

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

Coming off a fantastic Family Weekend and looking at the schedule of upcoming activities at Northwest Missouri State, I think it's safe to say the school year is in high gear now. Academic buildings are humming with students and faculty discussing their topics of interest, collaborating on projects and conducting research. Athletics seasons are successfully underway, and student organizations are embarking toward a new set of goals.

Every week brings new successes and unexpected challenges, but our focus on student success, not to mention the value we as a university can add to northwest Missouri communities, remains in the forefront at Northwest.

That value is added with events like Northwest's Family Weekend this past week as well as our upcoming Homecoming Week, Oct. 20-27, which draw thousands of family members and alumni who support local businesses and have economic impacts. Northwest also adds value in the partnership we've forged with the city of Maryville, and we are so proud to support the city's efforts to transform Fourth Street and enhance our neighborhoods.

Among recent successes is Northwest's designation as a Military Friendly School for the second consecutive year. This is a significant achievement that shows Northwest's commitment to assisting veterans and students of military families with the resources they need to achieve their educational goals. Dr. Mark Corson, a veteran and faculty advisor of the Northwest Student Veterans Association, is a leader on this initiative, along with Health Educator Jennifer Kennymore, Student Loan and Veteran's Coordinator Marge Stoner and so many others, from admissions to career services, who have demonstrated a commitment to serving some of our finest citizens.

Additionally, last month we celebrated Dr. Rick Toomey, associate professor in the Department of Natural Sciences, who is Northwest's 2014 recipient of the Governor's Award for Excellence in Education. Rick has invested a large amount of time in developing teaching strategies that help students be more engaged with course materials and enhance class discussions. Rick's focus on student success and innovation in the classroom sets a true example for all of our faculty and staff to follow.

And this weekend, Northwest will host Missouri Hope 13, a disaster response field training exercise at Mazingo Lake Recreation Park. The two-and-a-half-day exercise, sponsored by Northwest's comprehensive crisis response program, is the first of its kind in this region. It will focus students' attention on leadership and teamwork skills, incident command systems, disaster response operations and Red Cross shelter management. Ultimately, the exercise prepares our students to be better citizens and provides them with the knowledge they need to act if a disaster strikes.

But beyond those recognitions and initiatives, Northwest continues to work behind the scenes to enhance our mission and strengthen the University for the future. Recently, Provost Dr. Doug Dunham and seven other representatives of the University attended the Missouri Completion Academy in St. Louis. Northwest was one of just two four-year state

institutions, along with several community colleges, selected to participate in this intensive workshop aimed at strategies that we, as state colleges and universities, can employ to improve students' paths to degree completion.

Northwest's participation in the academy was significant as we continue discussions about boosting enrollment and retaining students. As a result, Northwest is exploring, for example, degree plans that encourage students to enroll in enough courses per trimester to ensure they are eligible to graduate in four years. Additionally, we're looking at how we offer remedial coursework and how we can better assist students with getting into degree programs that fit their interests as quickly as possible. National statistics suggest these approaches help students be more successful in attaining their degrees and doing so on time.

Additionally, Northwest's participation in the workshop supplements other initiatives underway that are setting the stage for the institution's future. Northwest also is engaged with Noel-Levitz to develop a strategic enrollment plan, and many of our staff and faculty are serving on sub groups to add input and help develop that plan.

Our overall focus on student success, an ongoing smaller pool of first-time freshmen, the loss of a large outgoing class and the competitive recruitment market for all segments of students are key factors within these efforts. Indeed, I am thankful for the work our recruiters and our admissions team perform every day, but all of us have a hand in sharing Northwest's story and helping others understand the value it provides.

The competition is tight, and the pressures of delivering quality higher education are facing institutions from multiple fronts. We need everybody "all in" as we innovate and evolve to meet tomorrow's challenges.

*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).*