

Maryville Daily Forum column
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Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

As Bearcats, our history is defined by supporting each other during good times and challenging times, and in light of the tough budget-related choices we've had to make at Northwest during these recent weeks, I have no doubt we will continue to lean on each other during these next few months. We are in a time of transition, but we are moving forward, focusing on student success.

As you may have heard or read, Northwest is transitioning from 19 to 11 academic departments, beginning next fall. It is important to note, however, that only one academic degree program – the B.S.Ed. in Family and Consumer Sciences – is proposed for elimination. All other academic programs will be realigned with new departments, helping with Northwest's continued emphasis on interdisciplinary degree programs and collaboration while reducing administrative overhead. Several of the faculty previously serving as department chairs will return full-time to the classroom.

Our plan includes laying off 20 employees, and we are making important changes to other programs and services. Among those, we will close the Foster Aquatic Center at the end of the spring trimester while continuing to study future uses of the building. We also are working on business plans for the Missouri Academy of Science, Mathematics and Computing; the Horace Mann Laboratory School; and KXCV-KRNW to make those programs more financially viable.

The bottom line is we'll continue to put students first by offering the comprehensive, transformative experiences that are part of our University DNA.

As we're passing the halfway point of the spring trimester, the University calendar is filling with concerts, lectures and other learning opportunities that we encourage our students as well the community to attend. The spring sports season is under way, and soon we'll be having our annual awards ceremonies to honor and celebrate student accomplishments throughout the academic year.

One of those significant experiences Northwest offers occurred this week – the spring Career Day and Graduate Information Fair. Offered each fall and spring by Career Services, Career Day gives students an opportunity to network with employers representing an array of career fields to discuss internships and full-time employment.

Career Services' motto is "Bringing Talent and Opportunity Together" and that could not be more true when you consider the professional relationships forged during Career Day. The event routinely draws about 100 employers, which shows they see the value of hiring Bearcats. Add to that, the annual Mock Interview Day, which last month drew a record turnout with representatives from about 40 employers conducting about 330 interviews.

It's these opportunities that are a huge reason Northwest can boast that 93 percent of our undergraduates obtain employment or enroll in graduate school within six months of graduating from Northwest.

Additionally, the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems recently hosted its annual professional advisory meeting, which encompasses about 40 industry professionals from 25 companies who offer key insight to faculty and students. Their recent agenda included a discussion of current industry issues and curriculum as well as a panel discussion with students.

Furthermore, Tower, the yearbook produced by Northwest students, is featured in the College Media Association's "2011 Best of Collegiate Design" for its outstanding achievements in media design. Northwest's mock trial team received an honorable mention at the American Mock Trial Association's 2012 Kansas City Regional Tournament and tied for ninth out of 24 teams. Four Northwest agriculture students were members of teams that recently placed among the top four at the Midwest Regional Dairy Challenge.

In athletics, our men's basketball team won a share of the MIAA conference title with a win in its regular season finale Saturday, and the Bearcats will compete as the No. 3 seed in the MIAA tournament this weekend in Kansas City. The Northwest wrestling club also won its second consecutive NCWA Southwest Conference over the weekend.

Tomorrow, I am honored to be introducing the Northwest Madraliers, under the direction of Dr. Brian Lanier, as they perform at the American Choral Directors Association Southwestern Division Conference in Dallas. The Madraliers were one of just seven university choirs chosen to perform.

These are all stellar examples that we have much to be proud of at Northwest and the ways we focus on student success. Thank you for all you do in support of our students, our employees, our alumni and Northwest.

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