

Welcome Back!

NCCC Battles Pandemic

Written By: Madeline McGuire

2020 was a year we will never forget. Now that schools and many other businesses are re-opening in 2021, things will not be the same. Face masks are required almost everywhere you go. In some parts of the world, there are temperature checks in every business. In addition to temperature checks, there are sanitizing stations at the entrances of businesses. There are also many sanitizing stations throughout many buildings such as schools and office buildings.

I currently live in Puerto Rico. When I moved down here in early January, I had to fill out a travel declaration form and get tested on campus here at NCCC. I didn't even get my results back before I left Buffalo.

Since the beginning of last year, COVID-19 has been spreading like wildfire. There have been thousands of cases and deaths in one day in the United States. To this day, we can't touch our faces and we can't touch other people. We still have to stay six feet apart and wear a face mask at all times. We can't even travel like we used to. Nothing is the same.

For example, here at NCCC, the college has established rigorous health protocols, as listed on the NCCC Website. There are testing sites indoors and outdoors. There are health screenings at every entrance all throughout the campus. Face masks are required at all times when on campus. Most students and teachers in non-healthcare settings are required to wear either cloth or disposable face masks and they have to be replaced daily. Students and teachers in healthcare settings are required to wear medical-grade surgical masks and N95 respirators. Although most classes are still online, the school is slowly re-opening and there are some on-campus and hybrid classes. There are signs all over campus that remind students and teachers to wear their face masks and keep a six feet dis-

tance between each other at all times. All students and teachers should be getting tested regularly. Students who plan to live on campus, are required to undergo mandatory COVID Surveillance Pooling Testing. Students who have tested positive for COVID-19 are required to quarantine for 10 days if they have no symptoms within those 10 days. They will also have to continue daily symptom monitoring through Day 14. If students start to have any symptoms, they will have to immediately self-isolate. Students must submit a negative COVID test to be allowed back on campus.

Students living on campus and who test positive, or have a roommate who tests positive, may not leave their suite for any reason until the infected person tests negative. They

may only leave with your mask on in case of an emergency. For everything else, students who tested positive must stay inside at all times. They must order their meals, leave their trash outside, email their instructors, and have someone deliver their groceries to them..

All meetings on campus are limited to 25 people and under. PPE is provided to all faculty, staff, and students by the institution at no charge. NCCC offers free walk-in testing for students indoors and drive-thru testing outdoors. If students travel to any state on the Governor's Restricted State List during the school year, they are required to quarantine for 14 days before returning to Housing or anywhere on campus.

NCCC is doing everything they can to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. They are always updating the protocols and procedures when necessary and when ordered to by the state of NY. They also expect all students and teachers to do their part by staying 6 feet apart and wearing a face mask at all times. By doing these things, everyone will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep everyone healthy and safe.

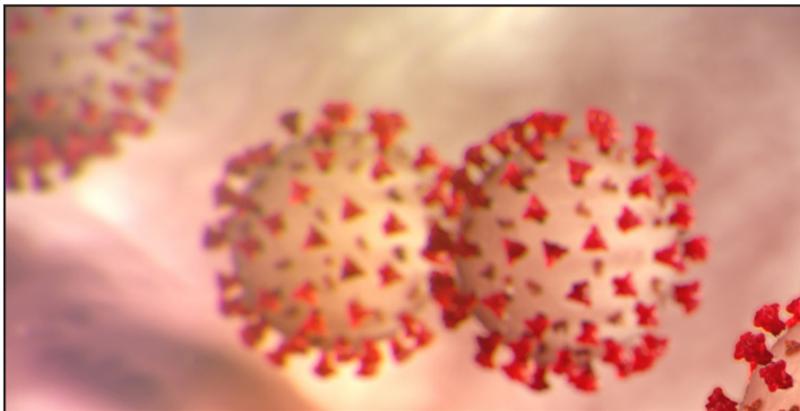


image courtesy CDC.gov

Schools Use Virtual Methods to Help Students Transfer During Pandemic

Written by: Aliyah Carroll

For the majority of college students across the United States, this pandemic has forced us to adjust to learning methods that many find uncomfortable. School shut-downs have forced professors to resume teaching through virtual methods, all across SUNY colleges. While we are still adjusting to this new instructional teaching implementation, students are now concerned about the process of transferring to a four year and/or graduate college.

