

**Local newspaper column  
Thursday, May 16, 2019**

**Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President**

Spring at Northwest Missouri State is a wonderful time of year when the tree buds of our Missouri Arboretum burst and the campus is reinvigorated after a long winter that tested them but also prepared them for the new season. The spring season is meaningful in so many ways on our campus, but the growth is especially symbolic as we reflect on the academic year, as many of our students leave the campus for a short break from coursework and add to their resumes through internship experiences, and some begin new chapters.

Earlier this month, of course, we celebrated commencement at Northwest, and it was an exciting and historic one as we saw a record-breaking Class of 2019, granting degrees to 1,062 bachelor's, master's and education specialist degree candidates during three separate ceremonies in Bearcat Arena. That number included 749 bachelor's degree candidates, with business management being the most common major among those students. We had 313 master's degree candidates, with education leadership in K-12 being the most common graduate degree.

We had graduates as young as 20, and our oldest was 58 years. They represented 36 different states – from all four corners of the country – and included 694 from within our own state. We also had 85 international students graduating, and they represented 10 countries, consisting of Bangladesh, France, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, China, Sri Lanka and Togo.

One of our own Northwest employees was among our graduates. We congratulated Matt Woolery, who works in the university's Office of University Marketing and Communication and received his Master of Science in Computer Science and Information Systems. We also congratulated Assistant Director of Academic Support Ashley Strickland, who completed her Doctorate of Education in educational leadership and policy analysis through our collaborative program with the University of Missouri-Columbia, and Director of Human Resources Krista Barcus completed her master's degree in management and leadership through Western Governors University.

Our Friday night crowd was even treated to an engagement proposal as Shane Miller, of Omaha, Nebraska, accepted his bachelor's degree in criminology with an adult system emphasis and then turned around to meet his girlfriend of eight years, Sierra Horan, as she crossed the stage behind him to receive her bachelor's degree in elementary education.

Dr. Michael Rogers, an associate professor in the School of Computer Science and Information Systems and this year's Governor's Award for Excellence in Education, addressed our ceremony for bachelor's degree candidates representing the School of Education and our master's and education specialist degrees recipients. Employing a mnemonic, C.A.T.S., he suggested the graduates live with curiosity, agility, tenacity and service.

Brian Weaver, a 1995 Northwest alumnus and entrepreneur, addressed our bachelor's degree candidates representing the College of Arts and Sciences and other professional schools. He reflected on the problem-solving skills he began developing at Northwest and has honed throughout his career, telling our graduates that failures are simply adjustments within the courses of lives.

Their messages were powerful as so much of our students' success – and the continued success for alumni like Brian – comes from the mentorship and wisdom imparted by our outstanding faculty and staff.

In fact, we've added another national championship to our trophy case since my last column. Our Pi Omega Pi business education honor society, with faculty advisors Cari Cline and Dr. Nancy Zeliff, claimed their third consecutive – and fourth in five years – National Chapter of the Year award at the organization's biennial convention in Chicago.

Additionally, we congratulate Dr. Greg Haddock, our associate provost of graduate studies and special programs, who was featured recently by Ingram's business magazine among its "50 Missourians You Should Know;" Dr. Tyler Tapps, a provost fellow and assistant director of our School of Health Science and Wellness, has been selected to participate in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Emerging Leaders Program next month in Washington, D.C.; and Dr. Terry Long, the director of our School of Health Science and Wellness, received a citation from the California Park and Recreation Society for his contributions to the field of recreation therapy.

The 2018-19 academic year is coming to a conclusion, and each year presents numerous challenges and opportunities. But one constant is our workforce and the partnership of our communities – every day. You learn with our students. You connect. You care. You practice civility. You show pride. Thank you for helping Northwest carry out its mission.

*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).*