

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

**Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President**

We have approached the halfway mark of the summer and turned the page to Fiscal Year 2015 at Northwest Missouri State University. August will be here before we know it, and as we anticipate the start of the next academic year, there is good news to share.

Our FY2015 budget was approved by our Board of Regents last week and it includes investments in enrollment and related student retention and completion initiatives, which are identified in our strategic enrollment plan and aligned with the goals and action plans laid out within our University strategic plan.

With the Board's continuing support, we also are supporting employees with cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) salary increases of 1.5 percent. We have addressed COLA increases each of the last three years and have addressed targeted, market-based adjustments with available funds during these challenging budgetary times.

We continue to experience increased health care benefit costs, and our Health and Wellness Committee is working on a variety of approaches to encourage employees to take charge of their health and wellness.

Finally, we continue to address investments in our physical plant that cut across capital, deferred and preventive maintenance and energy needs. Our collective efforts in energy reduction have allowed for a sizable offset in utility rate increases.

As you may have read, Gov. Jay Nixon last week vetoed \$144.6 million in general revenue spending and restricted \$641.6 million in general revenue expenditures – actions that directly impact public education in the state of Missouri. While we are confident these funds will be restored, the restrictions do impact our 5 percent performance funding-based appropriations increase.

So how do we respond? Simply, Northwest will not be deterred by these withholdings and vetoes. We produce positive student performance results, and we offer a high-quality collegiate experience as evidenced by meeting state-identified performance measures, receiving full accrediting approvals and our industry-leading student satisfaction results.

Northwest does all of this in the context of keeping college accessible and affordable. We held undergraduate tuition flat for the upcoming academic year, and we have the lowest tuition increase nationally during the last five years. We also continue to increase our scholarship investment, have an internationally-recognized student employment program, offer laptops and textbooks that produce huge student savings and have kept fees to a minimum with the support of students.

Just as all of us are recruiters for Northwest, we must continue to work collectively to protect academic excellence and student access and affordability. Our key drivers continue to include focusing on alignment and implementation of our strategic plan – including ensuring strategy drives our budget and collective actions, and our upcoming comprehensive campaign accentuates these areas. We must stand ready to address the

massively changing higher education landscape, and we will move forward with plans that increase our focus and investment in enrollment, student completion, our highly engaged workforce and overall long-term positive impacts for our region, state and well beyond.

The kinds of positive impacts we strive for at Northwest are illustrated in the news that our Dean L. Hubbard Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship is ranked among the top business incubators at universities throughout the world. University Business Incubator Index, a research group that analyzes business incubators, ranked the Northwest CIE 21st in its study of more than 300 incubators in 67 countries.

More positive impacts can be found in the connections and support of our 70,000-plus alumni and friends. Bearcat supporters once again filled the grandstand June 21 at Phil Welch Stadium in St. Joseph for the fourth annual Northwest Night at the St. Joseph Mustangs, setting a new attendance record of 4,427 for the Mustangs.

Furthermore, there are numerous positive impacts stemming from programming such as our annual Summer Orientation Advisement and Registration (SOAR), Upward Bound, music and sports camps, and other community events that fill the campus with activity during these summer months. More than 1,200 incoming students participated in one of our eight SOAR sessions. Additionally, our assorted camps draw several thousand campers from throughout the four-state region. As part of our community, we value your welcoming hospitality as you interact with these students and visitors – efforts that are so important to what we do at Northwest.

Have a safe and happy Fourth of July, and let us remember those who have fought for our freedom.

*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).*