

Maryville Daily Forum column
Thursday, Oct. 6, 2011
Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

From one weekend to the next, fall is a busy, exciting and fun time at Northwest Missouri State. We've benefitted from some gorgeous fall weather to enhance our already beautiful campus. And with our recent Family Weekend, Bearcat athletics, art displays and last weekend's Freshman/Transfer Showcase, activities on our campus have been plentiful. The opportunities Northwest provides for you to engage are continuous, and we hope you take advantage of what we have to offer.

There is perhaps no better opportunity for community engagement than Northwest's annual Homecoming Week, which we'll celebrate Oct. 16-23. It is such a great tradition that draws our alumni, families and so many of our friends throughout this region to the campus for a weekend of reminiscing and enjoying the camaraderie of fellow Bearcats.

As always, the week's worth of events are highlighted with the annual parade, which stretches from the Northwest campus to the Maryville square, and the Bearcat football game against Washburn. Those events this year are scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 22, with the parade beginning at 9 a.m. and kickoff for the football game at 2 p.m. at Bearcat Stadium. Don't forget, pregame activities begin at 11:30 a.m. at the Bearcat Zone in the Raymond J. Courter College Park Pavilion.

Other activities filling the Homecoming week include a 5k Run/Walk Sunday, Oct. 16, to benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Events on Monday, Oct. 17, feature a department decorating contest throughout campus and the annual canned art contest in the J.W. Jones Student Union to benefit the Ministry Center. The Homecoming Variety Show, another long-standing tradition, begins its two-night run at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 20, and Friday, Oct. 21, in the Ron Houston Center for the Performing Arts. Tickets are free this year, and the homecoming king and queen will be announced at the Thursday performance.

Walkout Day, as you may know, began at Northwest in 1915 when two-thirds of the student body walked away from their desks and headed for the Wabash railroad tracks, declaring the day an unscheduled holiday. The tradition has evolved dramatically over the years and is now a day that promotes student and community engagement.

This year's Walkout Day activities include the Golden Years Society Reunion honoring the class of 1961, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Alumni House; the Homecoming Golf Classic at Mazingo Lake Golf Course, beginning with registration at 11 a.m. and play at noon; the flag-raising ceremony at 2 p.m. at the Joyce and Harvey White International Plaza; and the M-Club Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at 6:30 p.m. in the Student Union Ballroom.

Support our athletics teams during the Homecoming weekend, too. In addition to the football game, the volleyball team plays Southwest Baptist at 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 21, and Missouri Southern at 6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 22, both in Bearcat Arena. The soccer team plays Lindenwood at noon Saturday at Bearcat Pitch. Also, the tennis program is sponsoring an alumni tennis match at noon Friday at the Frank Grube Tennis Courts.

This, of course, is just a sampling of our Homecoming events, and there is much more posted on our website. For more information, you may also contact our Office of Campus Activities at 660.562.1226 at homecmg@nwmissouri.edu. I encourage you to attend any or all of the events!

Other notes of interest

Our fall enrollment census data is in, and we're seeing increases nearly across the board. Total headcount shows an increase from 7,142 to 7,225 and the total for first-time freshmen is up from 1,378 last year to 1,489 this year. We're also seeing increases in first-time transfers and Missouri Academy enrollment, and graduate enrollment remains even with last year.

Recently, Northwest received word from the U.S. Department of Education that Northwest's student loan default rate dropped from 4.6 to 4.3, based on the most recent data from 2009. This is good news as it speaks to, among other things, student responsibility, placement and Northwest's overall affordability. As a comparison, the national student loan default rate rose from 7 percent to 8.8 percent, and Missouri's overall rate increased from 5.8 percent to 7.6 percent.

Last month, we celebrated the commitment and dedication of our employees with an all-employee recognition ceremony and honored 220 employees who have accumulated a remarkable 2,985 combined years of service. I am so grateful for the rich perspectives and varied experiences our employees bring to help Northwest further its mission of focusing on student success.

Additionally, we recently celebrated the grand re-opening of the B.D. Owens Library. During the last year, our library staff has taken a hard look at how we can better serve our students, and the students' response to the changes has been tremendous. Door counts and the resources being checked out have increased significantly.

From our upcoming Homecoming week to the changes in the Owens Library, the fall is full of activity at Northwest. Come visit us and see it for yourself!

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