

**Maryville Daily Forum column**  
**Thursday, May 5, 2011**  
**Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President**

I think it's safe to say there's rarely a lack of excitement and celebration at Northwest Missouri State, where we have established a tradition of excellence in our academics and athletics programs.

But there is something truly special about this time of year as we celebrate the accomplishments of those students who are completing major chapters in their lives and turning pages to new ones.

Last weekend, some 656 students received degrees from Northwest and joined a proud alumni and friend base of more than 70,000 men and women who have graduated from the university over the last 100-plus years. Northwest Alumnus Col. Christopher Hughes delivered two powerful commencement addresses, and we are proud to have honored him with an honorary doctor of laws degree.

As always, this spring's graduating class was a diverse one filled with unique stories and backgrounds. They ranged in age from 20 to 60 years old and represented nine countries.

Above all, our graduates show the kind of commitment, perseverance, collaboration, citizenship and hard work we value at Northwest. They represent the fruits of our faculty and staff members' labor as well as their commitment to promoting Northwest as the university of choice for a comprehensive student experience.

Consider some of these recent examples of ways our students are succeeding:

- Jacquie Lamer's advanced advertising strategies class traveled to the Federal Reserve Bank in Kansas City and presented an integrated communication campaign for the bank's Money Museum. I was fortunate enough to sit in on their presentation, and the representatives from the bank, which included several Northwest alumni, were impressed with the students' work.
- Graduate students in the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems presented research projects to Kansas City Power and Light, as part of an annual contest that stems from a long partnership Northwest has with KCP&L, where several of our alumni are now employed.
- In the Department of Psychology, Sociology and Counseling, about 61 percent of seniors in the capstone course, history and systems of psychology, scored at or above the 50th percentile rank. More impressive is that 11 percent more of our students scored above the mean than in the national norm group.
- Theater students recently produced a play they developed from scratch during a three-week workshop with guest artist Sean Christopher Lewis. One of those students was Maryville resident Keaton Schmidt, who graduated last weekend and now heads to the Actor's Theater of Louisville. Keaton was one of 22 actors – who were selected from more than 2,500 applicants – to participate in a nine-month apprenticeship.
- Twenty-four students recently completed a challenging interdisciplinary pilot course built as an interactive marketing communications agency. Representing the best and brightest from multiple departments, the students were required to complete a series of tough tasks that culminated with marketing pitches last week to a big-time client,

Lasik Plus Vision of Cincinnati. These students' work was astounding, and members of our Northwest Foundation had the privilege of seeing a portion of their presentations during our meetings last week.

These are just a few of the points of pride we enjoyed in recent weeks, and accomplishments like these are the culmination of the hard work our students, faculty and staff invest at Northwest every day.

Work in the name of Northwest and furthering education continues, transitioning from commencement last weekend to our first summer session of classes starting Monday. Over the summer, many students are experiencing internships or taking additional courses to enhance and expand their skills. Our faculty members are preparing their future courses, carrying out field immersion experiences and conducting research to further their knowledge in their fields as well.

And our campus – and therefore community – will continue to be active, as we'll host a variety of summer camps, conduct student orientation sessions and conduct a number of facility upgrades designed to focus on student success.

Additionally, as a university we're continuing to refine our budget for the upcoming fiscal year and tackling strategic issues. We'll continue to work with our representative groups and take a deft eye toward multi-year outlooks.

After all, as we prepare for the next academic year and beyond, we want to make sure there continues to be plenty of reasons to celebrate at Northwest.

Thank you, community members, for being an integral part to the success of Northwest and for helping us create an ongoing loud and proud Bearcat nation, always proud to say "I'm a Bearcat."

*Dr. John Jasinski is the 10th president of Northwest Missouri State University. For news and events at Northwest visit [www.nwmissouri.edu](http://www.nwmissouri.edu).*