

**Local newspaper column
Thursday, Nov. 21, 2019**

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

November greetings to you as we are in the thick of the academic year now at Northwest Missouri State University, and the holiday season is upon us. As our students leave for the Thanksgiving break this weekend, just one week of classes remains in our fall semester before a week of final exams and our winter commencement ceremonies Dec. 13.

After an incredible Homecoming week last month – which included formally launching our \$45 million fundraising campaign, having raised \$43 million to date, and watching our defending NCAA Division II national champion men’s basketball team play down to the wire with Duke University – we received the AASCU Excellence and Innovation Award in Student Success and College Completion during a ceremony in Phoenix. It was a truly memorable week, and we are thankful for the superb work of so many who work tirelessly to uplift our mission.

Earlier this month, our Student Success Center staff and Student Senate celebrated Northwest’s first-generation students in conjunction with activities sponsored across the country by the Council for Opportunity for Education and the Center for First-generation Student Success. With 46 percent of our freshmen identifying as first-generation students and 35 percent of Northwest’s student body being first-gen, our focus on student success is difficult to duplicate, and it is evident in the fact that our graduation rate is in the 90th percentile among our peers.

Another recent highlight was the success of our seventh annual Missouri Hope emergency response field training exercise, hosted in October by our Department of Humanities and Social Sciences – with support from so many others –at Mozingo Outdoor Education Recreation Area. Missouri Hope is an extraordinary experience for not just our students but for others throughout the country and our regional partners.

Here are some numbers worth noting:

- The exercise’s 44 participants came from four different higher education institutions – Northwest, the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Nursing, the University at Albany in New York and Northern Oklahoma College.
- 60 staff members working the event came from 12 higher education institutions throughout the country.
- First responders participated in the exercise with support by more than 25 partner agencies.
- The budget for this year’s exercise was \$8,500, but the estimated value is \$2.8 million.

This year’s exercise included an added collaboration of our advanced nursing students and the Missouri Army National Guard’s 139th Medics that allowed nursing students to gain skills not typically offered in a clinical environment and training for about 20 medics who support

our regional communities. Additionally, the Missouri Army National Guard trained students on high-angle rescue operations, using our new Collapsed Building Simulator Tower and giving students a chance to learn knots and techniques for technical rescue operation.

Looking ahead, we invite you to join us in celebrating the holiday season at Northwest. We'll gather at 5:15 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 3, for our 11th annual Holiday Tree Lighting ceremony at the Memorial Bell Tower. Maryville Mayor Rachael Martin, the Horace Mann Laboratory School's Bearcat Choir and "Santa Bobby Bearcat" will be among our special guests.

Later in the week, our Madraliers host the 46th Annual Yuletide Feaste – a tremendous tradition at Northwest – Dec. 6 and Dec. 7 in the J.W. Jones Student Union Ballroom. Tickets are \$32 and may be purchased by visiting the office of the Olive DeLuce Fine Arts Building or online at www.nwmissouri.edu/finearts/music/yuletide.htm.

Additionally, Mrs. J and I ask that you consider giving to Northwest's Career Closet – which provides professional clothing to our students for job interviews, internships and other experiences – or to our Bearcat Food Pantry or Pay it Forward Fund, which provides assistance to Northwest students who are struggling financially. Donation bins have been placed at Christmas trees in the Administration Building, B.D. Owens Library, Lamkin Activity Center and the J.W. Jones Student Union, or bring donations for the Pay it Forward Fund to the Career Services office on the first floor of the Administration Building.

As we celebrate and reflect this holiday season, we are thankful for Northwest's proud past, its vibrant present state, and the bright and bold future we envision. Our performance is a shining reflection of the superior work happening each and every day by our collective team at Northwest – and we take pride in being part of a community that is so incredibly supportive of our mission and our students.

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