

Maryville Daily Forum column
Thursday, March 3, 2011
Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

Greetings to you! As this is the debut of a series of columns that will appear the first Thursday of each month in the Maryville Daily Forum, I want to first extend my sincere gratitude to the Maryville community and the northwest Missouri region for your collaboration this academic year and throughout Northwest Missouri State University's 106-year history. We at Northwest are indeed lucky and grateful to have tremendous support from the citizens of our region.

My goal in this space each month is to share with you some of the things occurring on our campus and explore some of the areas we, as a community, may address to enhance vitality and foster economic development in the region – some of which you may be aware, and other items may relate to issues you are hearing about for the first time. Whichever direction this column takes each month, I hope it will give you a greater appreciation for what Northwest Missouri State is doing and inform you of new ways you can support our fine University.

Earlier this month, Northwest Vice President of Finance Stacy Carrick and I traveled to Jefferson City and joined several university presidents and chancellors at the Capitol for testimony to the House Appropriations Committee about issues related to the impacts of funding shortfalls on the state's higher education institutions. The committee asked university leaders to speak to how their institutions are addressing the impacts of possible 7, 10 and 15 percent appropriations cuts.

We touted Northwest's accomplishments, from high academic success rates – including a freshman success rate of 74 percent and a student-athlete success rate of 83 percent, both of which top other similar institutions – to the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship that has helped create 30 new jobs in the last six months. Additionally, we are proud to share that 95 percent of Northwest graduates responding to a recent employment survey reported finding employment or continuing their education within six months of graduation.

But it's also worth noting we have enhanced Northwest's financial position during the last year by making tough choices and collaborating with other institutions, despite a 5.2 percent appropriations decrease. Northwest has taken several measures to address funding shortfalls, including voluntary budget giveback contributions from the entire campus last year and a freeze on spending at the end of the last fiscal year.

Northwest realized savings by renegotiating contracts with suppliers, making facility improvements in-house, combining positions while leaving others vacant, refinancing bonds, reducing the number of land-line telephones throughout campus and changing employees' sick leave and vacation policies to reduce future liabilities. Additionally, Northwest continues to save money through the use of alternative fuel sources; that initiative has saved Northwest about \$13 million since the early 1980s.

At the same time, we are pleased with the growth we are seeing in other areas and will strive to enhance key programs to meet our students' changing needs. Last fall we recorded the largest enrollment in Northwest's history, and our total headcount of 6,265 students this spring is the second largest spring enrollment in the University's history.

As always there is much happening on the campus, and we encourage you to attend the exciting range of events and activities Northwest offers.

Theatre Northwest's production of the classic "Our Town" opens at 7:30 tonight and continues with performances at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. Sunday in the Ron Houston Center for the Performing Arts. It was the first production performed when we opened the performing arts center in the spring of 1985, and several alumni who were part of that show will return this weekend.

In Kansas City, our nationally ranked women's basketball team, which last week claimed its first outright MIAA conference title, will open the conference tournament against Truman State at noon Friday at Municipal Auditorium. We are extremely pleased with their success this season, as we are with all of our athletes who stand as excellent ambassadors for Northwest and the Maryville community.

As always, I encourage you to visit our website, www.nwmissouri.edu, for links to more news, events and information about Northwest, including the large gift we received this week from the Goppert Foundation, the "Ephemera" art exhibit, our new recycling partnership with the city of Maryville, the touring production of "Bus Stop" coming to campus Tuesday and our spring sports season.

Thank you again for your support, and I look forward to engaging with you each month.

Dr. John Jasinski is the 10th president of Northwest Missouri State University.