

Northwest Missouri State University
Testimony to the Joint Committee on Education
September 25, 2012
Trenton, Missouri

Chairman Pearce, committee members and guests,

The committee's statutory task from last session's HB 1731 (2012) states: "The Joint Committee on Education shall develop a comprehensive funding formula for Missouri public institutions of higher education by December 31, 2013. The General Assembly shall implement a funding formula beginning in fiscal year 2015."

We know your objectives are to provide a rational basis for core funding, support performance outcomes and support Missouri's goals for higher education.

I will speak on behalf of Northwest's 700 faculty and staff, nearly 7,000 Bearcat students and more than 70,000 alumni and friends in addressing your five questions succinctly. Please note for the purposes of this testimony, I will not cite the drove of statistics highlighting the value of public higher education, how those with degrees contribute more to society and earn more, the economic impact of higher education entities, or the like.

Rather, I will seek to briefly explain who Northwest is in the context of your five proposed questions. It is my hope this assists your committee in understanding how Northwest – and for that matter, all public universities in our great state – contributes to the betterment of our communities, our state and the larger society.

Committee Question 1: What are the essential functions of higher education?

"The strength of the United States is not the gold at Fort Knox or the weapons of mass destruction that we have, but the sum total of the education and the character of our people." Those are the words from former U.S. Senator and the late Claiborne Pell, and they epitomize why the essential functions of higher education are so very important.

Northwest Missouri State University focuses on student success – every student, every day. This is our mission. Higher education is a learning-centered proposition, and we all are committed to preparing our students to address the historical construct of higher education – to be broadly educated and engaged citizens readily adjusted for a world of constant change – and to address the constructs of being prepared to succeed in advanced degree programs and the job market.

The essential functions of higher education are focused on both the curriculum and co-curricular activities (or, historians called it, "extracurricular" activities). We provide for societal good in the way of volunteerism, bettering our communities and economic development. But make no mistake, academic and social development are the primary drivers of what we address. At the same time, we are committed to being accountable to the public in ways private entities are not – which, I might add, put us at a disadvantage – and addressing a dizzying array of federal, state and other regulatory and compliance requirements.

What do we – the state, your committee, all of us – believe the essential purposes of higher education to be? This seems to be ever-changing and certainly geared to media-ready and election-ready concepts of job training and simplistic completion metrics. These are important, no doubt. But I encourage the committee to reflect on not a political answer of the essential functions of *public* higher education, but rather, a greater societal description that is bi-partisan and perhaps politically blind. I worry that we have politicized higher education to the degree that your and my kids and grandkids may not benefit to the same level that so many before them did.

In the end, we focus on the dissemination of knowledge, the challenging and questioning of knowledge and the creation of knowledge. We develop the advanced workforce of the 21st century. We teach the teachers. Our graduates are educating the state's next generation of leaders, from preschool through doctoral programs. We fuel the economic engine of Missouri every day of every year. We improve the quality of life in Missouri by providing public as well as personal benefits.

Committee Question 2: What are the shared goals of the institutions? What are their unique goals?

The answer to Question 1 provides a glimpse to part of our shared goals. We also share the goals of providing for access, affordability and quality – and these are not always mutually exclusive.

For us at Northwest, we are a coeducational, primarily residential four-year public, not-for-profit university with a community of scholars offering undergraduate and selected graduate programs. We began our servant leadership in 1905 as Missouri's Fifth District Normal School to provide teachers for the schools of a 19-county region in northwest Missouri and have since grown into a comprehensive state university with 101 undergraduate programs, 39 master's degrees, three educational specialist degrees and a cooperative doctoral program in educational leadership. Northwest has been offering graduate programming since 1955. We started collaborative work with the University of Missouri in 1961, and it has since developed into that cooperative doctoral degree program. Since fall 2004, Northwest and Missouri Southern State University have collaboratively offered graduate degrees and diplomas that carry seals and signatures from both institutions.

