

**Maryville Daily Forum
Thursday, Jan. 8, 2015**

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

Performance and progress are all around us as we begin the new year, and Northwest Missouri State University is positioned well for a positive 2015.

Northwest begins the new year knowing that for the third consecutive year the university met all five of the state's performance measures and will receive 100 percent of our state-appropriated funds for FY16 budget. Northwest joins the University of Missouri-Columbia, Missouri State University and Southeast Missouri State University as the only four-year institutions to perform at the highest levels during all three years of this performance-funding model's existence, and I am thankful for the commitment and unparalleled focus on student success exhibited by so many of you who are significant partners of Northwest.

Furthermore, Northwest enters 2015 boasting a career placement rate of 98 percent among bachelor's degree earners and 99 percent among master's degree earners, which translates to the percentage of our graduates who are employed or continuing their education within six months of completing those degrees.

Northwest has held its tuition among the lowest in the country during the last five years. Plus, our internationally-benchmarked student employment program offers some 1,200 jobs on campus, and more than 90 percent of first-time freshmen are receiving financial aid through a variety of scholarship opportunities to which so many of you contribute.

We are proud to be ranked as the top moderately selective regional university in Missouri on U.S. News and World Report's list of "2015 Best Colleges," and we've collected 15 national championships during the last five years across our academic and athletics teams.

Our commitment to performance and progress – and student success – is never more evident, however, than on commencement days. And last month, we celebrated the years of persistence and perseverance exhibited by 542 unique individuals – the highest for a winter commencement ceremony in Northwest's history – who marked the completion of their degrees and turned their tassels toward alumni status.

All of this, of course, is illustrative of Northwest's sustained and strong performance against Missouri and national peers, combined with a significant focus on access and affordability – with quality. But the higher education landscape also is evolving quickly and we are not resting on our laurels.

Tuesday, we joined Gov. Jay Nixon, six school districts in North Kansas City, Metropolitan Community College and a multitude of regional business partners to announce our Northland CAPS Innovation Partnership and its designation as a Missouri Innovation Campus by the Missouri Department of Higher Education. This designation is an important next step in a collaboration that supports hundreds of high school students through internships, immersive experiences, student-held provisional patents and student-owned businesses. Students enrolled in the program also receive college credit through MCC and Northwest.

And Wednesday, we officially welcomed the return of our faculty and staff and kicked off our spring trimester during our spring all-employee meeting. Bob Marcusse, the president and chief executive officer of the Kansas City Area Development Council, was our guest for the morning and discussed economic development and the important role of education as we grow our region.

Additionally, significant progress is happening with regard to our remodeling of the Robert and Virginia Foster Fitness Center. We've refreshed our academic furniture with the assistance of a \$1 million undesignated gift. We've increased our internet bandwidth on campus to support the access our students and employees need to be successful academically and professionally.

We're seeing progress throughout the Maryville community, too, as you know by reading the pages of this newspaper. A signature piece of the Fourth Street Improvement Project, the archway at the intersection of Fourth and Buchanan streets, is in place, and favorable weather has allowed the contractor to continue making significant progress on the project, including installation of a new water main and the pouring of new sidewalks. In coming weeks, we're looking forward to watching the installation of stamped concrete paving and decorative street lamps.

We are pleased and supportive also of the annexation of Kawasaki's manufacturing campus inside the city limits as well as a number of other construction and expansion projects in the works to enhance economic development throughout the city.

Northwest has core strengths. We are performing. We have much progress in place, and our strategic plan is guiding us. Our strategic horizon is exhilarating and we embrace the future with much enthusiasm.

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