

Newspaper column
Thursday, Feb. 18, 2021
Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University president

Our spring semester is in full swing now and good things are continuing at Northwest. While winter weather in our region always keeps the days interesting, we are persevering and showing our resilience – and a fresh coat of snow always adds another layer of beauty to the Northwest campus.

As we continue our collective fight against COVID-19, we are so thankful for our partnerships with Mosaic Medical Center-Maryville and the Nodaway County Health Department and for so many who worked together to organize successful vaccination clinics inside the Carl and Cheryl Hughes Fieldhouse during the last three weeks. Through the work of local health professionals and dozens of volunteers – including many of our own students who are gaining profession-based learning experiences – about 2,200 community members have received their first dose of the vaccine.

So many wonderful stories are emerging from these clinics. At our Feb. 4 clinic, a 100-year-old woman arrived in a wheelchair during that day's snowstorm. After she received the vaccine, our Facility Services team helped the woman zip her coat, put on her gloves and ensure she returned safely to the vehicle transporting her.

And last week, we were pleased to have Carl and Cheryl Hughes receive their vaccines inside the facility that bears their names. While they live in Platte County, Carl and Cheryl shared that they could not secure appointments elsewhere but were successful in doing so in our community. While we never could have predicted using the Hughes Fieldhouse for community vaccination clinics in the midst of a global pandemic, we did envision the facility as a valuable community resource and pathway to enduring community partnerships and economic impacts. The success of these vaccine clinics is a symbol of our mantra at Northwest that "Bearcats care" and of our strengthened partnerships.

As the pandemic continues, we continue to assemble small teams at Northwest to address specific needs, opportunities and our campus activities. We also are providing updates related to campus life and operations on our website at www.nwmissouri.edu/alert/coronavirus/.

In the meantime, despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and winter weather, Northwest maintains its focus on learning and on student success – every student, every day.

Northwest recently extended its participation in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' student success cohort through February 2022. Our work in the cohort, which Northwest was selected to join in early 2019, has resumed after a pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a broader campus team of faculty and staff is meeting this spring. AASCU also has leveraged the help of Institutes for the Future to develop a series of virtual engagements with cohort schools to reimagine and design an institutional future with a focus on equitable outcomes.

Progress continues on the Agricultural Learning Center at the R.T. Wright Farm and we are on pace for a June opening. Excitement is building as this multipurpose facility will open opportunities for not just our School of Agricultural Sciences but other disciplines as well as our community. We are so appreciative of the support we have received from so many, including \$2.5 million from the state of Missouri, an equipment grant award of \$343,000 and a \$25,000 pledge last week from Nodaway County commissioners.

With our Board of Regents' approval, we are moving forward with deferred maintenance projects this spring. These include, for example, roof replacements at the Garrett-Strong Science Building, Martindale Hall and Colden Hall with the help of federal funds released from the state.

Our faculty and staff continue to shine, too. For example, Rebecca Lobina, the director of our Small Business Development Center, recently was recognized by the University of Missouri Extension Business Development Program for the counseling she provides to small business owners and her SBDC colleagues. Rebecca is indeed deserving of this recognition and works hard to serve small business owners in our region.

Additionally, Associate Professor of History Dr. Elyssa Ford authored a recently published book, "Rodeo as Refuge, Rodeo as Rebellion." Her work to recognize these underrepresented groups is appreciated.

According to a report released by the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development in January, Northwest is the most efficient among state universities for state appropriations per degree and certificate granted. We have such a beautiful and special culture at Northwest, focused on student success and employing an incredibly talented and dedicated faculty and staff. We are strategic, proud of our performance excellence and have strong footing moving forward.

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