agency funds. The Central Community College Foundation was tasked with raising \$3.5 million.

Brian Levander, owner and CEO of Levander's Auto and a member of the executive leadership team for the ACTC,

said while the automotive industry is evolving fast and technology has changed the landscape, finding skilled workers remains a struggle. "We don't just need people who can turn wrenches," said Levander. "We need sharp minds. We need technicians who understand electronics, diagnostics, customer service and are ready to power the next generation of leaders in the field. That's what this center will do. It will equip, inspire and empower."

CCC President Dr. Matt Gotschall closed the ceremony by thanking the taxpayers in the 25-county service area for providing the funds for the new ACTC.

"Next year will be our 60th anniversary when taxpayers in 17 counties chose to tax themselves to create the Central Nebraska Vocational Technical School District here in an old Navy ammunition plant," Gotschall said. "The folks that had that vision, I don't think could have even imagined what it has done in the 60 years since, expanding to 25 counties, thousands of students and now known as Central Community College."

The new center is expected to be completed in late 2026 or early 2027.



EXPLORING THE WORLD, ONE CLASSROOM AT A TIME

CULINARY CRUISE

Culinary Cruise HMRM

Six hospitality management and culinary arts (HMRM) students just wrapped up an incredible study aboard venture. The Hospitality at Sea trip was led by HMRM instructor, Kimberly Milovac. The crew embarked on a six-night voyage aboard the Celebrity Reflection from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., cruising to Grand Cayman, Cozumel, and Nassau for immersive, hands-on learning. The curriculum covered travel and tourism logistics, onboard health and safety measures, cultural awareness and appreciation, historical tourism, ecotourism, culinary experiences and more. It was a trip full of a variety of firsts, first time on a plane, first time on a cruise, first time out of the country, first time trying some unique culinary dishes and even a first time kissing a stingray.

Cheers to immersive learning and unforgettable memories!

Joining Milovac was Clarence Charles, HMRM program director. The students were Graci Boersen of Cairo, Grace Ciancio of Fullerton, Jillian Duryea of Grand Island, Marisa Gewecke of Geneva, Kailea Hauner of Hastings, and Brianna Rae of Danbury.



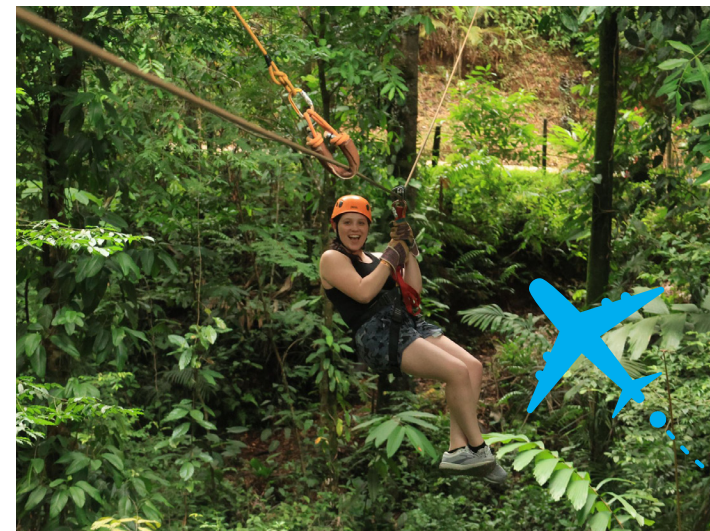
CRIMINAL JUSTICE IRELAND

Criminal Justice Takes on Ireland!

Students, staff, and faculty from Nebraska Community Colleges just wrapped up an unforgettable 10-day Study Abroad Program in Ireland, focused on exploring the Irish criminal justice system firsthand.

From touring jails, prisons, and police stations to taking in breathtaking views of castles, cliffs, and mountains, it was a trip packed with education, culture, and a lot of laughs.

This amazing journey was two years in the making, and we're thrilled to see it finally come to life! Central Community College led the way with Instructor John Sumsion at the helm and CCC students Hunter Fowler, Makenna Gildersleeve, and Emma Strampher helping to keep him in line along the way!



TRIO in *Costa Rica*

Eight TRIO students from Central Community College recently returned from the experience of a lifetime in Costa Rica, where they joined TRIO students from across Nebraska for an international service-learning trip. During their time abroad, students contributed to animal health projects at wildlife rescue centers, explored lush parks and rainforests, and engaged with an indigenous community to better understand its rich culture and history. Along the way, they enjoyed Costa Rica's stunning beaches, vibrant traditions, and diverse cuisine forming lifelong friendships and unforgettable memories.

