

**Maryville Daily Forum**  
**Thursday, March 5, 2015**

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

It's hard to believe we've passed the midpoint of the trimester at Northwest Missouri State. Looking at our legislative agenda and other upcoming activities, however, there is no shortage of business to complete.

Northwest and the city of Maryville are enjoying great progress as we partner and collaborate to advance our community, and that includes an emerging emphasis on downtown revitalization. Maryville has joined the Missouri Main Street program, which promotes a philosophical and physical approach to downtown revitalization based on economic development within the context of historic preservation. The approach calls for the establishment of four committees – Economic Restructuring, Design, Promotion and Organization – and we thank Matt Gaarder, a Northwest alumnus and local business owner, who has been the spearhead.

Progress also continues on the Fourth Street Improvement Project with new light poles being installed in recent weeks. ClearPath Senior Holdings, which is building the Oak Pointe assisted living center in Maryville, has voiced interest in partnering with Northwest. We have another partner in Michael Baumgartner who is returning as president of St. Francis Hospital and Health Services. And the "Watson 9" junior golf course at Mozingo Lake Recreation Park is set to open this summer – with a can't-miss interview featuring Tom Watson and Dr. Bruce Twaddle at 9:06 a.m. Tuesday, March 10, on KXCV 90.5 FM's "All Things Northwest."

Meanwhile, the legislative season is heating up and much work is being done to ensure education is supported in the state of Missouri. Travels took me to Jefferson City and Columbia last month in conjunction with Great Northwest Days and for House Appropriations Committee testimony regarding our educational programs.

We have a wonderful and talented cadre of leaders and supporters and so many rich resources within our region, and the Great Northwest contingent from our region did a fine job communicating our priorities. I'm also thankful for Sen. Dan Hegeman and Rep. Allen Andrews who are tuned in to the importance of education.

During my testimony, as I've done now on an annual basis since my presidency began in 2009, I carried the message Northwest has maintained in light of decreasing state support: We are performing, not whining. We are indeed quite appreciative of Gov. Jay Nixon's and the General Assembly's support and, while the need for enhanced funding is clear, we will not wait for the budget process to play out. We are being proactive in aligning with funding sources, partners and institutional directions.

Northwest's two legislative priorities consist of increasing core performance funding for FY16 and passage of a bonding package for maintenance and repair projects.

However, Northwest's \$30.8 million net in state appropriations matches its 2000-2001 funding level and accounts for 35 percent of the university's total income, compared to 56 percent in 2000. We also have held tuition to the lowest increase nationally during the last

five years and have a variety of metrics relating to access, affordability, quality and fiscal stewardship that show we indeed are disrupting from a position of strength.

Additionally, last month, the Council on Public Higher Education, the organization I am humbled to chair that is comprised of the presidents and chancellors of Missouri's 13 four-year public higher education institutions, and the Missouri Community College Association distributed a joint letter urging Missouri House and Senate leadership to support two priorities shared by our state education institutions for FY2016 – a 5 percent increase in core performance and equity funding, and the approval of the remaining \$162 million in bonding proceeds for badly needed maintenance and repair projects.

We are grateful for the legislative support to date, but even with investments, we continue to lag behind other states. In addition to being 44th in higher education funding, Missouri is behind surrounding states and less funded than several other low tax states.

We believe tax policy and politics are not the issue, but rather prioritization. We are collectively advocating for a core appropriations increase and passage of the maintenance and repair bonding package.

In sum, low public funding makes it increasingly difficult for our institutions to honor our shared commitments to offering high-quality education that is accessible and affordable. We are simply asking our state leaders to uphold the state's constitution, which provides that education should be the top funding priority after debt service.

*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).*