JCCC’s Collaboration Center

JCCC is moving forward in the development of a center to facilitate collaboration among students, faculty and industry in interdisciplinary projects. The new center will promote faculty working across disciplines to engage students in solving significant problems. This will require students to apply what they are learning in context and to develop strong interpersonal and communication skills critical to career success. The center will support a much greater community connection, helping the college fulfill its mission “to inspire learning to transform lives and strengthen communities.”

Over the past year, the Instructional Deans Council conducted three ideation sessions led by Tony Stewart, manager of human factors engineering at Sprint. The sessions included faculty and students from across disciplines as well as individuals from various KC metro industries (Rick Stilwell, consultant, Bluestem Innovation Partners; Gary Nevius, architect, Momenta; Shane Brethowr, COO, Lockton Companies; Katie Lewis, CSIT recruiter, Commerce Bank; Stephanie Scupham, film commissioner, VisitKC; and Mark Simpson, senior manager of user experience, R&D, Perceptive Software).

The ideas generated and the follow-up discussions strongly supported the value of this project.

We also met with leaders of the Kansas City Startup Village. They are excited about opportunities of connecting with students and have proposed several ideas that could lead to dynamic collaborations among students, faculty and industry. The Startup Village further noted that energetic start-up cultures benefit greatly from the involvement of higher education. Other institutions have not been quick to respond to invitations from the Startup Village to engage, so we have an opportunity to solidify an early relationship with the members of this start-up movement while their momentum is strong.

About the center

In response to the evolving needs of the 21st century student and to better connect with the greater Johnson County community, we propose to create a modern center for collaboration and engagement. The goal for this new space is to promote collaborative, interdepartmental learning in a technology-rich environment, to support experiential education across the curriculum, and to connect with the greater community, thereby promoting an entrepreneurial spirit at JCCC. Dramatically reimagining the vacated OCB first floor, the new JCCC Collaboration Center is proposed as an open, inviting, and inspirational facility featuring flexible and comfortable spaces in a high-tech environment.

When one reads about current trends in education today, the language of technology and engagement is everywhere evident. Students are challenged in flipped classrooms, accelerated courses, and learning with digital media
production, including online, cloud, video, audio, web, and e-portfolios. Students and teachers make use of Open Educational Resources (OER). The new space would support this active learning and focus on team-based projects in partnership with business, internships and practicums with local companies, and faculty-mentored experiences. Students would engage with emerging technologies such as makerspaces, robotics, and virtual reality.

This new space will transform the physical campus, offering a highly visible, dynamic center where students, faculty, and members of the community work together to encourage the citizens and industry of tomorrow’s Johnson County. The center would be housed in the vacant spaces on the first floor of OCB. To view a floorplan, click here. (Since the floorplan is the one used on the college’s website, the grayed areas simply identify spaces that can be used as storm shelters.) Classrooms 142 and 144 would complement the plans for the rest of the floor.

**Facility features**
The center will be neither a lounge nor a study hall for private work. To meet student and faculty and community needs, the center will feature:

- Two classrooms modeled after JCCC’s learning studios to be used for alternative scheduling
- Two classrooms supporting digital music studio and computer technologies such as animation and gaming, including a motion-capture suite
- Wireless and flexible computing environment
- Video conferencing facilities
- Studios for media production and small group projects
- Engaging spaces for public colloquiums and talks by community and industry leaders
- Flexible and comfortable spaces and furniture that invite collaboration
- Spaces and technology that could support training by the Ed Tech Center
- Demonstrated commitment to sustainability and “green” construction and operation principles

**Possible projects and events**
Collaborative, interdisciplinary projects for the center could include:

- Start Up projects that allow students to work with Start Up businesses in an internship or practicum relationship
- Start-up competitions
- Student sustainability initiatives
- Film and music projects
- Mobile app creations
- Marketing campaigns
- Design projects, whether they be architectural, mechanical, product,
Frequent presentations by community civic and economic leaders would
· Highlight community needs
· Offer students personal connections to community leaders
· Inspire creative solutions to real challenges

Design features
The space would allow for as much transparency as possible. The walls defining OCB 155 and OCB 133 (currently two kitchens) would be removed. All furniture would be moveable to allow for multiple configurations. The goal is to allow flexibility and promote collaboration. A popular term today in entrepreneurial discussions is “creative collisions” – the new center space should promote such “collisions.”

The William Jewell Library and the Sprint Accelerator are spaces that inspired the OCB space proposal. Other models are the DuPont Innovation Centers; the Zahn Center for Innovation at City College, New York; and Kansas City Startup Village.

Outcomes
Immediate benefits would include:
· Greater civic and economic connectivity between the college and the community
· Engaged, collaborative student learning evidenced by portfolios of student accomplishments
· Student experience with entrepreneurial startups
· Faculty resources to encourage more engaged student learning
· Two new classrooms to support special programs in non-standard scheduling patterns, enabling the college to better support cohorts of working adults

These outcomes are measureable; the number of projects, community connections and special entrepreneurial competitions, industry presentations, etc., can be counted and assessed. The success of cohort-based programs is also measureable.

Operations
The center will be guided by a director and supported by a team of three to four lead faculty, students and a Cabinet liaison. A board of area community leaders will serve to advise and promote the center’s community connections.

The director will be in charge of promoting strong connections between the college and the community as well as among various college departments. He or
she will be one who understands the entrepreneurial demands of industry, as well as someone who can bring together individuals from the community to engage with faculty and students. The director will be charged with promoting the work of the center; the interdisciplinary, collaborative projects will be solicited from within the college as well from the community. The space proposed will be reserved for groups of students working together with faculty and industry mentors.

The director of the Collaboration Center would report to the director of the Educational Technology Center, which will help develop the space as an interdisciplinary space supported by technology. An important aspect of the center will also be the availability of technology; having a close connection to the college’s educational technology specialists will help ensure a positive experience.

Cost and timeline
For fiscal year 2016, $1,063,000 will be re-budgeted from fiscal year 2015 to cover the cost of the renovation of the vacated space in OCB.

Within the coming months, the college will secure the services of an architectural firm, and a team of faculty and staff will work with the architect in more specific programming of the space. Following the final design, construction documents will be prepared with the expectation that construction will begin by January 2016. Construction should be completed in time to occupy the space by fall 2016.

What if . . .
If this space does not meet expectations, it will be designed so that it could be converted to other appropriate uses, such as a space for learning resource centers or even for regular classrooms.

Conclusion
The new strategic plan was developed with specific attention to better serving our students and the community. The current mission, vision, and values statements direct the college to embrace a more responsive and collaborative spirit. The Collaboration Center would support the mission, vision, and values and strategic goals the college has adopted and put the center of JCCC in the center of Johnson County’s creative enterprises and put collaborative learning at the center of the college.

If you have questions, please contact Andy Anderson, vice president of instruction/chief academic officer, aanders@jccc.edu.