

## N-Gage becomes NCC's new hub for student involvement

By: Kalei Pietraszkiewicz, Deputy Editor



Whether you're a new or returning student at NCC, Student Life serves as a resource for everyone. Led by a team dedicated to enhancing the student experience, Student Life continues to introduce new tools and opportunities designed to support campus involvement. From joining clubs and participating in events to building valuable leadership and networking skills, the possibilities are wide.

Miles Molerio, Assistant Director of Student Life: Leadership and Clubs, describes it perfectly: "[Student Life] helps students connect, lead, explore different interests, and feel like they belong."

As many students may have noticed, N-Gage, what Molerio describes as a "one-stop shop," is quickly becoming the central hub for campus involvement. Gone are the days of scouring the website for

club contacts or searching through bulletin boards packed with event flyers. With N-Gage, students can easily browse clubs, explore upcoming events, and even showcase their own involvement on campus.

Another feature that is expected to be especially helpful is the ability to check in at events. By simply scanning a QR code, students can easily keep track of the events they attend.

While many students have embraced the implementation of N-Gage this semester, suggestions for improvement have not gone unheard. Molerio shared that by working closely with the company, Student Life was able to quickly respond to student feedback by introducing a new "RSVP tracker" feature, which is now available.

The updates do not stop there. "Anything we can't or haven't yet implemented is coming down

the pipeline," Molerio said. Additional features—such as customizable forms, meeting minutes, space for bylaws and constitutions, and even push notifications—are all currently in development.

Another major goal will be using N-Gage to show students community service initiatives. Students seeking volunteer opportunities whether that's on campus, or within a short commute, will be able to find those options directly through the platform.

Student Life prioritizes student feedback, encouraging students to keep an eye out for forms distributed throughout the semester. By gathering input on what students think, what they want to see, and what they are interested in, the department continues to highlight the importance of listening to the students. As Molerio adds, "at the end of the day, this is all for students."

Getting involved can feel intimidating, especially with the wide range of clubs and events available. If you're feeling that way, you're not alone. Still, Molerio encourages students to take that first step by downloading the app and browsing the list of clubs and upcoming events on N-Gage. As he reassures students, "the worst thing that could happen is you don't like it then you don't have to do it again." With some clubs offering a more laid-back atmosphere and others providing a higher level of engagement, N-Gage gives students the opportunity to find what fits them best.

To get started with N-Gage, search "Suitable" in your app store or scan the QR code(s) on this page to download the app. Once installed, log in using your NCC

email and be sure to enable notifications—so you don't miss out on campus events and updates!

If you are having trouble accessing the app, you can also use the NCCGo app by navigating to the "Campus Life" drop-down menu and selecting "N-Gage." Students may also access the platform through a web browser by visiting [app.suitable.co](http://app.suitable.co). Whether using the app or the web version, simply log in with your NCC credentials to get started.

For club-related questions, contact Student Life at [studentlife@northampton.edu](mailto:studentlife@northampton.edu). For resource and department-related inquiries, email [SELT@northampton.edu](mailto:SELT@northampton.edu).



Download the Suitable app through the Apple Store here!



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### Students Dressing to Impress!

See pg. 4



### Why Do We Try to Be Perfect?

See pg. 6



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# Getting buried by burnout?

## How NCC offers tools to help students deal with stress

By: Riley Happel, Contributing Writer

Students face many stressors in college. Transitioning to college life can be challenging, especially for community college students, as stressors can extend beyond the classroom. With so much to do and limited amounts of time, students can easily feel overwhelmed by schoolwork or life demands. Learning how to manage stress is essential to prevent burnout.

Beatriz Messina, a counselor at NCC, said many students juggle part-time or full-time jobs, family responsibilities and financial challenges while studying.

Students who feel overwhelmed should know that resources are available at NCC. The counseling department offers counselors to help students manage stress. The counseling department offers free, confidential and short-term counseling to currently enrolled students. Sessions are solution-focused and available in person or via Zoom.

The NCC learning center is also a valuable tool students can utilize in overwhelming times. Learning Center tutor Mike Albanese advises students to meet with a coach, saying, "They're there to help manage that stress. They can help talk you through the semester and your classes."