Despite the evident transition of in-face to virtual realities campuses are actively managing to structure, covid hasn't prevented accessible methods for students to properly consider. In fact, you may find the strategies schools are imposing, easier and more convenient, amid the covid crisis. To help you along your continued educational path, I have conducted research in regards to the various methods schools are using to help students transfer.

First and foremost, have you decided on what college you want to attend? If not, numerous schools are offering vir-

tual tours online that include programs offered, student discussion forms, and time frames dedicated to speaking with admissions consultants. This virtual reality will save you trips on visiting the various college campuses you have in mind. If you still are questioning on where to even begin your search for a four year and/or graduate college to attend, NCCC's transfer services will provide you with representatives from prospective schools to help guide you in the right direction.

Nearing the end of February, transfer representatives from a wide variety of schools will be hosting virtual events in consolidation with our school, according to NCCC's virtual transfer admissions. These upcoming services will be hosted by St. Bonaventure University, Buffalo State, Hilbert College, Medaille, Niagara University, and many other participating schools in the New York region. If your considering moving out of state for the full college experience, administration teams offer online scheduling networks for your chance to speak with an admissions consular, one-on-one. Michigan University,

Pennsylvania State, and King's College are just the tip of the iceberg for participating schools offering these virtual remedies to students.

Hopefully with the endless selection of schools you may now have in mind, in important step in transferring to another school is the process of transferring your transcripts. While some schools may require official transcripts that can be conveyed via online portal systems, other schools are allowing students to send unofficial transcripts through E-mail. While every school differentiates in this aspect, many are allowing you to easily snap a photo of these documents to send directly to the admission's office of your desired school.

It is important, however, to carefully read the guidelines applications require for transfer students to abide by. Every school offers a discrete approach to ensuring student's fulfill the application process. Depending on the campus and state guidelines for school openings, some schools, such as Buffalo State, require in-person transcript drop offs. Consider researching and re-

questing information from school's online platforms if you are hesitant on how and where to send your transcripts.

To take advantage of the virtual methods administration offices in Western New York, are offering during this pandemic, sign up to receive texts. This is a reliable message channel that schools are using to further connect you with the right resources you will need in the upcoming months. If you prefer a different method of approach, sign up to receive newsletters for key dates and reminders.

These virtual options for safe and accurate transfers are endless with the rapid evolution of technology that is being developed in our world. We can't control the circumstances in which covid has shaped our education in the past. Nevertheless, with the virtual amenities that colleges are creating for prospective students, it is important that we use these upcoming events and spectrums to help define our road to graduation in the near future. Don't wait, start your enrollment process for your intended school now!

Vaccines -- Are They Worth It?

Written by: Nicholas Brown

The world we currently are living in is very different than one year ago. The main difference we can all see in our lives is COVID-19, ruling not only the world but our lives, or it may seem. Although it has been mostly down, things are finally starting to look up. With the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines being developed and administered we can now hope the end is near. Like with every vaccine there comes side effects and with the COVID-19 vaccine it is no different. Many questions we find ourselves asking are: Is it safe? What are the side effects? Is it really worth it?

Two pharmacy students from the University at Buffalo who received the vaccine answered a few questions for me. Gabrielle Graca of Wilson, NY who is an employee at ECMC received her second round on Jan 3, and Taylor Poltorak of Farmingdale, NY an employee of CVS received her second dose Feb 3. Gabrielle received the Moderna vaccine while Taylor received Pfizer. Both had unique

experiences with the vaccine and asked themselves these same questions. Taylor said "I was nervous at first but when the opportunity presented itself I couldn't refuse."

With both vaccines receiving emergency approval through the FDA, many are skeptical about them but there are very solid facts to support the use of these vaccines. Both vaccines are two doses the Pfizer is 21 days apart Moderna is 28 days apart to be the most effective. Both vaccines according to the CDC are over 90 percent effective with Pfizer coming in at 95 percent and Moderna at 94.1 percent according to the CDC.

