



News Release

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NMCC's longest-serving faculty member Daniel Hotham retires after 35 years; College Foundation scholarship to be established

Aroostook County - Having directly touched the lives of more than 5,000 college students in the classroom and after teaching nearly 600 courses at Northern Maine Community College in his 35-year career at the institution, Dan Hotham will officially bid farewell to the higher education community he so loves when he retires at the end of December.

Hotham, who first began his employment with then Northern Maine Vocational Technical Institute – a forerunner of NMCC, taught his final class at the College on December 11. He first joined the campus community as coordinator of residential life in 1974, when he was 25 years old. The better part of his more than three decades at NMCC was spent teaching communication classes and instructing in, and later directing, the first-year seminar and first year experience program.

“In education, the satisfaction you get is after your students leave and go out into the professional world. To hear a graduate come back to me and tell me that I have made a difference is what it is all about,” said Hotham. “The faculty and staff here really make a difference. They care deeply about the success and overall well-being of their students. There is no better calling in life than to positively impact another person’s life, and I have experienced that satisfaction every day of the 35 years I have been here.”

His impact extends beyond the students he has touched over that period of time. College administrators, fellow faculty members, staff and even community friends of NMCC recognize Hotham’s extraordinary legacy.

“Dan Hotham’s contribution to our campus community is unmatched by any individual who has worked for or attended NMCC in the 45 years since we opened our doors,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “This is true not based on longevity but on his approach to students, employees and the institution. His passion for the College and his vision for what we can do for our students are extraordinary, and he has had a tremendous impact on the lives of students who have come through our doors.”

During his tenure, Hotham both witnessed and was a transformative figure in the evolution of the campus community. When he arrived at then NMVTI with his wife Cathy in the mid 1970's to lead residence life programming, he became the first director of Andrews Hall. The brand new dormitory was the first housing facility and one of only three buildings on campus that was not surplus property from the former Presque Isle Army Air Base.

In his initial assignment, Hotham was tasked with bringing campus residence life from the "house mother" model to a staff of resident directors and proctors (now known as resident assistants). He not only successfully led that transition, but in the process developed a vital intramural program for the school that engaged the student body.

"We didn't even have a gymnasium on campus and had to use the gym at the Skyway School. On many occasions, the bleachers would be filled with spectators for our intramural contests," recalled Hotham of his early days at NMCC.

After two years living in Andrews Hall, Dan Hotham, and, more specifically, his wife Cathy – herself an educator – were looking for a change. Ready to take a teaching position offered to him by a local school system, Hotham was approached by former NMVTI Director James Patterson about assuming an instructor position in the business technology department.

"At the time I did not have the formal credential to teach these classes, but Jim Patterson told me that I was 'the right person' and that he did not hire for the credential but for the person who was a right fit for the position. Again I set out not to disappoint those who showed so much faith in me. With the support of the College, I took classes, attended seminars, visited other business communication instructors in the state and did a lot of reading," said Hotham.

It is that same dedication, work ethic and appreciation for lifelong learning that Hotham imparted on his students, above and beyond the expected course content, over the years. In many instances, those lessons have spanned across more than one generation within the same family.

Among the students taking a course from Hotham in his final semester as a full-time faculty member was Dustin Graham of Mapleton. Not only did Graham's brother Jacob take classes from Hotham in recent years, but his mother, who graduated from NMCC in 1984, recalls the many lessons imparted by Hotham that have guided her on her way to becoming both a successful businesswoman and well-rounded human being.

Hotham's effectiveness in connecting and impacting students over the generations has as much to do with his devotion to his chosen profession as it does with his pioneering and innovative spirit. Among the greatest accomplishments he cites is his work establishing a first year experience program at NMCC in the late 1980's, some time before such offerings were common on College campuses. He served as the program's first and, to present day, only director.

“I started to see a lot of students fail and it wasn’t because they weren’t bright, but because they didn’t have the tools they needed to succeed, such as how to develop the right study habits, how to manage their time as busy students and how to navigate College and life after high school. I recalled from my own undergraduate experience as a first generation college student in the early 1970’s at the University of Maine at Machias, that getting through those first few months of College wasn’t easy, so I wanted to do something to help students along the way,” said Hotham.

Many of those students, like Shawn Lahey, NMCC information support specialist, became friends and even colleagues of Hotham’s. In fact, of NMCC’s 105 current full-time employees, Hotham claims 24 as former students. A first generation college student himself, Lahey credits Hotham as key to his success.

“As an advisor, he helped me through scheduling, what things meant in the college world and pointed me in the direction of success. As an instructor, he not only managed the classroom and the learning, he had the knack for becoming the student himself and learned from those around him, thus making his classes more effective as he adapted to present to all learning styles in the room,” said Lahey. “As a colleague, Dan has always been ready to work, willing to help, confident in his abilities and accepted his limitations. Most importantly, in any situation, Dan has always been a pleasure to be around with his quick wit, catchy one liners and positive attitude, and I am proud to say that I have learned from and worked with him during my time at NMCC. He is one of those people that although ‘gone’ will never be forgotten.”

Hotham’s legacy at NMCC will live on not only for his impact in the classroom, but for his work outside as well. In addition to jump starting the College intramural program, he coached NMCC’s baseball team, served as yearbook advisor, student senate advisor and as Alpha Beta Gamma Honor Society co-advisor. However, he looks back most fondly on his 20 plus year tenure as the first coach of the NMCC golf team – a sport for which he has a clear passion.

“That experience left me with wonderful memories and many of my former players remain friends whom I regularly see on golf courses in Aroostook County and throughout the state. Sharing my passion for the game has been another major highlight of my career,” said Hotham.

With retirement on the immediate horizon and plans to winter in the Austin, Texas area not far from the couple’s only daughter, Danielle, and her family, tee time will be a year-round occurrence. Although he’ll enjoy golfing regularly during the winter months, Hotham will find himself in somewhat unfamiliar territory. In his May 2009 commencement address to the graduating class, he spoke about the NMCC campus serving as a unique geographic marker in his life.

“Northern Maine Community College has meant an awful lot to me and my family. I have spent most of my life within a five-mile radius of where I am standing,” he told the graduates. Following up recently on that statement, Hotham noted: “It would be less than five miles if the golf course was closer to the campus.”

Although he may spend months at a time outside of that five mile radius, Hotham's impact on the NMCC student body will be ever present. President Crowley has announced that the campus community and NMCC Foundation will work toward establishing an endowed business scholarship named after Daniel and Cathy Hotham.

"It is a great honor and extremely meaningful to both Cathy and I to have an NMCC business scholarship established in our names. NMCC students are near and dear to Cathy and me because they represent who we were when we first met at the University of Maine at Machias in 1970. Two kids from lower middle class families, first generation college students who were trying to get a college education so we could have a better life. Money was a luxury and any scholarship money we received was much appreciated as we tried to attain our goals and dreams."

Individuals interested in making a contribution to the Daniel and Cathy Hotham Business Technology Scholarship Fund should send their donations to the NMCC Foundation at 33 Edgemont Drive, Presque Isle, Maine 04769.

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Daniel Hotham, the longest-serving instructor at Northern Maine Community College, teaches one of his final classes recently. Hotham will retire at the end of the year after 35 years at NMCC.