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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **NORTHWEST IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE HOSTS “21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE”**

Education is now a full decade into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it is increasingly apparent that students and teachers have different expectations about the educational experience. For one day, teachers from northwest Iowa went back to school to learn how students want to learn.

On Monday, September 19, Northwest Iowa Community College hosted their first “21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology Conference.” 350 teachers and administrators from area K-12 schools, and the College instructors, met on campus to explore the challenges and opportunities of teaching millennial students.

“What we’ve been doing for decades isn’t working. We can see that with test scores, and other indicators. I believe technology is a major vehicle to change what’s happening in Education,” said Jeff Borden, Senior Director of Teaching and learning at Pearson/eCollege.

Some of the statistics referenced in the keynote included the grim fact that of every 100 9<sup>th</sup> graders, only 68% will graduate on time, only 40% will enroll in college, and only 18% will earn their degree on time. Business and Industry leaders reported in a 2008 study by Oxford University that only 15% of their young employees have the skills necessary for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

NCC and area schools know that it is time to address these issues, and this conference was the first step on what is hoped will be an ongoing collaboration to improve the learning outcomes for area students.

Borden, conference keynote speaker, addressed the conference on “How a Virtual Learning Environment Can (and Should) Help Learners.” Instead of shutting computers and phones off in the classroom, the focus was on how to leverage these (and other tools) to enhance the learning experience for individual students.

For decades teachers have been told to individualize instruction to the learning styles, interests, and needs of students. Standardized instruction does not meet the needs of individuals, and standardized students are rare.

Borden emphasized that we need to “stop ignoring the research” on how students learn and adapt teaching strategies to meet student demand. Cross-curricular courses encourage deeper learning. Students need to be encouraged to be creative and innovative, yet have real life applications and practical assessments of learning. It is critical to teach core competencies in communication and computers, but equally important to teach cultural and collaboration competencies.

After the morning keynote address, teachers and administrators moved out to join in forum sessions on a wide variety of topics. Borden addressed smaller groups on using Web 2.0 tools, and in being Creative in the Online World. Other sessions were delivered by Northwest Iowa Community College Faculty on various types of technology and strategies for using new tools in instruction.

Over the past three years NCC has been working to integrate active learning techniques into the curriculum as part of a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant from the Department of Education. This conference was an opportunity for faculty to disseminate what has been learned through the grant with other area educators.

Active Learning is a major topic of conversation and training at NCC as a result of the grant. In short this means that teachers lecture less, and students do more. According to Gretchen Bartelson, NCC Dean of Extended Learning Services, "The research on active learning is very, very clear. Students who "do" remember 90% of what they are taught, while students who only "listen" remember only 10%."

How does this happen? Well it is more than old fashioned group work. Students today have access to the information of the world at their fingertips. However, the internet is more than a giant library, it is a place to collaborate, communicate and invent new ideas and artifacts. Students expect to have lecture notes, PowerPoint's and other instructional resources available whenever they want it. They also want to be able to review lectures through podcasts, and to give instructors feedback on demand.

In addition to changing the way that students learn in the campus classroom, the option of online classes is growing every day. Within the next few years it is anticipated that 75% of all colleges' courses will be available over the internet, and 50% of high school classes. Clearly teachers need to learn to teach differently.

The plan is to try and host a shared professional development conference every year at NCC, building on the success of this week's event. In the next few weeks area schools will be asked for their input on what is needed in the fall of 2012.