Governor Nixon visits campus to view alternative energy program

Ron Houston Center for the Performing Arts
Graduating Northwest student receives prestigious government fellowship

Following graduation, DHS fellows must fulfill a one-year, full-time service obligation working either for the department or a department-approved venue in one of the 16 homeland security research areas. Williams, who will graduate from Northwest this year, said he is currently evaluating offers from a number of graduate schools, including Johns Hopkins and the University of Denver. After completing his fellowship, he hopes to embark on a career in public service, possibly as a policy specialist with a government agency.

Though funded through the Department of Homeland Security, the fellowship program is administered by the Department of Energy’s Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The selection process includes review by a panel of senior experts and engineers who evaluate the applicant’s Graduate Record Examination scores, research experience essay, current research interests essay and Homeland Security service essay. Highly rated applications are forwarded to the DHS Directorate of Science and Technology for the final selection process.

A dual major in geography and political science, Williams recently interned with the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) in St. Louis. His academic training at Northwest includes emergency preparedness operations planning, advanced geographic information systems exploitation and communications interoperability.

Williams was honored by the Student Senate this spring with the Tower Service Award, which is bestowed on individuals who demonstrate exceptional commitment to the University and its mission. Recipients are selected based on their continuing accomplishments and service to the Northwest community.

“This is a very special opportunity,” Williams said. “I especially want to thank the Northwest community. Following graduation, Iam awarded the Department of Homeland Security Fellowship to attend graduate school during the fall and spring semesters and participate in a 10-week, 13th place overall out of 64 teams competing. The trophies will come” Nelson said when asked what his team needs to do in order to continue its winning ways. “You've got to keep up with current events, and you have to be open to criticism, because you don't get better without it. Sometimes you don't want to hear what you don't want to hear because your ego gets in the way.”

But Nelson added that he doesn't want his students to dwell on losing a round or failing to achieve all their goals at a particular competition. He does, however, want them to use experience as a tool for improvement.

“They are learning from this. If they do that, trophies will come.”

A certain work ethic

While speech and debate teams don't draw the huge crowds and media attention of, say, a collegiate athletic event, Nelson said the rewards of doing forensics as a college student are both real and lasting.

“First and foremost, it instills a certain work ethic,” Nelson said. “Secondly, there is a bit of a learning curve, so the better you get at this, the more confident you get. You know you can do it. Also, it builds critical thinking skills through research and finding the right information. Finally, there is the teamwork — a really big thing for companies and corporations. You've got to work as a team, and when we go to a debate competition we all work together and share ideas.”

The forensics team displays their awards earned at the Missouri state tournament.
Nixon voices support for alternative energy program

On the first leg of a statewide energy independence and technology jobs tour, Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon visited the Northwest campus on March 16, to view the University's alternative fuel production facility and central power plant.

Nixon praised the University's role as the alternative energy leader among Missouri colleges and universities and voiced support for new state funding of its fuel program, which school officials say has saved taxpayers approximately $12.5 million over the last 25 years due to the relatively low cost of alternative materials compared to natural gas and oil.

During a press conference at the power plant, Nixon noted that some of the boilers, which Northwest is seeking to replace as part of a comprehensive alternative fuel upgrade, had been in service since 1958.

"Obviously we've got a lot more options here in the future," Nixon said, "and that's one of the reasons I wanted to visit Northwest as we look at what we can do to transform Missouri's economy, to create jobs for the future and to encourage the mentality that would have us be energy independent."

Nixon, who is traveling around the state looking at various energy projects, said Northwest's alternative energy program serves as "a strong example of what you can do" to promote environmental sustainability while reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

"As we look at transforming the economy of the state of Missouri, examples just like this, all across our state, are what we want to incent, improve and make more efficient," Nixon said.

He added that initiatives like Northwest's alternative energy program, in which wood chips, pelletized paper and pelletized livestock waste are burned to produce most of the thermal energy needed to heat and cool campus buildings, are essential to the state's economic future.

"Obviously the economy of this state and this country is going to change if we are going to compete in the future," Nixon said. "One of the best ways to do that here in the Midwest is energy independence."

The governor said the entire state could benefit from Northwest's example in developing sustainable, efficient technologies capable of "greening up" the economy and creating jobs.