### Strategy 1- Organize & Prioritize

One strategy that was recommended a lot was to make a list and organize tasks based on priority. Albanese said, "When things pile up and you start to worry, break stuff down and make a list, visualize it, and it becomes more manageable."

### Strategy 2- Journaling & Meditation

Many experts also recommend journaling and meditation on a regular basis to help reduce stress before it becomes too much. "Journaling can help you cope," said Emma Diddin, a writer for PsychCentral, "allowing you to externalize your anxious thoughts, put them into words, and then put them aside rather than letting them become an obsession."

Meditation can be a quick and effective solution when feel-

ing overwhelmed; it can be done just about anywhere at any time.

### Strategy 3- Breathe

If feeling overwhelmed, students should take a moment to just breathe. "Quick techniques students can use during the school day when they feel anxious or overwhelmed are breathing exercises," says Messina, "you can count backward from 10 as you focus on your breath and repeat as many times as possible."

### Strategy 4- Support Systems

Having a strong support system can also help students manage stress. That can be family, friends, or even a professor here at NCC.

"Having contact with people who care about us improves our overall well-being," Messina said.

It is easy to let stressful times overwhelm you. Resources and support systems are available to help students manage challenges. Students who feel overwhelmed are encouraged to seek help and explore stress-relief strategies.

"The skills you learn today to reduce and manage your stress will not only help you now in college, but after college," Messina said.

Counseling Information:

Bethlehem Campus located in College Center 341

Hours: Monday - Thursday: 8 am - 6 pm | Friday: 8 am - 5 pm

Or call 610-332-6178

Pocono Campus:

Hours: Monday-Friday: 9am-5pm

Or call 570-369-1911

Email: [monroecounseling@northampton.edu](mailto:monroecounseling@northampton.edu)

NCC Learning Center:

Bethlehem Campus located at College Center 315

Hours: Monday - Thursday: 9 am to 7 pm | Friday 9 am to 5 pm

Phone: 610-861-5517

Email: [tutoring@northampton.edu](mailto:tutoring@northampton.edu)

# Introducing the Learning Commons

## A modern take on a classic academic space

By: Abbey Monzo, Contributing Writer

The number 41,718 represents the total amount of real-life, tangible materials in the Paul & Harriett Mack Library at Northampton Community College's Bethlehem campus. Out of the aforementioned figure, 8,326 of them account for the physical and digital materials - including books, audiobooks, DVDs, audio CDs, periodicals, calculators, and laptops - checked out in the last three years at the Bethlehem campus. 41,718 material resources, and yet, only a fifth of them were opened. 41,718 opportunities to escape from reality, 33,392 untold stories and adventures, and one united team of faculty and students coming together in hopes of reinventing a tale as old as time—the library.

In the words of Brian Gardner, Chief Information Officer of the President's Cabinet, "While the Libraries of NCC have served our community well for a number of years, there has been a longstanding need to modernize both the space on the Bethlehem campus and the services provided to all students." As an expert in the field, Gardner will oversee the upcoming project and remodeling of the library, as well as the name itself.

Introducing: The Learning Commons, "a renewed focus on academic support, both to empower the faculty and improve the teaching and learning experience for all," Gardner said. Students can expect the Learning Center, Information Technology (ITS) Help Desk, and Career Services to join the library under the same organization, hence the name "Learning Commons."

For librarian Anne Bittner, who has been a part of NCC's faculty and staff for 26 years, working

as a cataloging librarian and liaison librarian for the Paralegal and Business students, there are several reasons why NCC feels the need to update its current library.

"The two biggest [reasons] are to combine several student support services together in one place - to make it more convenient - and to offer students a variety of study spaces that can be used for quiet study, group work, and other activities, like author visits or performances," Bittner shared.

The Learning Commons is hoping to house a browsable collection of books, as well as study rooms, quiet student space, research support, an information hub, flexible seating, group study/collaboration areas, an innovation classroom, and a mini-maker space. All while maintaining the tried-and-true library services that students know and rely on today.

