

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

The traffic on Main Street has increased, local businesses are busy and there's an extra bounce in our steps around the Northwest campus these days. Those are positive signs for our community that mean students have returned for the start of a new academic year.

Seeing new Bearcats arrive on campus and the energy on their faces during these last couple weeks is always one of my favorite times of the year. We welcomed 1,300 freshmen to Northwest last month, and as many have noted in conversations and on social media, the energy surrounding the campus is incredible. I am certain 2013-14 is going to be another great year for Northwest.

As the academic year begins, we are ever mindful of our mission, vision and values at Northwest and our continued focus on student success – every student, every day. Our challenge at Northwest is to adapt and evolve while keeping the values of Northwest intact. We will educate, advance and provide opportunities for students. We will propose solutions to problems. We will innovate as we continue to evolve. We will provide access to opportunity and transform lives. Every one of us plays a role in carrying out that responsibility.

But as a community, how will we ensure our youth and the young adults who make Maryville their home know we support them? For starters, Northwest is collaborating with leaders of the city, chamber of commerce and Maryville R-II School District to implement "Green Fridays," a day for encouraging local businesses, schools and residents to show their Bearcat and Spoofhound pride by displaying flags, signs or wearing Bearcat or Spoofhound gear.

Additionally, Northwest's University Relations team recently launched a social media campaign, called "Forever Green Fridays" that invites you to share photos displaying your Northwest pride. Snap a picture of the Bearcat flag hanging at your storefront or your staff or family dressed in Bearcat green and upload it, following the link and instructions on the lower right corner of the Northwest homepage, www.nwmissouri.edu.

There are numerous other opportunities for you to interact with students and be a part of the energy on campus throughout the year, from our Distinguished Lectures and Encore performance series to Homecoming week activities and Bearcat athletics contests.

You also may have heard Northwest recently finished an extensive remodel of its campus dining locations, and we want you to experience them for yourself. A new all-you-care-to-eat dining center, known as Bearcat Commons, on the lower level of the J.W. Jones Student Union, features a Mediterranean kitchen with hearth-baked pizza and pasta dishes, produce market and deli, an all-American grill, Tex Mex cuisine, fresh bakery and exhibition stations as well as a Mongolian grill.

The Student Union's second floor, known as The Jones, features retail locations including Einstein Bros. Bagels, Chick-fil-A, Zen Asian cuisine, and Red Mango frozen yogurt and

smoothies. Additionally, The Station is the new home of Papa John's, and the B.D. Owens Library includes a Starbucks, surrounded by an inviting seating area called Novel Grounds. These new campus dining locations are open to the public and offer more flexibility, convenience, value and dining options than ever before. Also, convenient, 45-minute visitor parking has been added to the Administration Building parking lot to provide community members easy access to these locations.

I am so proud of Northwest and the values we, as "stewards of place," impart on every individual – that includes local residents, students, alumni and visitors – who walks the Northwest campus. Let's continue to engage and help each other, while understanding our mission, continuing to listen for ways we can innovate, and disrupting and evolving to meet tomorrow's challenges. We need everybody "all in."

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