"As we build and improve power plants such as this, that's Missouri jobs," Nixon said. "As we look at where we come out of (the recession) in a year or two years when the economy is moving forward again, we hope to have something that is better than where we started, and this is an example of something that has included a new facility to fully meet the school's heating and electricity needs for 20 years. University officials estimate the cost of the upgrade at $12.7 million, and believe the investment will save taxpayers more than $26 million in fuel and utility bills over that same period.

"Northwest has the best argument," Nixon said of the proposal. "They've saved money. When they showed me this sheet of paper over here, they were proudly showing how they have actually saved money and made money for the state of Missouri, and they should not be penalized for that. This University, in this location, has done more than any university in the state of Missouri to be energy independent, and I think they should be rewarded for that cutting-edge technology."

Nixon granted that funding a new-generation alternative energy infrastructure at Northwest will be a challenge during a time of tight budgets and financial turmoil.

"But as we look at the (federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) I think we see dollars that are designed for energy independence," he said. "What we're trying to do is take an inventory of what we've gotten so far, so that Missouri, instead of trying to build brand-new things, can take places where people have the right mentality, have the right basis, and use that.

It is Northwest's longstanding commitment to alternative fuels, he said, that strengthens the University's bid to become a "bridge to the future" for continued development of sustainable energy technology.

"A lot of folks a long time ago decided to do this – when there weren't tax credits, when everybody wasn't talking green, and when there was not energy investment," Nixon said. "The patents that were gotten here, the processes that are now mature, really form a baseline to where we can go from here."

Alternative energy since the '70s
Northwest's alternative fuels effort began in the mid-1970s during a time of dramatic increases in the price of natural gas and heating oil. The University ultimately decided that wood chips, generated as a by-product of the forest products industry, were suitable as an alternative fuel source and secured $2 million in private funding for program development.

The next step was a study that found pelletized wastepaper could generate sufficient BTU values to heat and cool the campus. As a result, Northwest constructed a building, purchased pellet-making equipment, retrofitted a boiler and began accepting clean waste paper that otherwise would have gone to landfills.

This initiative was a major factor in Northwest receiving the Governor's Pollution Prevention Award in 1997 and the Missouri Recycling Association Award for Outstanding Contribution to Waste Minimization and Recycling in 2000.

In 1996, the University turned its attention to biomass sources acquired from industrial and agribusiness feedstocks that could also be converted into pellets and cleanly combusted.

Using internal funds, Northwest built a $700,000 addition to the existing pellet plant and, with additional money from the Missouri Department of Economic Development, added a second production line dedicated to transforming agricultural waste into biomass fuel.

In 2000, Northwest acquired a patent for its "animal waste to energy production" process. That same year, it received the Environmental Award from the American Feed Industry Association. A year later it earned the top rank of "Environmental Friendliness" from the National Wildlife Federation.

The governor said the entire state could benefit from Northwest's example in developing sustainable, efficient technologies capable of "greening up" the economy and creating jobs.
Dedication held for performing arts center addition

More than 100 alumni, Northwest Foundation officials, friends of the university, faculty and staff gathered Friday, March 13, in the lobby of the campus’ new Studio Theatre to honor the man whose generosity has led to a significant expansion of performance facilities available to Northwest drama students.

Speakers at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the theatre, completed this fall, paid tribute to Maryville native Ron Houston, president of J.L. Houston Co. in Hopkins, whose $1.3 million gift through the Foundation made the 5,500-square-foot addition to the former Auditorium, built in 1984.

Now known as the Ron Houston Center for the Performing Arts, the facility also includes the 100-seat Mary Linn Auditorium, built in 1984.

A ribbon cutting was the new name being unveiled outside the center at about the same time Houston cut a green ribbon inside the lobby with a pair of oversized scissors. The ceremony preceded a student performance of the Broadway musical hit “Celebration” on the Studio Theatre stage.

Dr. Charles McAdams, dean of Northwest’s College of Arts and Sciences, called the center “the most significant occasion” and praised Houston’s longstanding contributions to the performing arts at Northwest, especially theater.

“Believe me; the idea that this project would not have been possible without his support,” McAdams said.