In addition to the development of the Learning Commons, the Presidential Cabinet and Executive Board have been drafting plans to give back to the students enrolled at NCC.

Gardner said, "For several years, we have also been working on what we call the Students First initiative. NCC's mission states that students are the reason we exist. The Students First team is made up of all the service departments in the College, from Helpdesk to the Enrollment Services One-Stop, Advising to Career Services, and many more."

Alongside the Students First initiative, for the first time in recent history, the College is engaging students and alumni firsthand in the development of the Learning Commons.

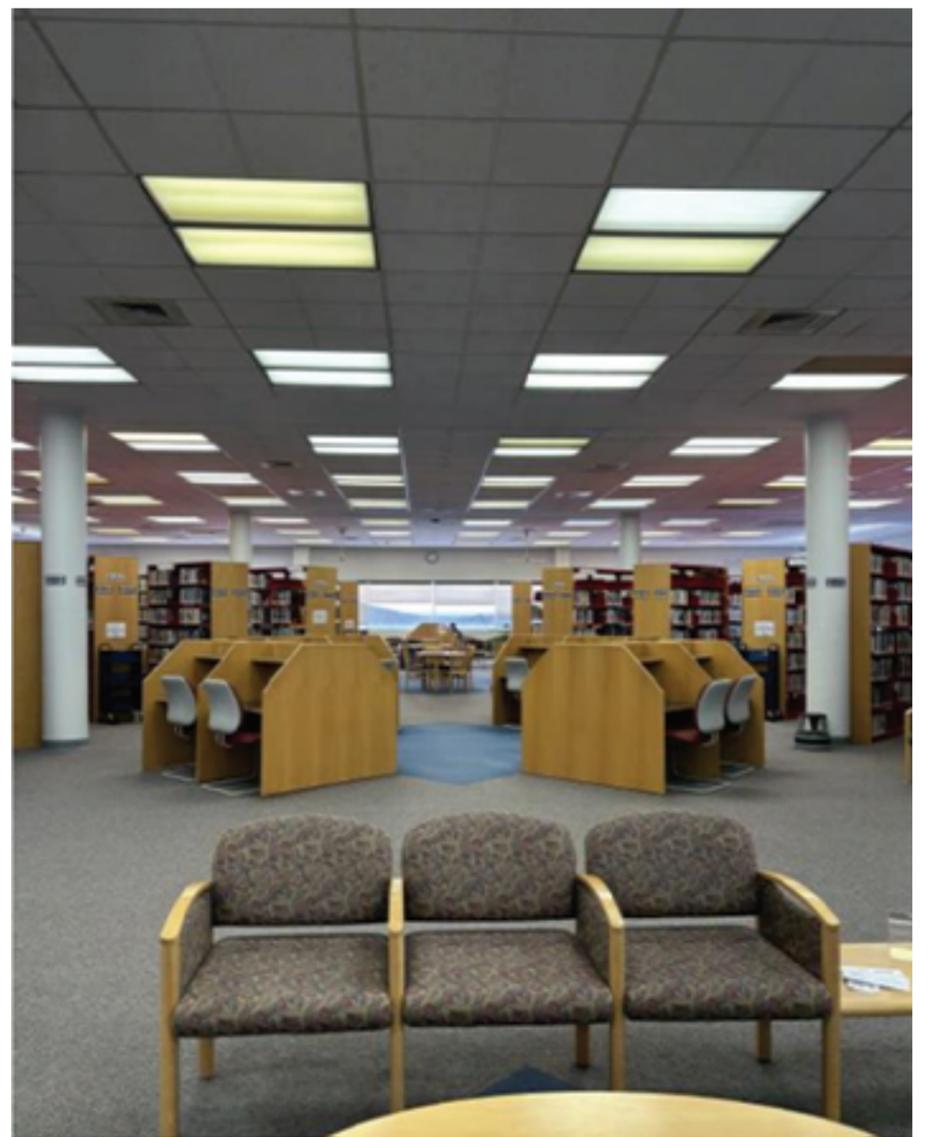
"Students were included as key partners in the listening tour during

the vision phase of the project. Randy Galiotto, [class of 2000], and a member of the Board of Trustees, is co-founder and Principal of Alloy5, the architecture firm working to bring this vision to life," Gardner stated.

