

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

Sectors across America are facing disruption, and higher education is no different. At Northwest Missouri State, we are fortunate we can talk about it from a position of strength, and as the legislative season heats up, we are making our case to lawmakers for enhanced support of education, as it should be — in any society — the No. 1 priority.

Northwest is uniquely positioned to address the disruption. We have plans in place that are aligning our actions and guiding our implementation. We're meeting or exceeding measures set out by the state or as compared to our peers, and our focus on access, quality and affordability cuts across such measures. We're also advocating collaboration and partnerships that separate us further from the field.

Gov. Jay Nixon proposed an additional \$25 million for colleges and universities, based on performance funding during his state of the state address last month. In addition, the governor recommended the General Assembly pass "three fiscally responsible legislative measures" that would, if passed, combine to generate \$178 million in general revenue for further investments in education, health care and economic development.

Furthermore, the governor proposes \$161.5 million from bond proceeds for repairs and renovations at Missouri's colleges and universities, raising the total bonding package for higher education to \$200 million. SCR 9, if passed, it would yield about \$6.9 million for desperately needed maintenance and repairs at Northwest. Additionally, the budget proposal calls for \$4 million allocated to scholarships for students, including \$2 million more than Fiscal Year 2015 for Access Missouri scholarships.

Northwest operates with an Education and General budget of \$87 million along with an auxiliary budget of \$25.3 million. However, the \$30.8 million the University receives in state appropriations now stands at its 2000-2001 funding level. State Appropriations account for 35 percent of Northwest's total income, compared to 56 percent in 2000.

As we meet with legislators this spring, Northwest is advocating for funding for maintenance and repair needs, increased state appropriations to a minimum of 3.6 percent, 50/50 match funding and Missouri Innovation Campus funding, and a budget that supports scholarship programs such as Access Missouri and Bright Flight.

The governor's proposal is good for Northwest and these are starting points, but only part of the larger higher education picture. Northwest isn't waiting for the budget process to play out. As one of four four-year institutions to receive full performance funding in three straight years of the program's existence, our performance, progress and plans display a vibrant institution.

Our recent Missouri Innovation Campus designation and innovative partnership with K-12 school districts, businesses and Metropolitan Community College in North Kansas City are transformational. We have received two large state-wide competitive grants — one for the innovation campus and another to embrace competency-based education.

Our internationally recognized partnership with the city of Maryville on the Fourth Street Improvement Project is coming to fruition. Our work on the Robert and Virginia Foster Fitness Center is proceeding on time and on budget. We recently opened a new police department and support services building that is debt-free. Our comprehensive fundraising campaign is in its quiet phase and is proceeding quite nicely as all of Northwest's performance, progress and plans are being guided by our strategic plan.

We continue to be focused on access, affordability and quality – and we will not waver. We continue to consider how we do our jobs and how we can continue to embrace meaningful collaboration – all geared toward improving the university and our focus on student success. Our four strategic objectives – innovative enrollment growth, improving college completion, an engaged and high performing workforce, and organizational viability – help center us center on these positive disruptions.

I advocated to our employees recently for facing this disruption from a relentlessly positive point-of-view, with Northwest needing to focus forward and needing input from vibrant and open minds, with broad participation. We're also making no apologies for the jobs each of us do every day, for the ways we all contribute to Northwest's success and that of our students.

We're disrupting, from a positive position, across academics, operations and facilities. We're rethinking how we teach, how and why we partner, how we do our jobs and how we fit into the higher education model. We're aligning our actions with specific strategic objectives.

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