

**Local newspaper column**  
**Thursday, March 21, 2019**  
**Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President**

March greetings to all of you as signs of spring are finally appearing on our campus and in our neighborhoods! It has been an eventful month at Northwest Missouri State University as we close the 10th week of the semester and enter next week's spring break with commencement ceremonies fast approaching!

Highlighting March were our Women's History Month activities, and what a tremendous celebration and gathering Friday as we honored "Influential Women of Northwest." Congratulations to Assistant Professor of Theatre Kat Bilbo on her recognition as an influential faculty member and to Accessibility Coordinator Pat Wyatt on her recognition as an influential staff member – as well as to Bryana Jones, who received the first Lonnae Young Influential Student Award.

We lost Lonnae, a junior psychology major from Lee's Summit, Missouri, suddenly last month, and her impacts were many, through her involvement as a resident assistant in Dieterich Hall, our Upward Bound program and with the Sigma Society service sorority. Lonnae, in fact, was nominated to be recognized as an influential student and our Women's History Month planning committee took the fitting steps to name the student award in her honor. We were humbled Friday to have the presence of Lonnae's parents, David and Marie Dawson, who presented the student award to Bryana.

We also are so proud of men's basketball head coach Ben McCollum and his team on an absolutely outstanding season – so far! If somehow you missed it, our Bearcats are now 35-0 and bound for the NCAA Division II Elite Eight tournament next week in Evansville, Indiana. The accolades are piling up for this team – and deservedly so.

We enjoyed super crowds Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday in Bearcat Arena as hosts of the Central Regional Tournament for the third consecutive year. There are so many people responsible for planning, hosting and executing the regional tournament – from the Department of Athletics to Facility Services, University Marketing and Communication to University Advancement and University Police. Serving as host takes everyone being all in – and Northwest and the city of Maryville certainly were! We are thankful for the economic impact provided to our locality as we also hosted a high school track meet, conducted a visit day and hosted various other events on campus just in the last few days.

In academic news, our work with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' (AASCU) Center for Student Success initiative is underway and an AASCU team is on campus this week to meet with our Northwest team, led by Director of Academic Success and Retention Allison Hoffmann. An Institutional Transformation Assessment was deployed last month to 100-plus faculty and staff with questions related to nine categories – guided pathways, developmental education, leadership and culture, strategic finance, institutional research, advisement and student support, information technology, policy, and digital learning – and our teams are reviewing the results and their meaning as well as Northwest's focus on student success. As the visit wraps up, we will work together to set key performance indicators on which to focus throughout the project.

Our Board of Regents also met last week and approved an increase of the University's tuition for the 2019-2020 academic year with no increases in required fees and room rates. At the same time, we are transitioning our graduate tuition rate structure from a traditional structure of in-state and out-of-state rates to a model that is program-based. The decision on tuition rates is an important step as we move closer to finalizing our budget in June and we are thankful for Student Senate President Alyssa Lincoln and our student representatives for their vital input. We are appreciative, too, of our Board of Regents for their support, and of Vice President of Finance Stacy Carrick, her team and all who play a role in our budget-planning process as we continue focusing on access, affordability and the high-quality academic environment we have all come to expect.

In conclusion, our hearts are heavy this week as we've watched video clips and read about the devastating flooding affecting Nebraska, Iowa and our corner of the world in Missouri. Pellet Plant Supervisor Chris Redden and his team loaded pallets this week for Holt County to use in transporting sand bags. Our admissions team also has reached out to accepted students impacted by the floods, and a variety of groups are seeking and providing support to current students as we are monitoring and discussing other ways to assist and offer support.

*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).*