By doing so, this project will reinvent the library and the anticipated Learning Commons, becoming a "one-stop model designed to streamline access to vital resources and services, ultimately fostering student

success at Northampton Community College," as said by Gardner.

With plans of the Learning Commons hoping to unfold in the coming years, the 41,718 materials in the Paul & Harriett Mack Library will now be accompanied by more than their hardcover counterparts, as NCC puts the element of community back on the shelves.



The entrance of the Paul & Harriett Mack Library at NCC's Bethlehem Campus on College Center's 4th floor  
Photo by: Abbey Monzo

## Newest NCC organization offers support for adult and non-traditional students

By: Kayla Gerard, Staff Writer

For many, the traditional college experience takes place immediately after graduating from high school. However, at NCC, a significant portion of the student body is rewriting that narrative. From parents managing both diapers and diplomas to professionals switching careers, a new student-led organization is ensuring that no one travels this path alone.

The Path, a recently launched club for non-traditional students, aims to create a campus culture where every student, regard-

less of age or background, feels seen, supported, and empowered.

The club has a broad definition of "non-traditional," serving as an inclusive support network. Its members include adult learners and career changers returning to education after years away; parent students juggling childcare with coursework; ESL and international students adjusting to a new academic environment; and first-generation students or those who

have completed their education through GED/HiSET pathways.

"Whether you're returning to school, parenting, learning English, or navigating college later in life, this space is made for you," the club's mission statement declares.

The initiative is proudly affiliated with Generation Next, a program of Community Action Lehigh Valley, further solidifying its role as a bridge between the college and the larger community.

For those interested in getting involved, the club makes it easy to connect. Students can join their digital community via Discord or scan the QR codes posted on flyers around campus to apply for leadership roles within the council.

As the club's motto reminds us: "It's never too late to study." For the members of The Path, while the journey may look different, the destination and the support received along the way are what truly matter.

# Center for Career Development helps students craft the perfect interview look

By: Tiffany Judge, Staff Writer

Have you ever seen a dress code description and thought, “What does that even mean?!” All of these vague and varying descriptions, such as “casual,” “smart casual,” “business casual,” or “business professional,” can send young job seekers and seasoned workers alike 2 a.m. doomscrolling to avoid under- or over-dressing for interviews for their dream jobs.

Fortunately, the NCC Center for Career Development has students covered.

On Feb. 24, an event called “Professional Dress Do’s & Don’ts and Why It Matters!” took place at the Bethlehem campus, where students learned how to dress for an interview or business event and had a chance to browse a selection of professional looks from the campus boutique, First Impressions. A show of hands

at the event indicated that not all students are aware of this resource at NCC that connects students with professional clothing at no cost.

Staff members gathered at the front of the room, sporting varying levels of acceptable workplace dress and discussed where some job candidates miss the mark. Questions from students centered around how job seekers can show personal style while still looking professional.

In a post-COVID world, the concept of acceptable dress within the workplace has evolved quickly. Additionally, industry and specific job requirements also drive what is appropriate. So, how can new graduates ensure they dress for success while still expressing themselves?

With 36 years of experience at the NCC Center for Career Development, Karen Veres has seen it all -

from formal, suit-and-tie workplace requirements to employers' increasing acceptance of personal self-expression; such as, visible tattoos and piercings, colorfully dyed hair, and facial hair. “Things were definitely

relaxing before, but COVID really accelerated the change,” said Veres.

*continued on page 5*



Karen Glose, NCC Director of Career & Alumni Services, offers students tips to make a good first impression with employers  
Photo by: Tiffany Judge

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## From page 4

Despite loosening attire standards in the workplace, she notes that a neat, clean, well-groomed look can go a long way when making a first impression in an interview. Prospective employees should take care to practice good hygiene and wear wrinkle-free, properly fitted clothing to make a good impression when interviewing in a professional setting.

