

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

October is here and the academic year at Northwest Missouri State is off to a strong start – enrollment is up, the University is highlighted on a prominent national ranking, and we continue to strengthen our local and regional partnerships. To accent the latter, students and faculty in our emergency disaster management program were supported last weekend by a dozen city, county and regional emergency agencies during the second annual Missouri Hope disaster response field training exercise at Mozingo Lake Recreation Park – community support that is critical to Northwest’s growth and viability.

But the beginning of October also means we have much more ahead. This month on campus brings a variety of theatrical and musical performances, lectures, art exhibits and our Homecoming week, which is a hallmark of every fall at the University. This weekend, the Freshman/Transfer Showcase theater production is playing in the Ron Houston Center for the Performing Arts, and our Encore performance series kicks off next week with performances by the St. Louis Brass on Oct. 6 and Circus Electronica on Oct. 10. Homecoming week is Oct. 12-19, and you can find details of all these events and more on Northwest’s website.

Last week, we announced Northwest’s fall enrollment is 6,720 students – an increase of nearly 4 percent from last fall. That total headcount is made up of 5,491 undergraduate students and 1,229 graduate students. We are proud that our graduate enrollment is up 30 percent from the same time last year, and international enrollment is up 98 percent, signifying Northwest is increasingly diverse.

Furthermore, our freshmen enrollment is up 3 percent, and about 71 percent of Northwest’s fall 2013 freshmen returned to the University this fall, placing Northwest’s freshman retention rate above the national average.

This positive news came on the heels of the latest U.S. News and World Report’s list of “2015 Best Colleges,” which ranked Northwest as the top moderately selective regional university in Missouri. Overall, Northwest ranks at No. 80 on the list of “Best Regional Universities” in the Midwest, which includes all public and private universities in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin as well as Missouri. Among public regional universities in Missouri, only Truman State University and Missouri State University are ranked higher than Northwest.

These rankings are but one indicator of Northwest’s continuing elevation of academic excellence. We are proud of our faculty, staff, students and alumni; thankful for the strong collaborative relationships with the communities we serve; and pledge to continue our strong contributions to economic development and positively impacting those we serve.

As such, we’re progressing through the latest phase of our strategic plan, which we’re calling “Focus.” New academic furniture has arrived as part of Phase II of \$500,000 designated from an anonymous gift we received last year. We have a fantastic new Support

Services Building on the northwest corner of the campus that is creating efficiencies for our police and purchasing departments. Progress continues on the Fourth Street Improvement Project, too.

The Missouri Arboretum is sparkling and will be full of color as we transition deeper into the fall season. Bearcat Stadium has been packed for home football games, and all of our sports teams are off to strong starts this fall. In fact, we know 97 Northwest student-athletes received a 3.5 GPA or higher last year, which ranks Northwest as the fourth best Division II institution in country when it comes to the academic excellence.

Our annual Family Weekend gave us an opportunity to showcase the many positives throughout our campus and the legacies left behind by so many. We honored Brig. Gen. Christopher Hughes, Dr. Ben Blackford, Dr. Betty Bush, Dr. Robert "Bob" Bush, Ken Scribner, Steve Bratt, Brad Elliott and Mike Thomson during the annual Alumni Awards Banquet. We also celebrated President Emeritus Dr. Dean L. Hubbard and former first lady Aleta Hubbard with the renaming of the Dean L. Hubbard Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

The list of positives happening at Northwest right now goes on and on.

As Bearcats, we get after it and we act for the success of our students, our employees and our communities. We are focused forward and committed to providing the comprehensive education and unrelenting dedication to student success in which we all take so much pride.

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