

**Maryville Daily Forum
Thursday, Dec. 1, 2016**

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

As we reflect on where we are at Northwest Missouri State University and in our community, it is a good time during this holiday season to give thanks for the blessings bestowed upon us.

We at Northwest represent a community of thinkers and bridge builders. As such, this fall we have continuously affirmed and reinforced what it means to "Be a Bearcat" – and the extraordinary opportunities we have to engage in advocacy, inspire hope and lay the path for our future. We, as Bearcats, exhibit kindness and respect to one another, no matter our differences.

We continue to lead in regard to providing a quality education in our region, state and beyond. Recently we learned that, for the fourth time in the five years since Missouri implemented its performance-based funding model for the state's public two- and four-year institutions, Northwest has achieved all five benchmarks of the funding model. As a result, we will receive 100 percent of the funding appropriated to the University within the state's FY18 budget.

Additionally, we have received notification that the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) renewed its accreditation of our teacher preparation program, an acknowledgement that it meets the rigorous standards set forth by the professional education community. Northwest has been continuously accredited since NCATE was established in 1954, and we believe Northwest is one of no more than 20 institutions to claim that designation.

Furthermore, our education program recently was recognized by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, an education advocacy group based in Washington, D.C., for its use of data aimed at continuous quality improvement in the preparation of educators. Northwest was the inaugural site visit of an ongoing project to capture, document and disseminate the most promising and effective practices for educator preparation programs, and only four other institutions were invited.

We have plenty of opportunities in the days and weeks ahead for engaging and connecting also.

Tonight, we invite you to join us at 5:15 p.m. on the lawn of the Thomas Gaunt House on the Northwest campus for our eighth annual Holiday Tree Lighting. Maryville Mayor Jason McDowell and Travis Dimmitt, on behalf of Campus Ministerial Alliance, will join me in sharing some reflections on the season. We'll also hear from our talented Horace Mann Laboratory School Bearcat Choir and Maryville High School Spectrum Choir. I'm told Santa Bobby Bearcat may also be on hand to welcome our guests.

On Saturday, our top-ranked and defending national champion Bearcat football team continues its quest for the ultimate goal with a matchup against Harding University in the quarterfinal round of the NCAA Division II playoffs. Kickoff is 1 p.m. at Bearcat Stadium,

and I hope you will help us pack the stadium to cheer on our student-athletes – who by the way are excelling in the classroom, too; 48 football players were named this week to the MIAA Academic Honor Roll. Let's also not forget our Bearcat basketball teams, whose seasons are off to strong starts and are deserving of your support at their home games in coming weeks.

On Sunday, our Tower Choir, under the direction of Dr. Stephen Town, performs at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception at Conception [Abbey](#). We are indeed fortunate in northwest Missouri to have such a magnificent structure and it will be an extraordinary venue to hear the Tower Choir. The concert is free and open to the public, beginning at 3 p.m. Sunday. Additionally, our Madraliers host their 43rd annual Yuletide Feaste Dec. 9-10 in the J.W. Jones Student Union Ballroom; more information about that event is available on our website.

Of course, we're also advancing toward final exams and commencement, and this is prime time for us to focus on our students' learning to ensure their success. Dr. Margie Vandeven, commissioner of education for the state of Missouri, will join us for our winter commencement ceremonies Dec. 16 to address our graduates and their families. We expect to award degrees to more than 550 graduates who represent 16 states and five countries and range in age from 20 to 64.

Indeed, there is much taking place – and we have much in which to engage. We give thanks to all of you as we enact what it means to "Be a Bearcat." Learning. Connecting. Caring. Practicing civility. Showing pride.

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