In comparison to other vaccines such as the seasonal flu vaccine (40-60 percent effective), measles vaccine (97 percent effective), and the chicken pox to the normal person (85 percent one dose 98 percent two dose) it would be considered highly effective. You may be thinking "why would I not get it then?" and the thing holding most people back is the side effects and un-

certainty behind it. Some side effects that have been reported are injection site soreness, fatigue, muscle pain, joint pain and other adverse reactions. In the Pfizer vaccine case study 84 percent of people reported injection site soreness. 62.9 percent reported fatigue and 55.1 percent of people experienced headaches, all according to the CDC.

Ms. Poltorak did report side effects of "after the first dose sore arm and the second dose I had a headache for two days straight, really tired and arm felt like a noodle." These were all side effects she expected on getting I asked her if she had heard about it affecting people of multiple ages differently and she said "I have not heard much about how it affects other people. I have heard that many pharmacists who received it had a fever, similar symptoms to myself." On the other hand, the Moderna vaccine case study reported 91.6 percent of patient reporting injection site pain, 68.2 percent fatigue, 63 percent headache, 59.6 percent muscle pain and 44.8 percent joint

pain according to the CDC. Gabrielle said "after the first dose I had a headache and was kind of achy. For the second dose I had a headache, achy, chills, dizziness fever, and passed out and puked from being so dehydrated from the fever." she said her side effects for the first dose lasted a few hours but the second dose was a few days." The side effects did not change how they viewed the vaccine Gabrielle calling it a "living miracle."

Both women said they would highly recommend the vaccine from a professional and personal standpoint. Both said they would get the shot again and Taylor said "even though it is not 100 percent effective, it takes a little stress off your shoulders now, having gotten it." There have been many conflicting reports about the vaccines and their safety. After reading the experience others have had with the vaccine, as well as the extraordinary mound of scientific evidence the decision is left in the hands of the person receiving, although it should not be too tough a decision.



ALSO!

The Spirit needs a crew!



Tuesday, February 16th, 2021

The Spirit

Issue 1 Spring 2021

...your voice!

NIAGARA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Join The Spirit!

We need writers and editors! We want your help! Anyone can contribute!

Email spirit@niagaracc.suny.edu for more information!

Profile: Gemma Fournier

Written by Nathan Fournier

“Never stop working, and always aim higher,” says Gemma Fournier, who has been a professor at Niagara County Community College (NCCC) for the past 26 years. Gemma grew up in Niagara Falls with her immigrant parents from Italy and two younger sisters, and has been working ever since she was fifteen years old, and has no reason to stop anytime soon. She is what some define as a “workaholic” and is definitely a proud one.

Her story with NCCC starts after she graduated from Niagara Catholic. Although she was accepted to other four-year schools in the Western New York area, she decided that NCCC was her best option economically. While working part time at a bank and her parent’s pizzeria, she was going towards her AAS in Nursing, but decided to change to Surgical Technology and truly enjoyed her time as a student here. Gemma loved her time as a student at NCCC, stating “This place gave me the foundation to where I am today, and I am forever grateful for it.” After receiving her AAS in Individual Studies with a concentration in Surgical Technology, she was offered many full time job opportunities as a Surgical Technologist. She then began working as a full time Surgical Technologist at the Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center (NFMCC). During her time there, she became a Certified Surgical Technologist, also known as a CST. Also, while working at NFMCC, she returned to Nursing at Niagara University, and successfully earned her Bachelor’s of Science Degree in Nursing.

Once graduated, she was offered an interview from NCCC for a Surgical Technology (ST) Program Coordinator and fortunately, she was offered the posi-

tion in July 1995. Through this position, she has transitioned the Surgical Technology program from certificate to an AAS degree in Surgical Technology, and maintaining the program’s Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accreditation. If you were to major in Surgical Technology, Gemma most likely would be teaching some of your courses and will be your advisor as well. Gemma always tells her students in the first week of classes, NCCC and Surgical Technology is the reason she has been provided a good life and successful career along with many different opportunities at the state and national level related to the Surgical Technology profession.

Gemma is a strong believer in professional development and has attended and presented at numerous educator and national conferences related to Surgical Technology, she was able to network and get involved with many different committees throughout the years. The networking with individuals across the country solidified her name in the Surgical Technology world and earned various awards at the national level. The one award at the College level that Gemma is very proud of is the SUNY Chancellor’s Award Excellence in Teaching. Gemma has been fortunate enough to have served on the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) New York State Assembly Board of Directors for ten years, ending the last two years as President. Currently, Gemma is serving on the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) as the Secretary. She also is grateful enough to be currently serving as a member on the Lewiston-Porter School District Board, and her term ends in June of 2021.