Industry professionals like Jessica Delgrosso echo Veres' advice. Delgrosso is the Director of Human Resources at MCS Industries in Easton, and she emphasizes that even if professional clothing is not available to a job candidate, personal grooming can go a long way. She shared that in lieu of the perfect wardrobe, a polished resume, neat appearance, and a handwritten thank you note goes a long way with hiring managers and HR teams: "Show us your effort."

Delgrosso recalls the adage "dress for the job you want, not the job you have," but she advises prospective employees to follow that within reason. To avoid a scene out of the movie "Stepbrothers," interviewees should skip the tuxedos and instead seek to elevate their looks slightly for an initial meeting, even for hands-on trade jobs.

Although an applicant may feel uncomfortable slightly overdressing for an hour, it could be the thing that helps a person stand out and ultimately land the job.

Since COVID, many interviews and professional meetings now take place on virtual platforms, like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Although it may be tempting to keep it comfy while connecting remotely, Veres and Delgrosso both recommend dressing professionally from head to toe, even if the

camera only shows a headshot. "The clothing that you wear influences your mindset and you'll feel more professional," said Veres.

Despite the recent societal shift towards casual clothing, the Wall Street Journal reported that some Gen Z workers are bucking that trend. Social media workwear aesthetics, such as "office siren" and "corpcore" are adding excitement behind dressing professionally while maintaining a personal touch. Reporting showed that younger workers are moving away from having separate work and personal sections of their closets. "If you're buying a blazer, you want it to be your office blazer, your going out blazer, your running out to brunch blazer," says WSJ reporter, Lane Florsheim.

Overall, the message is clear: the stuffy, cookie-cutter suits of past generations are out, and feeling confident in your own style is in. The secret power of looking good is that it will make you feel good and can provide a much-needed confidence boost during a nerve-racking meeting.

If your current closet is a sea of hoodies, sweatpants, and other pieces of athleisure, fear not! The First Impressions Clothing Boutique, located in the College Center of the Bethlehem Campus, is available to get all students confident and interview ready.

Students can participate in mock interviews and resume help by contacting [careers@northampton.edu](mailto:careers@northampton.edu). Students can also make an appointment with a member of the Career Center staff to gain access to the boutique for suits, ties, blazers, skirts, pants, shirts, shoes, and other accessories at no cost.



Jacqui Stackhouse, NCC Assistant Director of Employer Engagement (left) and Grace Williams, NCC Student (right) browse through the NCC First Impressions Boutique  
Photo by: Tiffany Judge

# Meet Dr. Brian Alnutt

## The "Historian" of NCC

By: Natalie Sack, Contributing Writer

Dr. Brian Alnutt is a History Professor at Northampton Community College, where he has been teaching since 2009. Dr. Alnutt initially went to college for history, then attended grad school where he received both his master's and Ph.D. degrees in history. He currently teaches a total of seven different courses. He is very passionate about history and teaching it to the next generation. His love of both history and teaching is prevalent in his classes, which he makes fun and engaging for the students. Dr. Alnutt believes that we cannot understand our present times without knowing the past.

**What is it that first drew you to love history?**

I think I always liked it even from middle school. In those years, it was called Social Studies - it [wasn't] really called history, but I really got an interest in it back then. And I really can't think of a time since middle school where I wasn't interested in history, so I was happy to be able to explore it more deeply in grad school. And now I get to teach it also, which is neat.

**Why did you decide to become a professor at NCC?**

It's a very good school with a good reputation and I live in the area. It seemed like a good fit because I didn't really want to move to other parts of the country.

*continued on page 7*

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# Why students try to be perfect in their educational career

## Is striving for academic flawlessness helping students or harming them?

By: Tyler Gallagher, Contributing Writer

Over the past few years, the job market has become increasingly demanding for college students to prepare for the real world. However, many students may overlook this factor in believing they must be flawless with their grades to get a high paying career. What is making students feel this way? Do they focus on one trait over another throughout their education? Is this desire for perfection worth it in the long run?

Many questions linger and there are many subjective opinions, both from students and professors. Their definition of perfection in academics, though, is to get the highest grade possible, sometimes at the expense of their personal life and what they hope to do with themselves post-graduation. In fact, some question their future and whether they made the correct choice.