Northwest offers graduate programs in our outreach centers located in Liberty and St. Joseph and coursework online and through instructional television outlets. Further, we are participants in the Missouri Alliance in Collaborative Education in which we are collaborating with the likes of the University of Central Missouri and Southeast Missouri State University in offering courses to students in majors that otherwise would be under-enrolled or perhaps not offered. We have developed numerous agreements with community colleges across the state and our region, allowing students to begin at a community college and transfer seamlessly to Northwest to complete their baccalaureate degree. In fact, in addition to 102 "2+2" agreements, we also have joint admission agreements with Metropolitan Community College of Kansas City and North Central Missouri College, which, I should note, are very strong and thriving partnerships. We are pleased not just by the reverse transfer degree we celebrated earlier today before the testimony, but also by our joint work in programming ranging from nursing and business to agriculture and teacher education.

Northwest has long been a leader in continuous improvement and the use of information technology. We house the State of Missouri's Academy of Science, Mathematics and Computing, which is an on-campus, accelerated learning program for exceptional high school juniors and seniors. While at the Missouri Academy, students are enrolled in a curriculum consisting of all college coursework taught by Northwest professors. Upon successful completion, Missouri Academy students earn an Associate of Science degree as well as a high school diploma. This is an opportunity for our state's high-performing and exceptional students to live, socialize and study in a living/learning community of peers and supports our state's commitment to the STEM disciplines and enhances the state's ability to attract new businesses that seek a workforce with these high-demand skills.

Our Education & General (E&G) budget is approximately \$83 million, and our Auxiliary budget is approximately \$26 million. State assistance comprises about 34% of E&G revenues, and the rest is split between tuition and fees as well as scholarships and grants. Total physical assets are just under \$330 million with a recent capital study valuing needed maintenance and repair upwards of \$100 million.

Admission standards at Northwest are moderately selective, and we are one of four such institutions across the state. As such, admission for new freshmen, transfer and returning students is based on a combination of academic and personal considerations. New freshman admission is based on a combination of ACT/SAT score, class rank and GPA.

In FY12, about 87% of Northwest students were undergraduates and 13% were graduate students, with about 73% of our students coming from Missouri and 12% of our student body comprised of underrepresented populations. We have students representing 48 states and 33 countries, 41% live on campus, and 90% of our students rely on some form of financial assistance. Our enrollment has seen all-time record highs in three of the last four years.

Our retention rate of approximately 70% trends better than national and regional averages for similar institutions, and our 57% graduation rate is 12% higher than the national average. Furthermore, 95% of our reporting graduates find employment or continue their education within six months of graduation – even in this recessionary climate. Our average class size is 27, but we share the highest student-to-faculty ratio (21 to 1) with Missouri State University. Our student loan default rate is lower than Missouri’s average rate and the national average. At Northwest, laptops and textbooks are included in tuition and fees with the textbook rental program saving students an average of nearly \$1,200 per year.

Our signature academic programs include agriculture, teacher education and nanoscale science. The University’s agricultural sciences program provides students with experiential learning opportunities at the 500+-acre R.T. Wright University Laboratory Farm. Northwest’s nationally recognized teacher education program stems directly from the University’s historical institutional mission as a state “Normal” school, and we have one of the few on-campus laboratory schools in the country. The newly developed nanoscale science program is an interdisciplinary undergraduate major involving the fields of biology, chemistry and physics and is housed in the academic wing of our state-of-the-art Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. And beyond these programs, we boast the likes of our Geographic Information Sciences (GIS) program – a nationally ranked online program that enrolls about 100 students.

Building Bridges is a unique partnership between regional high schools and Northwest with the goal of sharing information about our curricula and data about students who attend Northwest to better prepare students for the transition from high school to college and to assess our success in making these changes.