Gemma is always committed to the communities that she is a part of, and her work proves it. There is not a moment when she is thinking about work, this is truly her passion and loves every second of it. She loves lending out a helping hand to her amazing students and colleagues. When Gemma is not working, she loves being with her wonderful and supportive friends and family. She loves watching horror movies, and

many other scary television shows like American Horror Story. Coming from her own son, she is the hardest worker I know, and always puts the well-being of others before herself. She is someone who I look up to who Nathan Fournier Journalism constantly inspires me every single day. Many of Gemma’s family, friends, and colleagues consider her as selfless, compassionate, dedicated and overall a wonderful spirit to be around.

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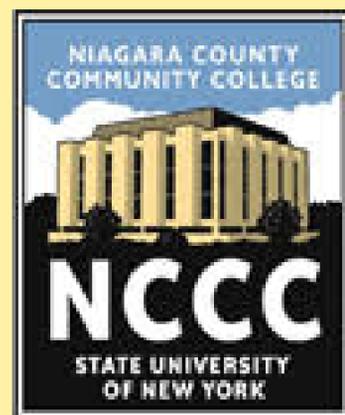
Aliyah Carroll

Nathan Fournier

Jacob Massaro

Madeline McGuire

Alecia Peake



Spring-Time Activities During Quarantine

Written by Alecia Peake

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, people around the world have been attempting to find new things to do while in quarantine. Spring-time is quickly approaching and many people cannot enjoy the activities they used to during holidays such as Spring Break. When people think of Spring, they imagine going on vacations or spending Easter with their friends and family, but due to the pandemic, many of us cannot enjoy these leisure activities like we used to. A large percent of the population is now confined to their homes, only leaving to work or buy their daily necessities. The students who attend NCCC, unfortunately, do not have a Spring Break this year due to the pandemic. For most of us, the question at hand is: What can we do for fun during quarantine?

For those who are tired of being stuck in the house all day, a fun and environmentally productive activity that they may want to try would be starting a garden. Not only would students be able to enjoy the fresh air and admire the transition of the seasons, but they would also be contributing to the environment. When I was little, I remember helping my grandmother plant her garden at the beginning of Spring. She

taught me all about the different types of flowers, vegetables, herbs, and even fruits on occasion. We’d spend hours tending to her garden. It was a great learning experience and it helped to strengthen the bond between my grandmother and me. It felt good to spend time with her on those sunny spring days when the breeze was so gentle and light. Now that I’m older and my allergies, unfortunately, flare up during the Spring, it makes me miss those days with my grandmother and her garden. Gardening is a simple, yet enjoyable activity that gets you out of the house. If you happen to live with other people, gardening can be a great way for you all to spend time together during quarantine. Not only can it be done while distancing from other people, but you can also use the plants you harvest for other activities such as cooking if you grow vegetables or for decorations if you grow flowers. According to the article “Celebrate the Season With These Social Distancing-Friendly Spring Activities,” the best item for beginners to plant are herbs since they are easier to care for, and they can be grown indoors or outdoors. Gardening is one of the best spring-time activities to do during this pandemic.

For those who do not like to risk being around others during the pandemic, there are plenty of other spring activities for to do while in the comfort of home. Personally, I love to read, especially when the weather is nice. Spring is the perfect time for you to grab a book, relax in a chair, and bask in the sun and the refreshing breeze. Whether relaxing indoors or outdoors, getting lost in a good book when the weather is airy and the trees are blooming is quite a pleasant way to pass the time.

Again, my seasonal allergies have made the spring-time not as enjoyable as it used to be. Since I can’t really indulge in the outdoors, something I now take joy in is spring decorating. Now I know that decorating the house doesn’t seem very entertaining, but it can really brighten up one’s home. Being stuck in my room all day makes time go by so slowly. It makes everything feel bland and uninteresting. Sprucing up the decor in my house helps to emphasize the joys of spring. Spring represents a time of rebirth. The trees and flowers are blossoming, the snow is melting away, and everything just feels new again. Decorating the home with colorful spring decor makes everything feel fresh. It adds a new

pop of fun into life that can help to relieve the boringness and sadness of quarantining. It’s an activity that will only require people to leave their house to gather supplies, and after that, they can enjoy the pristine and refreshing look of their new decor.