Participating students included Jessica Ortega, Kateri Wichman, Princesa Esquivel, Sarai Orozco Martinez, Kylee Young, Elise Warner, Rosibel Arista, and Maricarmen Apodaca-Hernandez.



HOLDREGE CENTER CONSTRUCTION KICKOFF HELD

The Sun Theater in Holdrege was the setting for a construction kickoff for the new Holdrege Center on May 20. The theater is directly across the street from the new center where construction crews were in the beginning stages of transforming a former bank into an educational facility. CCC regional director Diana Watson was the emcee for the event which featured comments from community leaders including CCC President Dr. Matt Gotschall.

Once completed, the nearly 11,300-square-foot facility will feature classrooms, live video rooms, nursing assistant lab, computer lab, offices and a testing room. Space will also be available for future partner organizations or agencies to share space and collaborate on programming.

During the event, Phelps Memorial Health Care was recognized for its \$100,000 donation toward the

construction of the new Holdrege Center. A news release said the contribution demonstrates Phelps Memorial's commitment to fostering community development through education and health care collaboration.

"We value local education and the positive impact it can have in enhancing the overall well-being of our community," said Kyle Anderson, chairman of the Board of Directors of Phelps Memorial Health Center, in the release. "Supporting CCC's expansion aligns with our dedication to community development and helps ensure the availability of a skilled workforce in the region."

The kickoff closed with seven color cannons being fired off, filling the air with green-colored smoke.

Community & *Alumni Celebration*

A joyful celebration of connection, community, and Raider pride!

On April 26, Central Community College Grand Island hosted the Community and Alumni Celebration, bringing together alumni, families, students, and community members for a day filled with fun and appreciation. Raider Rex helped kick off the festivities, which included hands-on program simulations, emergency vehicle displays, a lively

fun-walk/run, a magic show, and a bike helmet giveaway. Guests also enjoyed a free lunch and engaged with local partners. The campus buzzed with energy and laughter as CCC faculty, staff, and community members came together to reconnect, explore, and celebrate everything that makes our Raider community special.



From Pickleball to Pass & Serve, CCC Camps Inspire All Ages

This summer, Central Community College campuses and centers were buzzing with activity as they hosted camps that inspired learners of all ages. From sports and STEM to design and discovery, CCC offered something for everyone.

In Columbus, young athletes joined Little Raiders and Skills Camps, while Grand Island introduced the community to beginner pickleball. Hastings hosted the Verizon Innovative Learning STEM Camp for rural middle schoolers, featuring hands-on lessons in

robotics, coding, AI, 3D printing, and more. Students also got a visit from the Hastings Police Department, complete with a drone demo and K-9 officer Kane.

The Ord Center rounded out the fun with camps focused on coding, entomology, and graphic design—proving learning doesn't stop for summer.

Whether on the court or in the classroom, CCC summer camps continue to spark creativity, build skills, and create lasting memories.



RAIDER AWARENESS WALK

Focuses on Mental Health

Central Community College students, faculty, staff and the community united at multiple locations for the Raider Awareness Walk. The Sept. 10 event provided an opportunity for participants to stand together against the stigma surrounding suicide and mental health.

Participants from all walks of life joined in the Raider Awareness Walk at the Columbus, Grand Island and Hastings campuses and the Kearney Center. The collaboration between CCC athletics, the wellness committees, student activities, counseling and prevention and the veterans and military resource center made the walk a truly unified effort.

Participants discovered inspirational rocks along the mapped-out walkways, which were painted by CCC students. The rocks featured messages of hope, encouragement, and resilience, a reminder that no one walks alone in their mental health journey.

“This walk is about more than awareness,”

said CCC athletics director Mary Young. “It’s about creating a community where people feel seen, heard and supported. Together, we are breaking the silence surrounding mental health challenges, and we are here to remind everyone that it’s okay to ask for help.”

Luz Colon-Rodriguez, CCC director of counseling and prevention education, also thanked the participants and said their dedication and unity are key in spreading hope that lives can be saved by fostering a supportive environment for all.

“Events like the Raider Awareness Walk shine a crucial light on the reality that suicide happens in our community,” said Luz Colon-Rodriguez, CCC director of counseling and prevention education services/504 coordinator.

