

Maryville Daily Forum column
Thursday, Sept. 6, 2012
Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

What a good feeling it is to see the Northwest Missouri State campus and our community buzzing again as we've welcomed back our students in recent weeks to begin the 2012-13 academic year. With the assistance of so many of you – whether you represent one of the numerous businesses, churches or community groups who attended our Merchant Fair on campus or just reached out with a simple wave while passing on the sidewalk – we warmly welcomed some 1,600 freshmen and transfer students to Northwest this fall. We won't know our official fall enrollment until next month, but with the beginning of the fall trimester, I've got a little bounce in my step because I am pumped about this academic year and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Northwest is moving forward and is positioned to do some great things this year that will continue to set it apart from other institutions. With our focus on retention, we must be more engaged than ever with our students, the city of Maryville and our northwest Missouri region, the state of Missouri and beyond to create that awareness of Northwest Missouri State and the benefits of higher education. I look forward to working with Vice President of University Advancement Mike Johnson during this next year and getting out to meet with alumni, legislators and community members who will help us spread that message of what we do here at Northwest.

A huge part of our reputation for providing a comprehensive experience rests in our success at connecting with students. But we can do better.

Here's what I've asked Northwest employees to do to enhance our connections with students, and I challenge you to do the same as you interact with students:

- Foster students' resiliency and courage
- Expect personal responsibility
- Embrace a rigorous general education curriculum
- Help students make connections within the Northwest community
- Educate students about campus and community resources
- Facilitate the development of a plan for their academic success
- Promote diverse growth opportunities and open mindedness

Conversations about how we can meet these goals already are occurring across campus, and I hope you give some thought to the role you play as community members. I'm looking forward to our progress during the fall as we paint the canvas of enhancing our already strong retention efforts.

With the academic year getting under way, I'm not sure I can say it better than the words Stephen Terry expressed as one of the alumni who addressed Northwest employees during our Aug. 22 opening meeting. Stephen, a 2006 graduate who now works at Park University as that school's director of Military and Veteran Services, noted that all of the students on our campus have dreams – to attend college, earn their degrees and be successful. Think about their dreams and wishes as you see them and interact with them on campus and in our community. Everything we do must be directed at retaining them and helping them succeed – every student, every day.

We are lucky to have strong community support of our athletics teams throughout their seasons, and yet another way you can show support of Northwest begins at 6 p.m. Thursday with the "Bearcat Coaches

Show," hosted by KXCV – Northwest's National Public Radio affiliate and the flagship station for the Bearcat Radio Network – and Carson's Sports Grille. We invite you to join us for the weekly show as a special question-answer session will allow you to ask questions of the coaches and learn more about a couple of our student-athletes. On a related note, most of our athletics teams are competing away from Northwest this weekend, but the Bearcat cross country team opens its season in town with the Northwest Open, beginning at 6 p.m. Friday at the Maryville Country Club. Additionally, I'll look for many of you tailgating Saturday in Warrensburg as the Bearcats take on Central Missouri.

Among other upcoming events, our annual faculty art exhibit opens with a reception at 7 p.m. Monday evening in the Olive DeLuce Fine Arts Building, and the a capella group Overboard is our first Encore performer at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Ron Houston Center for the Performing Arts. As the school year begins, the Northwest campus is bustling with activity. I encourage you to check the Northwest homepage and our calendar often for news about our students, our employees and ways that you can participate in the exciting opportunities and events Northwest has to offer.

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