“I believe that throughout my education, I’ve been exploring alternative options, mostly due to me firmly thinking that my career won’t be able to suffice in the real world because of bills and necessities being at a higher cost,” an Arts major student at NCC said.

Some students, local and nationwide, have outright changed their majors entirely, with around 33% of undergraduates shifting theirs in hopes of better job opportunities (InsideHigherEd). Surprisingly enough, these statistics were provided in 2017, but today, 75-85% of students swap majors during college (LuminaFoundation). The highest pivot seems to be those in Journalism majors, with AI up-rising being the key blame, and not the quality of the major itself.

However, selecting another major isn’t always likely to bring spectacular results. In fact, it is common nowadays that even with a college degree, there is still speculation that someone’s “dream career” won’t be attained, with 30% of 971 surveyors getting a full-time job because of their degree (CNBC). For those individuals that remain dedicated to their career path, they attempt to be as successful as possible in any given class to the point where it may interfere with personal lifestyle.

“I usually try to prioritize my grades in college so that it would look good on my resume... I do think it takes a toll on my mental well-being, because getting a bad grade is something that’ll always be frowned upon and sometimes it makes me lose confidence

in learning about specific content,” said one NCC sophomore.

Sometimes, students consider grades as a secondary factor and prefer to focus on the course material to retain knowledge even after an exam, knowing it will likely not be reiterated or discussed in the future. Some use this method of learning sparingly, though, depending on how crucial the class is.

“It does vary depending on class types because with electives, I’m not as focused on grades... As long as I’m passing the class, I know that I’m understanding the flow correctly. As far as retaining the knowledge post-exam, it becomes tricky,” Pasco Hernando State College Freshman Amy Holley added.

*continued on page 7*



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## From page 6

“Knowledge is more important because you’re going to use what you learn in class way more than grades in the long run. The knowledge is what helps get sufficient grades and even put it to use beyond college,” NCC student Kaitlin Glick said.

Most high school students are notorious for focusing on graduating and not needing most of the knowledge in the real world. But a handful of students test their limits and try to enter AP or Honors courses in hopes of better quality of teaching, and to build the foundation of their future. Why do some of the students go through the stress of that?

“I think the classes will, in some way, benefit my future but, for the most part, I’m taking [AP classes] to build up my high school credit requirements... An AP class is challenging, but striving for the good grades is very satisfying, despite me not retaining as much knowledge as I would like to,” Freedom High School student Collin Whiting said.

“I have been motivated to take more Honors courses in high school simply because of the quality of teaching being a night and day difference compared to academic classes. Electives also make me comfortable as well, because it’s sometimes in an environment with people I know I share the same skills with and people that are likely to dive further into the same career as me,” Freedom High School student Laylane said.

Not only did students provide their opinions on how they’re going about their education, but professors and staff at NCC were able to share their perspectives on how they went about their education, as well as how they became college professors.

To start, Communications Professor Spring Shank explained that she primarily focused on grades prior to

her high school experience. “Up until early high school is when I really started worrying about my grades, and once I fully entered the high school environment, I got more oriented towards understanding what I was learning about... Growing up at the time that I did, it wasn’t as ‘demanding’ as it is now... My validation of knowledge is what assisted me in becoming a professor, as I fell into the act of teaching on my own.”

Sociology Professor Joshua Kreger also included his perspective: “I didn’t quite have a cohesive plan when I went to college. I wanted to do well, while also focusing on things I found interesting... I was definitely more motivated to invest into subject material that I found to be helpful or interesting long-term and less so on getting good grades...” He added that being a professor wasn’t always something in his agenda, but it was a decision he did not regret, and it helped him gain new skills that improved his curriculum.

Some professors even agree that students sometimes don’t retain the knowledge they were taught, usually because of the mindset that whenever a test is completed, it’s almost certain that the discussion won’t be brought up in future lectures. Students are so acclimated to putting full attention into a new unit, rather than referring to a previous one.