“By coming together, we not only make this issue visible, but also demonstrate its profound impact. It gives us an opportunity to educate how to prevent suicide and how to support one another through this loss.”said Luz Colon-Rodrigue.



In Remembrance

Patricia Eaton, 77
Columbus | July 15, 2024

Bruce Mildfeldt, 57
Minden | July 27, 2024

Edward Ostdiek, 71
Lawrence | July 29, 2024

Roger Guggenmos, 63
Brewster | July 30, 2024

Jesse Huffman, 74
Rio Rancho| August 3, 2024

Amy Kohler, 48
North Platte | August 5, 2024

Donna Anderson, 66
Grand Island| August 20, 2024

Robert Niemann, 76
Cairo | September 2, 2024

Dorothy Anderson, 100
Hastings | September 24, 2024

Karen Hansen, 69
Verdigre | October 4, 2024

Nathan Schumm, 41
Harvard | October 25, 2024

Sheryl Brundage, 73
Hastings | October 27, 2024

Larry Carmann, 75
Davidson | October 28, 2024

Brad Hucke, 62
Hastings | October 30, 2024

Walter Dye, 78
Mitchell | November 5, 2024

Clark Haberman, 84
Sutton | November 6, 2024

Rick Bienhoff, 73
Tucson, AZ | November 7, 2024

Cynthia Omel, 66
Grand Island | November 11, 2024

Jack Crowley, 86
Hastings | November 15, 2024

Carla Flack, 84
Hastings | November 16, 2024

Anne Rupp, 63
Charlotte, NC | November 20, 2024

Chelsie Brittain 32
Grand Island | November 26, 2024

Rose Griess, 583
Spokane | November 28, 2024

Patrick “Pat” O’Neill, 43
Grand Island | November 29, 2024

Patrick “Pat” Dietz , 68
Orleans | December 14, 2024

Esther Glinsmann, 86
Ravenna | January 5, 2025

Tamara Gill, 71
Columbus | January 6, 2025

Raynold Verkamp, 91
Hastings | January 8, 2025

Wayne Ganow, 89
Hastings | January 17, 2025

Eugene McIntosh, 65
Grand Island | January 31, 2025

Dick Longwith, 92
Hastings | February 6, 2025

Phyllis Ceder, 87
Columbus | February 6, 2025

Doris Van Dyke, 97
Phillips | February 7, 2025

Lynne Jackson, 62
Hastings | February 7, 2025

Lori Muhle, 62
Columbus | February 10, 2025

Larry Anderson, 72
Hildreth | February 20, 2025

Denette Drum, 74
Columbus | February 28, 2025

Patricia Thompson, 88
Columbus | March 8, 2025

David Stroh, 62
Shelton | March 14, 2025

Lenard Adam, 80
Minden | March 16, 2025

David Kirby, 27
Kearney | April 5, 2025

Booker Scriven Jr. , 71
Hastings | April 6, 2025

Dennis Schuyler, 78
Grand Island | April 8, 2025

Lisa Stethem, 49
Ord | April 10, 2025

Bruce Broberg, 79
West Des Moines | April 15, 2025

Brandon Reinsch, 27
Geneva | April 20, 2025

Fred Hyde, 73
Hastings | May 2, 2025

Norene Brauner, 81
Boerne, Texas | May 3, 2025

David Culver, 67
Orleans | May 11, 2025

Nell Quig, 78
Hastings | May 22, 2025

Larry Schmidt, 77
Hastings | May 24, 2025

Madison Ripp, 23
Grand Island | June 1, 2025

Arden Trueman, 74
Grand Island | June 3, 2025

Lonie Salmon, 72
Stockham | June 6, 2025

Robert George, 77
Columbus | June 9, 2025

Douglas Spale, 80
Bellwood | June 16, 2025

Alumni Updates

Stay connected with Central Community College! We want to hear about your exciting milestones – whether it’s a new job, a recent promotion, or the birth of a child. Share your news and let us celebrate with you.

Share your news with us!



thecccfoundation.org/alumni/alumni-updates.html

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402-562-1284, titleixcoordinator@cccneb.edu.

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Senior Director of College Communications
3134 W Highway 34, PO Box 4903
Grand Island, NE 68802-4903
308-398-7355, collegecommunications@cccneb.edu.

To obtain this information in a language other than English or in an alternative format, email collegecommunications@cccneb.edu or call 308-398-7355.

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