

**Local newspaper column
Thursday, Dec. 6, 2018**

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

During this holiday season, we have a great deal for which to be thankful at Northwest Missouri State and in our community. We are thankful for all of you who support our mission of focusing on student success – every student, every day – and help make our surrounding communities and Northwest a quality home for our students. From record retention and state-leading placement rates, to significant increases in enrollment and student satisfaction, from continuing our exciting work on profession-based learning to strengthened financials, we have achieved a level of “performance excellence” that is unparalleled in the state and region.

Receiving an incredibly strong Higher Learning Commission (HLC) report and a recommendation for full reaffirmation of accreditation pulls all of this together. As a result of our work during the last year and the October visit by a team of HLC evaluators, Northwest met 18 of 21 core components within its HLC Assurance Argument. In short, being required to report progress on the remaining three core components in our regularly scheduled 2022-23 Academic Year Assurance Review is superior. This allows us to address and implement further actions on a regular schedule. Additionally, Northwest met all components of our HLC Federal Compliance Review with no required follow-ups, which is above normal for the sector. The HLC process affirmed what takes place at Northwest every day in all areas of the campus. Northwest has a winning culture, and that is not by accident. We take pride in not just preparing our students to be career ready and to be successful citizens but in having the right people join our teams, to set positive examples, to lend their experiences and expertise, and to build up others.

Christy Tapps, an assistant athletic trainer, for example, put her expertise to practice last month and saved the life of one of our track athletes who had fallen and hit his head during a practice at the Carl and Cheryl Hughes Fieldhouse. Christy began CPR on the individual immediately and sent an assistant coach to retrieve an automated external defibrillator to revive the student-athlete’s heart. Throughout his subsequent hospital stay, Christy remained in close contact with his instructors as well his family and offered encouragement. He is now out of the hospital and has a defibrillator permanently implanted under his left arm. People like Christy and track and field head coach Brandon Masters are what make Northwest a special place. The Hughes Fieldhouse had been in use for only a few weeks, but they were competently trained, organized and prepared to act.

Another fine example of Northwest’s winning culture, of course, is Mel Tjeerdsma, who was inducted Tuesday night as a member of the College Football Hall of Fame. Mel’s remarkable coaching record during his 17 years at Northwest and before that at Austin College in Texas speaks for itself. Beyond the field, though, his tremendous service to Northwest and the role he played as a mentor to so many student-athletes personifies the culture we have at Northwest.

Last month, Northwest students tested their cybersecurity knowledge and placed high during the National Cyber League competition Nov. 16-18. One Northwest team placed 10th

overall among a total of 368 teams from across the country competing in all divisions, while a second Northwest team placed 130th overall. Northwest students' success on a national stage happens because of faculty members like Dr. Scott Bell, who advises our Cyber Defense Club and mentors students not just in the classroom but in the co-curricular activities that help give Northwest students an edge as they enter their career fields.

Northwest now offers a Career Closet to students who may not have the means to acquire the clothing they need for job interviews or practicum experiences. Jill Brown, Northwest's director of partnerships and placement, and Meghan Sheil, an early childhood instructor at our Phyllis and Richard Leet Center for Children and Families, saw a need and turned their idea into reality, and our students are benefitting tremendously. Visit www.nwmissouri.edu/career/career-closet.htm to learn how you can contribute.

This holiday season I encourage you to pick each other up, catch others doing good and continue to express thanks to each other for the work we do to uplift our communities.

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