

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

Every day is a great day to be a Northwest Missouri State Bearcat. Yet the momentum we are riding, on a variety of fronts, makes these days especially exciting at our university.

Our strategic mindset is paving the way for action, and we are actively remodeling curriculum, programs and infrastructure. Moreover, I believe we are in the midst of an “academic renaissance” at Northwest.

It begins with our academic restructuring, announced last month by Provost Dr. Timothy Mottet, toward free-standing, multi-disciplinary professional schools. This restructuring grew out of a pilot project with departments in our Melvin D. and Valorie G. Booth College of Business and Professional Studies, and we launched a School of Health Science and Wellness in September as our first professional school.

Come July, we will implement a new academic structure that, as Tim points out, allows us to be more nimble and interdisciplinary. This new structure will include the renewed School of Business, School of Communication and Mass Media, and School of Agricultural Sciences as well as a new School of Education and School of Computer Science and Information Systems. I extend my congratulations to Dr. Tim Wall and Dr. Carol Spradling who become, respectively, the new dean of the School of Education and director of the School of Computer Science and Information Systems.

In December, our Board of Regents approved the Northwest Core, which represents a reframing of our general education curriculum to help students understand the world in which they live and develop transferable skills that will help them make significant contributions to their workplaces, communities and families.

We are progressing through an academic program review – a significant step forward in terms of examining our curriculum and developing a quality initiative needed for reaffirmation from the Higher Learning Commission. To date we have assessed 26 programs. Deans and Faculty Senate representatives met Monday to review data; discuss our accreditation responsibilities as they relate to this process; review strengths, weaknesses, recommendations and actions for our undergraduate and graduate programs; and review processes for assessing faculty credentials and learning outcomes. I thank Vice Provost Dr. Greg Haddock for administering and driving this program.

Living and academic learning communities implemented in the fall are helping first year-students in agriculture, business and natural science programs establish meaningful relationships with their peers and instructors. Furthermore, we retained 100 percent of students residing in living and learning communities from fall to spring. We are quite proud of this success and look forward to continuing our work on this initiative. Thanks to faculty members Rod Barr, Allison Hoffmann, Shelley Riley and Assistant Director of Residential Life Meghan Davis for their efforts.

We are proud, too, of our model classroom in Colden Hall. Associate Professor of English Dr. John Gallaher says it best when he calls it “a malleable space and it conforms to what you bring to it.” Mobile furniture, multiple projection screens, portable white boards and other tools add new life to the classroom experience for our students and faculty alike, and we are eager to see its impacts as we shape plans to refurbish more classrooms.

We are developing our Learning and Teaching Center to equip faculty with the tools they need to help students engage more deeply and participate in meaningful learning experiences. Services provided by the center will support faculty in specific learning contexts, develop instructional technology interventions to enhance learning and teaching, and offer multiple professional development opportunities. Thanks to Assistant Professor of English Dr. Joseph Haughey, who leads the center.

Finally, we are listening to each other and to our community and education partners. We’ve hosted a number of academic summits in recent months to discuss topics of health science and wellness; academic partnerships; and science technology, engineering and mathematics curriculum. Most recently, we hosted local business and government leaders for a profession-based summit to explore ways we can better partner with local employers to provide internships and other experiences for students.

There is so much more to discuss – Project Lead the Way at our Horace Mann Laboratory School, professional advisory teams helping to guide us, an emerging and significant partnership with a variety of partners in northeast Kansas City.

We are profession-based and driven by student success. The renaissance is in full swing!

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