On the co-curricular side, more than 70% of our students are engaged in one of 150-plus student organizations. Northwest students are nationally recognized for their successes in a variety of areas, including applied learning activities such as our student-run advertising agency, soils judging, Students in Free Enterprise, wrestling club, forensics and debate, cheerleading, Tower Choir and student publications. Greek life participation is 14%. More than 400 student-athletes compete in 16 sports and represent Northwest as green and white Bearcats in the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association, which is an NCAA Division II conference. Our internationally-benchmarked student employment program allows more than 900 students to help defray costs of their education and to gain professional development and specialized training in administrative, communications, environmental and other service areas.

Our 370-acre campus serves as the State of Missouri’s Arboretum, as we have more than 1,300 trees and over 130 species. We also offer programming through 315 acres of rural lakefront at the Mazingo Outdoor Education and Recreation Area. Our decades-old alternative energy program includes the burning of wood chips, pelletized paper and pelletized livestock waste to produce most of the thermal energy needed to heat and cool campus buildings. Our recently implemented sustainability program cuts across all operations, and the Sierra Club recently ranked Northwest at No. 74 on its list of “cool schools” – the highest of any Missouri institution.

Finally, Northwest advocates one-to-one engaging relationships within a hands-on and applied learning environment, keeping costs affordable, providing beautiful and safe surroundings, driving economic development and entrepreneurship to better our region and community, being socially responsible and delivering excellence through high expectations and servant leadership.

Committee Question 3: Are the missions of the institutions consistent with their missions as outlined in statute? If not, how do they differ?

This certainly is a good question for the Missouri Department of Higher Education, but Northwest's mission is consistent as we have focused squarely on being a moderately selective institution. We provide value-add through our many academic and support services to those students who wish to partake. As a regional institution in the state of Missouri, Northwest is committed to meeting the higher education needs of the citizens of our region as well as offering signature programs with such distinctive characteristics that we will attract students from throughout the United States and also worldwide.

That being said, I am personally concerned about mission creep across the expanse of public higher education and about not having a level playing field against not only private institutions, but public institutions from neighboring states and beyond. Thus, I do believe this is a worthy subject for the committee to explore.

Committee Question 4: How can higher education institutions most effectively contribute to Missouri's educational and economic policy goals?

We at Northwest strive to ensure our performance measures align with those from the Missouri Department of Higher Education. We track economic policies and goals and explore how our programming can enhance the state's efforts. A good example is the current climate focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines. We offer enhanced opportunities for teaching teachers based on math, science and technology. We are highlighting our agriculture sciences and nanoscale science programs. Northwest's biology program is one of the largest enrolled programs across the institution. Our Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship affords public and private sharing and students working with faculty and private entrepreneurs.

I hope we can ask the corollary question: How do Missouri's education and economic policies contribute to the betterment of higher education? Also, I hope we can work together to ensure goals are clearly stated, understood and agreed upon by all parties – and are in place over a certain amount of time.

I would advocate to the committee to not stray away from the importance of both a broad education and one that is discipline-based. This approach has served our country well, and we are at a crossroads of perhaps tilting the scale to be a bit unbalanced. Helen Keller once said, "The highest result of education is tolerance." I am hopeful our citizens embrace this and understand that education is our answer, and a well-rounded and diverse set of higher education institutions can serve as a springboard for our state.

Committee Question 5: What are the indicators that higher education institutions are serving Missouri well?

I would like to take a moment to talk not on behalf of my colleagues from the Council of Public Higher Education (COPHE, the four-year public institutions), but in support of all of us. We address the state's and nation's completion agenda elements: enrollment, retention, graduation and placement. I indicated Northwest's contributions on these measures earlier in my remarks.

State and national leaders have set a goal of increasing the proportion of the adult population with a college degree or with community college credentials to 60 percent by 2020. This will be challenging in Missouri,

since about 37 percent of the population currently meet this standard — but we are up to the task. One of the ways we are keeping on track is to annually report our progress on performance measures adopted by the Missouri Joint Committee on Education.

Missouri's public universities are continually implementing ways to improve efficiency without reducing the quality of the education that attracts students and serves employers. We have reallocated resources within our budgets; participated in a statewide effort to eliminate degree programs that do not produce very many graduates; redesigned entry-level, high-enrollment courses in a statewide effort to improve student performance and reduce costs; and designated courses to be offered statewide to students at any Missouri public university in order to share resources and improve efficiency.

