

Maryville Daily Forum
Thursday, Aug. 7, 2014

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

August is here, and the fall trimester kicks off officially in less than one month. From my perch, as we look ahead to the new academic year, alignment, progress and growth are at our doorstep.

Our strategic plan is moving into the implementation phase and it will be a focus throughout the academic year. Our strategic objectives are innovative enrollment growth, improve college completion, engaged and high performing workforce, and organizational viability. Our Board of Regents recently approved a strategic investment proposal that ties directly to the first two of those strategic objectives.

The Northwest Foundation Board took a historic vote last month, deciding to move forward with a comprehensive campaign. This is the culmination of discussions that began in June 2012, and it is a significant opportunity for alumni, friends, employees, parents, corporations and foundations to invest in Northwest's strategic priorities and emerging opportunities. The campaign initiatives – which target scholarship support, academic support and student life – are aimed at enhancing academic programs, driving enrollment, relieving budget challenges and addressing financial pressures associated with the increasingly competitive recruitment market and reductions in state funding.

Another piece to the alignment puzzle includes embarking on a master facilities plan journey this year – updating our previous master facilities plans that have been developed over the last 30+ years. We hope to conduct a comprehensive information technology assessment as well.

Other signs of progress and growth are abundant. We welcomed our new provost, Dr. Tim Mottet, as he began his first official day Aug. 1.

There is good news to share regarding our career placement rate as our newest data shows 97.5 percent of Northwest undergraduate degree earners are in a job or continuing their education within six months of graduation. Further, our placement rate among graduate degree earners is 99 percent.

We have placed another significant order for academic furniture – this cuts across classrooms, offices, conference rooms and common areas – that marks phase two of an initiative we began last year, thanks to an anonymous donor's undesignated gift we earmarked for much needed academic upgrades.

University Police Chief Clarence Green and his team along with Purchasing Director Ann Martin and her team moved into their new confines last week, and we'll mark the celebration of their new building with a ribbon-cutting Sept. 10.

You may have noticed the new video board at Bearcat Stadium and a new track. Also, take a walk inside Bearcat Arena and see how some branding upgrades completed during the summer have enlivened that facility.

Our plans for the Robert & Virginia Foster Fitness Center continue moving forward, and the same goes for our indoor activity center and agricultural learning center. Planning for the Dean L. Hubbard Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE) renaming ceremony, scheduled for Sept. 20, is going smoothly as well. And you may have heard the CIE was recently ranked among the top 25 business incubators at universities worldwide by University Business Incubator Index.

In concert with the city of Maryville, crews have begun significant demolition on the Fourth and Dunn intersection as part of the Fourth Street Improvement Project. City Manager Greg McDanel has been so supportive and focused on this project's end goal. The project's delays are frustrating and will yield some challenges, but as Greg says so aptly, the "ultimate end result will be transformative."

We can also boast of the Tom Watson Youth Course on track to open next spring; the Burnside's project changing the face of the bypass interchange; the Oak Point Assisted Living and Memory Care facility being built along Icon Road; and the significant trail additions on South Munn, Seventh and Ninth streets.

Fall classes begin Monday, Aug. 25, but already students are arriving. We welcomed 36 international students to the Missouri Academy of Science, Mathematics and Computing last month as they began taking introductory courses and participating in our cultural transition program. Advantage weekend for freshmen and transfer students begins with move-in day, Thursday, Aug. 21, and the campus will be buzzing once again as we expect to welcome about 1,300 new Bearcats and their families – with overall enrollment projected to increase.

Northwest has accomplished much, and we have a great deal for which to be thankful as we look back on the last academic year and transition to 2014-2015.

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