Other spring activities can also be found on the NCCC’s website’s Events Calendar. There are many upcoming activities that allow students to get together with others either online or in public, while also being a safe distance away from each other. According to the NCCC website, there are several events that are occurring such as the “Trivia Tuesday: Black History Month” on February 16th and the “Thunderwolves Game Show” on February 18.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put an immense amount of unease and stress on many of us. Quarantine restrictions have put a damper on the holidays/activities that we used to enjoy so much, but that shouldn’t stop us from enjoying the simple things in life. Though things may be changing, we can still find ways to bring joy into our lives. These simple activities can make it so that your spring-time can still be filled with entertainment and fun during these ever-changing times.

The Sabres of the New Year

Written By Jacob Massaro

It is never easy to be a Sabres fan, one might say after about a month and a half or so into the season. Since Buffalo's last arguable stretch of consistency, the team has gone through four coaches, with Ralph Krueger currently sitting at the helm as the fifth since Lindy Ruff was relieved of his duties in 2013. Despite the most inconsistent thing about Jack Eichel being his jersey number, the team has struggled to surround him with other talent. This has unfortunately lead to Eichel never experiencing a winning season since being drafted 2nd overall by Buffalo in in the 2015 NHL Draft. Despite attempting in recent years to claw their way out of the dredges of the Eastern Conference, the Sabres have not been sharp as it pertains to building a steady front office and coaching staff since the departure of Ruff. The '18-19 season added thirteen more wins from the year before, and despite a ten-game winning streak in November that briefly put them at the top of league standings, they regressed as the season continued and missed the playoffs.

With COVID forcing the NHL

to cancel the remainder of their games for the 2020 season, the Sabres once again finished with a losing record once again. Here we currently sit at the '20-'21 season and The Sabres are 4-4-2 and have a losing record at home as I write this article. According to the website 'diebytheblade.com', The Sabres recently cancelled all their games through February 8th due to Taylor Hall and Rasmus Ristolainen having entered COVID protocol.

Viewing the offseason from today's mindset, Buffalo did not do much to aid in extinguishing their nine-year playoff drought, The Sabres added Eric Staal via trade with the Minnesota Wild. This transaction still has question marks looming over it as Staal has not seen any time on the ice for Buffalo since being acquired on September sixteenth. Along with their trade addition, Buffalo's 8th overall draft pick, Jack Quinn, has yet to see any action as well. I recently caught up with the coach of our NCCC club hockey team and intramurals & Recreation Coordinator of 10 years Matthew Oleski about what he had to say about the Sabres' lack of consistency: "Personally the

system they play with Kruger is from 1995. Dump and chase is no longer a solid way to coach in today's NHL as analytics show puck possession is extremely valuable." With Buffalo adhering to the trend of the rise of analytics in sports, one could wonder if they are indeed on their way to searching for a new coach sooner rather than later. With major American sports leagues such as the NFL, NBA, MLB, and now the National Hockey League embracing analytics, teams that have chosen to not take that step forward fell well-behind. Analytics in general along with the rise in the importance of puck possession in the NHL has skyrocketed over the recent years; it has allowed the offense to open up and spread the puck around. Not only does this help with dominating time-management, it is the most unpredictable and surefire way to break through today's NHL defenses.

Along with problems pertaining to puck possession, Coach Oleski was also quite critical of Buffalo's ability to tend to the goal. "(Linus) Ullmark has turned the corner a bit over the past two seasons, but (Carter)

Hutton is simply not an NHL goalie" he also addressed how having a solid goalie can help contribute to wins and vice versa. With the shortened season passing by, it is difficult to remain optimistic for the Sabres at this current point in time as they seem to be caught in a perpetual loop of signing players that don't contribute, and not doing enough to help the players that keep the number '0' out of the win column. If Buffalo cannot turn the corner as a team, building consistency instead of winning in bursts, they might be able to return to their winning ways.