Professors also believe that a handful of students may suffer through indirect peer pressure. For example, if a student in one major is doing really well, but another isn’t too confident about themselves, that second student feels more obligated to join the first student’s major, knowing it can likely be more successful in their future, despite it not being something that they wanted to do as a career.

Lastly, staff members Jill Gehring (Math Tutoring Coordinator) and Gabby Stanley (Writing Tutor) at NCC’s Learning Center mentioned how there is a large influx of students that arrive during the fall semester due to high enrollment. They usually discover that “students who arrive very close to the due date of an assignment or test strive to get a solid grade, while students who consistently ask for tutoring veer towards the educational value a course may hold.” They also included that focusing on strictly school and grades is harmful, as it pressures students to be flawless, degrading the quality of the learning material. Focusing on learning can bring joy and fulfillment, so long as personal life is factored in as well.

Jill and Gabby concluded with advice that “even though a particular career may not pay a high salary, it’s better to stay in the major that stu-

dents fundamentally enjoy because not only will their college years be more enjoyable, but also they are still learning problem solving and critical skills that are beneficial to life and can be used even outside of their main career...Continue trying as much as possible, and eventually you will find your strong suit.”

Overall, the value that an education may hold is subjective in a contextual manner. Devoting a large amount of time into learning may bring joy and a “getaway” for some, while others may feel deflated because of fatigue from learning, which can harm grades and overall value of what they are learning. Everybody has a strict prowess about how they go through academics, which makes some to believe that perfection is the key to success. Sometimes, though, it’s what you also retain as a result of that perfection.

## From page 5

And this is a very good school with a good history program that I could work with while still living in the area. So, it was a really good fit.

**What are all the courses you teach at NCC?**

I teach American History 1, American History 2, and Modern American History. I also teach History of Latinos in America and History of The Black Experience. And then Middle Eastern History and The American Experience of Warfare, which is a military history class.

**What is your favorite time period in history and why?**

I like the late 19th and 20th centuries. Those are what I would say my favorites are. The 20th century had things like the Civil War going on in America, as well as social reform things happening like women’s rights getting some traction.

And then in the 19th century you had World War 1 and 2, the Cold War, and different cultural shifts happening throughout the world. So, there was definitely a lot going on, a lot to look at happening all at once. So that’s really why that’s my favorite time period in history.

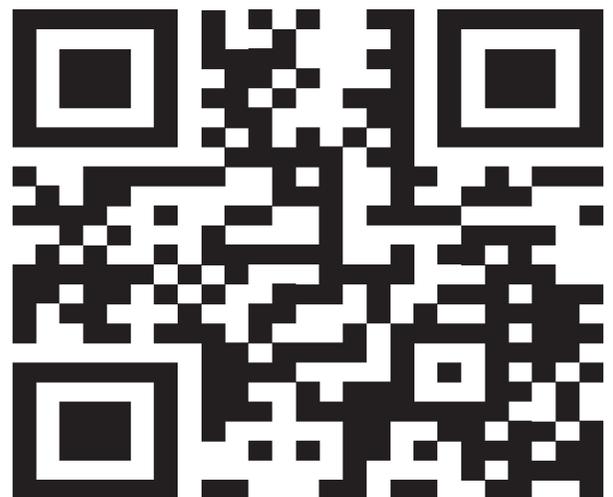
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# Exploring NCC through the lens: College hosts author Clint Smith and annual Club Fest

All photos by Marcia Young, Staff Photographer



Clint Smith begins his lecture to NCC students, faculty, and staff on February 19. The lecture touched on themes from his bestselling book *How the Word is Passed*



Smith and NCC Sociology Professor Erin Reilly (left) field questions from the audience following Smith's lecture



Smith continues his lecture, exploring themes of slavery in America and the power of historical memory in shaping our world today



An NCC student meets with club officers during 2026 Club Fest. Club Fest was held on January 29 in the Student Life Zone



The Band of Brothers Club poses at their table at Club Fest. Every student organization was represented, allowing students to meet and learn about every club available to them



Club Fest allows for students of all backgrounds to get involved. No matter the path, NCC allows for students to find their community and meet their peers through events like Club Fest