

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

It is a wonderful time to be a Bearcat as we recently concluded the academic year at Northwest Missouri State University and are coming off a celebratory weekend honoring our newest graduates.

Northwest had three commencement ceremonies last weekend that celebrated 879 students from 31 states and 12 countries and ranging in age from 20 to 64 years old. Their achievements are truly remarkable as just one-third of the U.S. population attains a bachelor's degree or higher, and Northwest graduates students at a rate 20 percent higher than the national average.

I continue to emphasize that kind of momentum that we are experiencing at Northwest in alignment with our strategic plan. But our Board of Regents last week also approved a significant proposal – by approving the additions of a vice president and coordinator of diversity, equity and inclusion – that elevates our strategic movement regarding diversity, equity and inclusion, and helps us address our longstanding institutional value of intercultural competence.

Our Extended Leadership Team voted last August to elevate diversity, equity and inclusion to be a single strategic objective. We created a Strategic Objective 3 (SO3) team comprising a cross functional group of faculty, staff and students from diverse backgrounds and experiences. The team analyzed our past efforts, research, infrastructure and programming to uncover the strengths and weaknesses facing Northwest.

The SO3 team identified three areas of strategic focus:

- Access and success: Implementing intentional structures and resources to ensure access, retention and success of both marginalized students and employees.
- Teaching and learning: Providing effective social justice education to ensure all students have the ability to be culturally competent and that all faculty and staff are provided the tools necessary to create inclusive learning environments.
- Campus and community climate: Fostering an environment committed to respect, integrity and ensuring equitable experiences and opportunities for all identities of students and employees.

Given these strategic goals, the first outcome of this work has resulted in a new structure to support university wide efforts for diversity, equity and inclusion. This structure will help us build a culture at Northwest of supporting both marginalized students and employees.

This new structure includes the vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), who will report directly to me and be the content expert on campus.

Our new DEI structure will move the areas of Multicultural Student Success as well as the Title IX/ADA office to report to the new vice president and work to support students and employees. The Office of Multicultural Student Success will be renamed the Office of

Diversity and Inclusion with the additional coordinator to be hired to support that office. Similarly, the Title IX/ADA office will be renamed the Office of Equity and Accessibility and will expand support to include Title IX, ADA/504, and Title VI for students and employees. A coordinator position is being added to address this work also.

The creation of this division is the first step in building infrastructure to support all people within the Northwest community. In addition to supporting employees from marginalized backgrounds, this structure will provide support to offices and individuals on campus. The division will support, for example, the Office of Human Resources to ensure diverse hiring practices are used, the Learning and Teaching Center to ensure all students are supported on campus, and all other offices and departments on campus.

This area will provide the infrastructure to build our campus conversation to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion practices on campus. The SO3 team will continue to meet and align actions and outcomes seeking to address access and success, teaching and learning, and campus and community climate.

Our Northwest Foundation Board also met last week to address Forever Green: The Campaign for Northwest Missouri State University. They heard presentations on the campus master plan as well as planned giving opportunities – and delved deep into our campaign initiatives. We are thankful for all those board members as they provide suplerative service to Northwest.

As community members, you have had significant impacts on our students, on their academic success and future plans.

Thank you for your dedication to Northwest and your contributions to a 2015-2016 filled with championship performance. We have momentum that comes from partnerships, teamwork and a special Bearcat culture focused on our mission of delivering student success.

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