With analytics taking over the sports world, and shaping the way how teams play and adapt to the changes within the game, the Sabres need to stop looking to the past for answers. One step at a time they will hopefully realize soon that heading towards the future is the only way they are going to build a winning culture. Just akin how the Bills were such a huge positive inspiration and an enjoyable escape from the reality of our worldwide pandemic, hopefully The Sabres can figure out what they need to do to attempt to conquer similar feats.

NCCC's Fall Pivot

Written by Riley Funseth

At this point it has been almost a year since classes became online focused due to the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing both faculty and students to quickly change plans and adjust to a new way of learning. Though very different from past semesters, through hard work NCCC has been able to keep students learning despite the difficult circumstances we are in. Many students may be concerned with the conditions of the next semester, and NCCC is hoping to keep students informed of what to expect. In an interview on February 10th with Ms. Ulatowski, NCCC's Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs, she described the switch NCCC is planning to make.

When describing in general the goals for this next semester, Ms. Ulatowski says the aim is for the ratio of students taking in-person classes versus online to be 75% / 25%. She notes at the moment it is around 50% / 50%, though when factoring for hybrid classes the number of students online could be higher.

This aim could naturally change depending on what SUNY says, at the moment however this is what's being planned for. She says this uncertainty makes it more of a challenge when planning due to the nature of COVID-19 and vaccines being ever evolving.

Ms. Ulatowski says faculty are being prepared for a 'covid-pivot', to be able to switch between modes of teaching based on what factors may change that are out of the college's control. Despite the unpredictability, she says NCCC is overall still optimistic about being able to bring more students and faculty back to campus next semester. This shift does not mean that online learning will cease to be a focus, she notes that through this past year NCCC found many students don't mind or actually prefer online learning. There are also many students who don't feel quite comfortable coming back to campus yet, so NCCC plans to offer many different modalities of learning to address as many needs or preferences as possible. NCCC is also offering training to staff with at

least one mode of online teaching to be able to make their online classes more interactive and engaging for students.

When the semester starts, the standards for masks, social distancing, and testing will most likely still be required as with last semester when on campus. For those wondering about immunization, it will most likely not be required for a multitude of reasons. In general, there is still confusion in general over which vaccines are recommended, if they're available, and where to get them. Currently the CDC has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, as well as Moderna's COVID-19 Vaccine, but there are presently three other vaccines in phase three clinical trials by the CDC, as well. Besides people being confused on which vaccines to take, millions of vaccines also still need to be manufactured. Vaccines may also not be possible to mandate for students or faculty in general. Ms. Ulatowski notes that certain programs may inherently require immunizations, such as nursing to be able to go to clinical sites.

While it is being "played by ear," there are no specific courses that should be unable to return to normal. NCCC recognizes students benefit greatly from being in high tech/touch courses in person. Culinary classes by their very nature benefit from being in person as well, and thankfully both the culinary and Sanborn campuses are expected to return.

As a final note, Ms. Ulatowski says the master schedule is being developed right now for fall 2021, and this will be viewable for students in March.

NCCC is currently hard at work to make this transition possible, and if all goes well we can expect a return come the fall semester. While we have all been forced into these circumstances due to COVID-19, Ms. Ulatowski says this experience has made faculty learn a lot, and some things will most likely stick around. This pandemic has affected us all, and hopefully with a reopening next semester we are taking a step back towards normality.

Student Questions Answered!

HOW DO I GET AN ENROLLMENT VERIFICATION?

Did you know you are able to print your own enrollment verification certificates, view enrollment history, and check loan deferments through Banner Web? Log in and click the Student Services & Financial Aid tab and choose Student Self-Service. This can be accessed 24/7 and is free, easy to use, and secure. The Registration & Records Office provides this service to students through the National Student Clearinghouse.

NEED TO ORDER AN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT?

Order your transcript ONLINE through Banner Web (under Student Records) or on the Registration & Records webpage and click the green button "Click Here to Request Official Transcripts".

STUDENT CALENDAR

As a result of reviewing student communications to streamline information, Registration & Records and Career & Transitional Services have created a new STUDENT CALENDAR which can be found under the MyNCCC link at the top of NCCC's homepage. This combines a variety of documents into a centralized calendar, such as Important Dates, Student Guide and Key Dates normally distributed by the two offices. This calendar provides key enrollment dates in a centralized location on our website.