

**Maryville Daily Forum
Thursday, April 6, 2017**

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

April is here and that means we have entered the final month of our 2016-17 academic year at Northwest Missouri State University. We're closing out the year having just won our first NCAA Division II national championship in men's basketball – which also makes us the first school in the history of Division II to win football and men's basketball national championships in the same academic year.

We are so proud of National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) Coach of the Year Ben McCollum and NABC Player of the Year Justin Pitts and the accomplishments of our men's basketball team this year. Nine student-athletes representing men's basketball were named to the MIAA Academic Honor Roll, including Zach Schneider, who was named MIAA Scholar-Athlete. We also are proud to have hosted the Central Region tournament last month for the first time in Northwest's history and the sold-out crowds those games brought to Bearcat Arena. Hosting such events provide an economic boost to our community, and we are proud of the special bond between Northwest, surrounding communities and our alumni.

It's important to note, though, that our successes extend far beyond athletics and include academic programs and profession-based experiences. While our men's basketball team was winning games in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, our Speaking Bearcats debate and forensics team was competing at its national tournament – where Ve'Shawn Dixon finished as an individual national champion and Maryville native Emily Meyers was named an All-American.

Additionally, eight students and faculty members representing our School of Education traveled to Reggio Emilia, Italy, to study and observe practices in preschool and primary education. Twenty-nine students and staff members representing our Alternative Spring Break program traveled to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to assist with rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of devastating flooding last fall. Our Celebration show choir toured from Missouri to Texas, visiting a handful of high schools and performing a concert in Houston.

When a house fire affected four of our students and left them without housing a few weeks ago, our community came together to donate clothing and offer support. Our Pay it Forward Fund, started by two staff members about three years ago because they saw a need, has given away about \$8,000 to assist students and employees during the past year and has received an equal amount of donations in return. When Maryville went under a tornado warning March 6, our students and employees took action and complied with our notification systems.

We continue to explore interdisciplinary programs and partnerships that support degree completion and prepare students to be career ready when they graduate from Northwest. We are addressing academic enhancements and co-curricular experiences, including a recently concluded Greek Life visioning. We are focused on our values, core competencies, diversity and overall strategy.

On Monday, we hosted our annual Northwest Awards and Recognition Ceremony, where we honored outstanding students, faculty, staff and student organizations for their achievements and contributions to the university. Tucker Peve, a senior business management major from Lee's Summit, Missouri, and student manager in the Department of Athletics, is Northwest's student employee of the year in addition to being named the state student employee of the year!

Students are enjoying a variety of activities this week in commemoration of our annual Northwest Week. This weekend our Theatre Northwest program presents Moliere's comedy "The Learned Ladies," and we have the MIAA vs. NSIC Showdown track and field meet at Bearcat Stadium.

As always, the culmination of our academic year is our spring commencement ceremonies, which are set for April 29 and will feature Karen Daniel, who is chief financial officer Black & Veatch, chair of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, a Northwest alumna and member of our Northwest Foundation Board of Directors.

Behind the scenes of these successes and exposure, we have been working diligently to align Northwest's budget and ensure we are a better, stronger university for future generations of Bearcats. We continue to address short- and long-term actions related to our strategy, and we will continue to lead proactively with a positive approach.

As I have been advocating to our leaders, I sincerely believe in the importance of staying positive. Being healthy. Eating well and sleeping well. Exercising. Taking time to take a breath. I hope you take time to do all of these things, and I hope you continue to exhibit the responsibilities of being a Bearcat – learn, connect, care, practice civility and show pride.

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