Over the last three years, we have kept our in-state cost increases low, increased the number of degrees awarded and continued to bring in outside tax revenues both through student participation and the array of activities we all offer on our campuses.

As reported by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, "... institutional spending data from the past decade illustrate that master comprehensive public colleges and universities have kept overall increases in the cost of educating students to roughly the rate of inflation. This analysis of institutional spending, conducted by the Delta Cost Project at the American Institutes of Research, indicates that it is these institutions that are the most efficient in American higher education, with spending-per-degree the lowest of any sector."

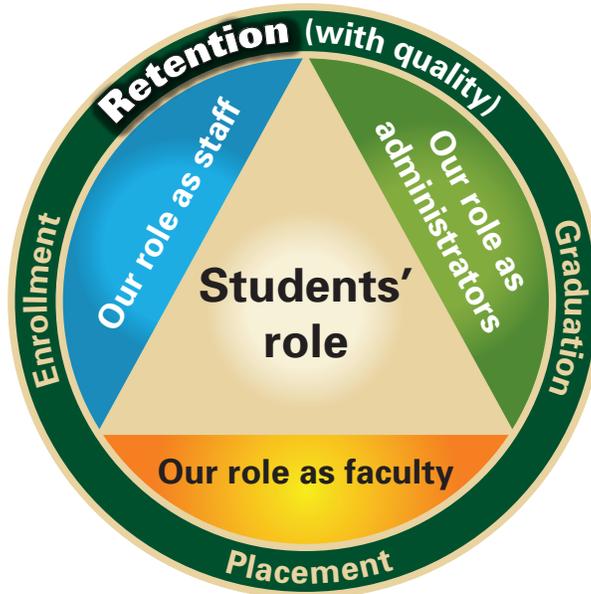
Committee members, higher education is a set of complex enterprises that can and should be appreciated for our needs today. Students today and education today are different than what you and I experienced. If I may, I challenge you, as committee members, to roll up your sleeves, come into Northwest's classrooms, check out our residence halls, talk to our students, faculty and staff – then explore those same opportunities at other four-year institutions throughout the state. I believe the experience may shed some light on how our institutions operate. You are doing important work, and I commend you for such. But please make this a personalized experience. Understand what our students, faculty and staff do, why they – we as public higher education institutions – should be considered by your committee and our state as investments, not costs. Creating and implementing legislation with good intentions is one thing, but doing so with first-hand knowledge is another!

In closing, I'd like to leave you with the words of Derek Bok, the former president at Harvard: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." My friends, let us focus on what matters, and what matters is an educated populace. I wish you the best in your work, and Northwest Missouri offers our assistance as you progress through your study.

Dr. John Jasinski
President
Northwest Missouri State University

Student Success at Northwest Missouri State University

Provided to the Joint Committee on Education
September 25, 2012



First-year Retention				
	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Northwest	73%	71%	72%	70%
MO moderately sel. average	66%	66%	69%	66%

Fall-to-fall retention - source IPEDS

6-year Graduation Rate				
	2001 Cohort	2002 Cohort	2003 Cohort	2004 Cohort
<i>Enhanced Missouri Student Achievement Study (EMSAS):</i>				
Northwest	63%	58%	58%	57%
MO moderately sel. average	57%	51%	47%	50%
<i>Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS):</i>				
Northwest	52%	51%	53%	52%
Peer 40 average (national)	38%	38%	38%	38%

Placement Rate				
	2008	2009	2010	2011
Northwest	95%	95%	93%	95%

6-month post-graduation data - source Northwest Missouri State University

Student Loan Default Rate				
	2007	2008	2009	2010
Northwest	3.5%	4.4%	4.3%	5.6%
National average	6.7%	7.0%	8.8%	8.9%

2-year student loan default rate - source IPEDS / federal student aid