

**Maryville Daily Forum
Thursday, April 3, 2014**

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

March was a busy and wonderful month to be a Bearcat as we talk about establishing partnerships, placing value on education and our focus on student success. While it seems like warmer weather may finally be here to stay, I am excited about the momentum that is already building toward the 2014-2015 academic year and some future endeavors.

The landscape of higher education is changing and our future depends on collaborative initiatives. As such, we must continue building relationships to ensure education stays relevant and maintains a rigor that guides students along successful career paths while providing for a more educated and tolerant citizenry.

Northwest is proud of the relationship it has with the city of Maryville, City Manager Greg McDanel and his team as we've partnered on several projects in recent years. We are inching closer to the Fourth Street Improvement Project becoming a reality, and it will help to greatly enhance Northwest's Fourth Street entrance in addition to serving as a key link to the downtown corridor and future development in that area of the city.

Additionally, it is a pleasure to work with Maryville R-II Superintendent Larry Linthacum as he continues to provide important leadership and has excellent plans for advancing the school district. Partnering with Nodaway County commissioners, Chamber of Commerce Director Melanie Smith and Nodaway County Economic Director Josh McKim provides yet another spark for so many good things taking place in and around our communities.

But Northwest's partnerships must extend beyond the boundaries of Maryville for the institution to fully realize its focus on student success.

Northwest joined Metropolitan Community College (MCC) and the St. Joseph School District Monday to announce a partnership that allows MCC to use space in our St. Joseph Center and provide high school students with opportunities to use their A+ scholarship money locally. Northwest also joined MCC, the city of Gladstone and the North Kansas City School District last month in announcing a partnership to create what is being touted as the Northland Innovation Campus.

These partnerships are important because they share Northwest's values of student success, innovation and collaboration while aligning with strategic objectives.

More immediately, Northwest is entering that time of the academic year when we reflect and celebrate our achievements during the last several months. Once again, we have so much to be proud of at Northwest.

Dr. Richard Toomey, associate professor in the Department of Natural Sciences was honored Wednesday in Columbia as Northwest's recipient of the 2014 Governor's Award for Excellence in Education. Dr. Toomey is a strong advocate, not only of student success, but of innovative instruction techniques, and we are proud to have him representing Northwest.

On Sunday, Northwest will host its second annual Academic Celebration, honoring Northwest students' for their academic achievements while providing them a chance to interface with the donors who support them directly through scholarships. The event features performances and presentations by some of the award-winning and talented groups that are illustrative of our focus on student success.

Also, Northwest will honor six retiring faculty members during a reception at 3:45 p.m. April 18, in The Station. At that time, we'll celebrate the careers of Dr. Barbara Crossland, Dr. Margaret Drew, Linda Heeler, Dr. Phillip Heeler, Dr. Patrick McLaughlin and Dr. Kim Spradling.

And we'll celebrate the 20th anniversary of Northwest's designation as the Missouri Arboretum with a program and ceremonial tree planting at 1:30 p.m. April 21. As many know, Northwest has a proud legacy of caring for trees, dating back to Thomas Gaunt's tree nursery more than 150 years ago on the land that is now the Northwest campus. Fast forward to the 1980s and we have Dr. Johanna Fairchild, then a member of our agriculture faculty, to thank for her study of Northwest's landscape and igniting the momentum that led to Northwest's designation as the Missouri Arboretum in 1993.

In addition to those events, I encourage you to purchase tickets for the Northwest Department of Fine and Performing Arts' musical production of "Urinetown" April 10-12 and our final Encore performance featuring the Hot Club of San Francisco April 16. Visit our website, and you'll find many more events worth attending.

As you can see, there is a lot happening at Northwest, but our focus on student success is constant. On behalf of the university, I thank you for your continued support.

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