

**Maryville Daily Forum**  
**Thursday, July 7, 2016**

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

A week ago, we closed our fiscal year at Northwest Missouri State University and turned the page to 2016-2017. Our Board of Regents passed a balanced budget that focuses on investments in strategic objectives as well as our people and plant. It reflects our focus on access, affordability, quality, overall student success indicators and reallocations to support our strategy.

Looking back on Northwest's 111th year, we remained a thriving institution – and disrupted from a position of strength. We didn't rest on our laurels. We thought and acted boldly and focused on the future. We took risks and sought to be a solution provider while cultivating partnerships that were values-based, robust and purposeful.

When students arrived to begin the academic year last fall, the new gateway arch and Fourth Street corridor welcomed them and their families as they turned from downtown Maryville and traveled toward our campus. The Fourth Street Improvement Project was the culmination of a three-year initiative resulting from our strengthened partnership with the city of Maryville.

The first day of classes was marked with the opening of our state-of-the-art Robert and Virginia Foster Fitness Center – a facility that once housed our indoor pool. We also unveiled a model classroom in Colden Hall that featured modern amenities to enhance students' learning. In October, we dedicated the new Michael L. Faust Media Lab in Wells Hall, which enhanced students' learning in the communication and media disciplines.

We changed the academic structure Northwest had known for decades to empower our academic units to be innovative and stimulate interdisciplinary programs while better preparing students to be career-ready the day they graduate. We opened a School of Health Science and Wellness last fall and officially launch five more professional schools this fall that represent the areas of agriculture, business, communication and mass media, computer science and education.

We confronted societal changes, too. Amid racial tensions at campuses throughout the country, we found ourselves in the middle of history-making events where each of us had a chance to shape how those events would be recorded and remembered in the years ahead. Our open forum in November to discuss social justice was a shining example as our student planning team served as national role models. We continued to make progress throughout the year and are interviewing for a vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion.

We constructed a new academic vision, in part, through a series of academic summits; reworked our general education program; introduced living-learning communities in our residential halls; launched our Green Dot program to promote bystander intervention; launched a partnership with the Missouri Army National Guard; piloted a competency-based education model; introduced leadership competencies for all campus leaders; completed a Campus Master Plan; enhanced Martindale Hall, the entry of Valk Center and began state-

funded deferred maintenance projects that will cover 12 buildings. We continued to enhance funding models through private support from donors, foundations and corporations.

Also, let's not forget our Bearcat football team in December earned its fifth NCAA Division II national title in program history, and members of our Speaking Bearcats debate and forensics teams claimed five more individual titles – raising our total for national titles University wide to 28 since 2009.

Our men's basketball team won its third MIAA title in four years and reached the Sweet 16 of the national tournament for the third consecutive year. Our softball team recorded its second-largest win total in program history and qualified for its national tournament, and the men's tennis team won its seventh straight MIAA title and advanced to the quarterfinals of its national tournament.

It's noteworthy in all of these achievements that Northwest has a strategic plan guiding how we move forward as a university. We are setting strategic goals and tracking associated performance goals and metrics.

By working together to execute our strategic plan, we grew enrollment, elevated our academic programs and culture, increased student success, and ensured the longer-term viability and vitality of Northwest. We injected change, and every single one of us played a critical role in doing so.

Another academic year will be upon us soon, and we are well-positioned to continue our momentum as the university of choice for a comprehensive, exceptional student experience. Thank you for the role you play in helping students succeed and our community thrive!

*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).*