

**Maryville Daily Forum column**  
**Thursday, Feb. 2, 2012**  
**Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President**

The news handed to public higher education institutions in Missouri last month on the proposed 12.5 percent reduction in appropriations further illustrates that we are in a transformational period at Northwest Missouri State, and we must adapt to continue providing the comprehensive experience we offer. But we need your help.

I traveled to Jefferson City this week with so many others as part of the annual Great Northwest Days. I also testified to the House Appropriations Committee on Education as committee members requested again this year to hear from presidents of state colleges and universities. During my testimony, I addressed budget impacts, reserve funds, capital and deferred maintenance needs, and academic program growth as well as the percentage that state appropriations plays in our total institutional funding over the last three years.

As I've said, the state's proposal to reduce appropriations for higher education is a game changer. If this proposal stays in place, we will be at 1998 funding levels, not adjusting for inflation – and with significantly more students and an ever-growing set of requirements. However, Northwest's focus must remain positively on student success, and we must tap new resources to enhance their experiences. We need to protect the quality of the Northwest experience and keep it at an affordable range.

I ask for your help in aiding the student experience – through, for example, providing enhanced and affordable housing, continuing a focus on addressing infrastructure needs and beautifying our community, considering partnership arrangements beneficial to the student experience and providing learning opportunities to our students. The bond between Northwest and Nodaway County communities must be stronger than ever. A “town and gown” community, the support Northwest receives from the Maryville community has never been more important.

Northwest faces funding cuts of somewhere north of \$4 million as we factor in our commitment to a multi-year compensation approach. We will make up a small part from direct expenses – operating budgets – but we have stripped those to a minimum as we've adjusted to appropriations cuts totaling 12.5 percent over the last two fiscal years.

There is no sugar coating. Our cuts will be program and service-based, and they will impact personnel. Provost Dr. Doug Dunham and I have asked members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to begin its election process to form a Reduction in Force Faculty Advisory Committee. We've also suspended our search for a dean of the Melvin D. and Valorie G. Booth College of Business and Professional Studies.

This is a tough message for higher education, but we have a choice in how we respond. Bearcats deal with adversity, and this is another challenge presented to us. I do not like it, and I know our employees and Northwest supporters throughout the region do not either.

This game changer should have our state - its citizens and lawmakers - stepping back and asking: How much do we really value higher education and long-term interests and

impacts? Northwest has faced many tough budgets over its 107-year history, and this is yet another example. We are addressing the proposal with respect, yet trepidation, and hope lawmakers and taxpayers alike can come to solutions that will help show enhanced support for the value of public higher education in the coming months.

Our challenge now is to engage in the deeper conversations about how we can ensure Northwest emerges as a stronger, comprehensive institution. And I have appreciated hearing your continued suggestions and comments as I've seen some of you around town, in the grocery store or at basketball games. It is gratifying to know the Maryville community cares so deeply about Northwest – I do not take that for granted!

Despite the obstacles in front of us, we are continuously reminded of the hard work our students and employees do every day in the form of accolades such as those we earned last month. For example, our Bearcat cheerleaders were crowned national champions for the second time in three years at the Universal Cheer and Dance Association Collegiate National Championship in Florida. That, by the way, is Northwest's fifth national championship since December 2009 – two cheerleading championships, a football championship, a wrestling championship and Northwest student Carl Stafford's individual championship at last spring's national forensics tournament!

Also, 25 Northwest theater students attended the Region 5 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival at Iowa State University where they received numerous honors for directing, design, acting and stage work. Additionally, Dr. Brian Lanier, associate professor of music, and the Madraliers performed last week at the Missouri Music Educators Association Conference. It's these kinds of opportunities that add so much value to what takes place in classrooms throughout the campus every day!

I cannot say enough how much Northwest appreciates the support of Maryville and our surrounding communities. But before I conclude this message, I want to mention another group of people who deserve your support this weekend. Beginning at 10 a.m. Saturday in the Lamkin Activity Center, Northwest hosts the Special Olympics Missouri Northwest Area Basketball Tournament. I commend Director of Athletics Wren Baker and his team for working to bring this event to our campus, and I hope you will come out to support our area athletes.

It was 138 years ago today that resolutions were passed in Maryville asking for a Normal School to be located in Nodaway County. Today, we proudly serve the mission of focusing on student 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](http://www.nwmissouri.edu). For a complete listing of events at Northwest, visit [calendar.nwmissouri.edu](http://calendar.nwmissouri.edu).*