

**Maryville Daily Forum
Thursday, Jan. 5, 2017**

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

Here we are beginning a new calendar year and another spring trimester at Northwest Missouri State University. Northwest had a tremendous fall that carries us into the spring and will propel us to another strong academic year.

As we reflect on our achievements these last few months, it's easy to forget that not that long ago we welcomed another large class of first-year Bearcats. We celebrated the opening of our Northwest-Kansas City location in August at the newly completed – and now award-winning – Northland Innovation Campus in Gladstone.

We celebrated, in September, the opening of five professional schools designed to help Northwest raise the bar in terms of the experiences we provide and further differentiate ourselves from our peers. We opened a food pantry to help students experiencing food insecurity and hunger. We celebrated our scholarship recipients and the many inspired donors who give back to Northwest and quietly assist with our students' pursuit of a college degree.

October gave us our largest-yet iteration of the Missouri Hope disaster response field training exercise with about 500 students and faculty from throughout the country partnering with our first responders and emergency services personnel. There was that week, too, when we collected nearly 400 units of blood during the Student Senate's annual fall blood drive and beat our neighbors to the south to hold our supremacy as top blood donor among higher education institutions in the region.

We launched Northwest Success 360, a networking tool and database to help strengthen and align the resources available to our students. We maintained our status as a Military Friendly School for a fifth consecutive year.

Our recreation programs in the School of Health Science and Wellness received full accreditation from the Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions to continue through the year 2023. And the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education renewed its accreditation of our teacher preparation program – a status Northwest has received continuously since the accrediting body was established in 1954; we believe Northwest is one of no more than 20 institutions to claim that designation.

We announced the single largest public-private partnership in our institution's history with plans to build a Northwest Multipurpose Complex. In November, local voters approved a transient guest tax to advance tourism and economic development in our region, which will assist with the construction and operation of a Northwest Multipurpose Complex. We are indeed grateful for the support of this historic public-private partnership, which further strengthens the bond between campus and community.

In December, we received further confirmation of our continuing efforts as a leader of providing quality education in our region, state and beyond. 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.

On Dec. 16, we hosted our winter commencement ceremonies with Dr. Margie Vandeven, the commissioner of education for the state of Missouri, delivering the commencement addresses. We awarded 568 degrees – 241 master's degrees, 10 education specialist degrees and 317 bachelor's degrees. Of those bachelor's degree candidates, 90 completed with a grade-point average of 3.5 or above.

You may have heard, too, that our Bearcat football team won a record-breaking sixth NCAA Division II national championship and named Rich Wright – assistant head coach and defensive coordinator, nationally recognized and respected by players, coaches, staff, alumni and community members – as our new head coach. Our athletics programs had a tremendous fall and – with our men's basketball team ranked No. 1 and undefeated to start the season – our winter programs are off to strong starts as well. We are thankful to our athletics staff and all of our coaches for the hours they put into coaching, mentoring and preparing our student-athletes to be successful far beyond their time at Northwest.

We are blessed to have the energizing environment, engagement and level of success we enjoy at Northwest. We do not take that for granted, and it is a tribute to your commitment to our community and university. On behalf of the Northwest Leadership Team, thank you and have a wonderful 2017!

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