

Maryville Daily Forum column
Thursday, April 7, 2011
Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

Last fall at Northwest Missouri State, we revised the University's mission statement to reflect our focus on success and engagement for "every student, every day." But if you've driven on Highway 71 lately between St. Joseph and Maryville, you've likely seen a billboard touting our marketing slogan: "Champions in the classroom, too," and the month of March certainly upheld that.

Our women's basketball team recently completed a truly historic season filled with accomplishments no other women's basketball team at Northwest has reached before. The women won their first outright MIAA conference title, captured the MIAA tournament title and eventually advanced to their first-ever NCAA Division II Final Four. The 14 women who made up this season's team were a model group of unselfish players who were a joy to watch, and your fan support – especially by those of you who traveled to the St. Joseph Civic Arena to watch them play their final two games – was astounding.

It wasn't just our women's basketball team bringing home trophies last month. The Northwest wrestling club, which was founded in 2005 for students interested in participating in organized wrestling competitions, won the National Collegiate Wrestling Association Division II National Championship.

As our spring sports continue and our teams prepare for next year, we hope you will come to campus Saturday for our Spring Showcase. Throughout the day, the Bearcat Nation may enjoy a multitude of sporting events and activities. Coach Ryan Anderson's softball team hosts Central Missouri at noon, and Coach Darin Loe's baseball team hosts Southwest Baptist at 1 p.m.

The Spring Showcase also will include a youth basketball tournament to raise funds for the women's basketball team during the day, and the annual spring football game begins at 6 p.m. at Bearcat Stadium. You are invited to tailgate from 2-6 p.m., and fans will have opportunities to step onto the field to interact with players and coaches throughout the game. Admission to the game is \$4.

And like the billboard says, Northwest students are excelling in the classroom, too. The Students in Free Enterprise team qualified for national competition for the second consecutive year. Also, our forensics team, which is having one of the most successful seasons in its history, recently competed at the Pi Kappa Delta national tournament where team members Carl Stafford and Jory Baker finished first and second, respectively, in the nation in the programmed oral interpretation category.

Inspired learning experiences also are happening beyond the classroom. During Northwest's spring break week, about 30 students in our Alternative Spring Break program embarked on an important service-learning trip to Florida to help restore the natural habitat along the Gulf Coast. Also, members of our Sigma Tau Delta English honor society chapter were recognized at an international convention for 80 years of membership!

We are just weeks away from closing out another academic year, and there is plenty more to celebrate in that time. April is indeed awards season at Northwest, and there is much to celebrate this month.

Dr. April Haberyan, associate professor in the Department of Psychology, Sociology and Counseling, was honored as our Governor's Award for Excellence in Education recipient at a ceremony Wednesday at Lincoln University in Jefferson City. April is an excellent example of

someone who is focused on every student, every day. She is highly respected by her colleagues and admired by her students for the enthusiasm and active learning she brings to her classroom.

This week, each of our three academic colleges hosted awards ceremonies to recognize student successes and scholarship. We also will recognize those students who have excelled throughout the academic year in organizations, leadership and student employment. And you are invited to join us as we honor nine retiring faculty members – Janice Brandon-Falcone, Carolyn McCall, David McLaughlin, Dean Sanders, Connie Ury, Gary Ury, Michael Wilson, Frank Grispingo and Carol Tjeerdsma – with a reception at 2:45 p.m. Wednesday, April 13, at the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

All of this, of course, culminates with our annual commencement ceremonies, Saturday, April 30. U.S. Army Col. Christopher Hughes – a Northwest alumnus who went on to serve a distinguished military career – will address our graduates at the spring commencement ceremonies.

Our Northwest family is deeply rooted in a dedication to academic excellence, but your community support plays a huge role in that. Accomplishments like those I've mentioned are things we are, of course, proud of on the Northwest campus, but they also are a tribute to the supportive environment of the Maryville community and the ways it, too, ensures our students' success – every student, every day.

Dr. John Jasinski is the 10th president of Northwest Missouri State University. For news and events at Northwest visit www.nwmissouri.edu.