The dean was followed at the podium by Maryville Mayor Chad Jackson, who presented Houston with a plaque and read a proclamation declaring the evening to be “Ron Houston Night.”

Northwest President Dean L. Hubbard described Houston as a valued personal friend who has lent his support to numerous University programs and projects over the years “quietly and without any credit or recognition.” He also noted Houston’s patronage of KXCV/KRWV, the University’s public radio station.

The Studio Theatre functions as a drama laboratory and contains state-of-the-art technology, including an articularated lighting grid, a makeup lab/ classroom and a new lighting and sound control system. The Studio Theatre seats up to 250 people, depending on how the space is configured, and provides a more intimate environment for students and departmental performances. Houston’s multi-year gift, when coupled with University and Northwest Foundation funds, allowed not only for construction of the Studio Theatre but also several other capital projects, including Bearcat Stadium.

“Without Ron’s gift, the Northwest Foundation would not have received the funds to construct Bearcat Stadium, which was completed in 2003. Ron’s gift provided the necessary capital to facilitate the acquisition of bond financing,” said Orrie Covet, Northwest’s vice president for university advancement and executive director of the Northwest Foundation. “In 2007, the Foundation was able to release those funds to fulfill Ron’s wishes that his gift eventually be used for the construction of the Studio Theatre.”

In addition to being the lead donor for the Studio Theatre, Houston has been a longtime Northwest supporter. His contributions through the Northwest Foundation have funded the Ronald A. Houston Scholarship for students graduating from North Nodaway public schools and attending Northwest as well as a new sound system and projector in Mary Linn Auditorium. He was also a member of the Northwest Foundation Board of Directors for six years, where he was co-chair of the finance committee.

Student employees recognized

Northwest honored some of its most valuable employees on April 13 during the University’s Student Employee Recognition Ceremony.

Cody Melton, a junior management major from Leavenworth, was named Student Employee of the Year for his work as a computer lab consultant for Client Computing, the unit within the Office of Information Systems that manages help documentation, technical support and computer help desk services to all students, faculty and staff.

The other honorees were:

- Outstanding Team, the student staff of the Mission Academy of Science, Mathematics and Computing: Jacqueline Adkins, a senior chemistry major from Burlington Junction;
- Outstanding Student, a senior chemistry major from Freeburg;
- Reliability, Nicole Syversen, a senior elementary education major from St. Louis;
- Reliability, Jake Klaus, a junior mathematics major from St. Louis;
- Reliability, Nick Pedlar, a senior special education major from Hazel Crest;
- Professionalism, Ryan Daer, a junior social science major from Florissant.

2009-10 Tuition and Fees

On Friday, May 1, the Northwest Board of Regents approved the tuition and fee rates for the 2009-10 academic year. Tuition will remain the same as last year with fees increasing by $121 to $3,021. Students who purchase a Missouri State Health Insurance plan will pay an additional $210.

Changes to student planner distribution

The 2009-10 student planner is included as part of the new student fee for incoming freshmen and transfers and will be distributed during Orientation. Upperclassmen can choose to purchase the planner, at a minimal cost.

Northwest legislative internships learn state government first-hand

Four Northwest students spent the spring semester serving as legislative interns at the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City.

This year’s interns were:

- Sienna (Mish) Mohr, a senior majoring in marketing and business management from St. Louis; and
- Jon Ferguson, a senior social science major from St. Louis.

Marketing and Management honors top majors

The Department of Marketing and Management recently recognized five students for academic excellence and exceptional contributions within the department’s major fields of study.

Winners of Marketing and Management’s Outstanding Major of the Year Award are selected by faculty based on grades, class participation, quality of academic work and overall contributions to business organizations and societies.

This year’s Outstanding Major honorees were:

- Myke Bummer, a senior management major from Maryville;
- Staci Baker, a senior online student from Midsouth.
Boys Like Girls comes to campus

Boys Like Girls, a power pop alternative rock group, performed at Bearcat Arena on April 17. Special guests included After Midnight Project and The Fast Track. The concert was sponsored by the Student Activities Council (SAC) with support from KZLX, Northwest’s student-operated radio station, the Office of Student Publications and the University. The concert was for students, by students. Student members of SAC organized the concert, from choosing the band to running the event.