

Newspaper column
Thursday, Nov. 18, 2021

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University president

As we enter this season of joy and gratitude – and the culmination of a successful fall semester at Northwest Missouri State University – I am filled with pride as I think of the positive momentum on our campus and in our community, from record enrollment at the University to downtown revitalization and improving our South Main Street corridor. It is indeed a joy to partner with our city, county and state leaders on projects that drive our local economy and progress.

Successful athletic programs are just one piece of that momentum, and our Bearcat athletics teams have it this fall. The Bearcat soccer team earned its first-ever Division II Tournament berth as a No. 7 seed and meets No. 2 seed Emporia State University on Friday afternoon. Head coach Marc Gordon and his team set a Northwest record this fall with 13 wins, among several other new program highs, while finishing third in the MIAA conference.

The Bearcat volleyball team, led by head coach Amy Woerth, is ranked No. 4 in the country and began its quest for an MIAA tournament title with a win Tuesday night in Bearcat Arena. They finished the regular season 24-4 overall and 17-3 in the MIAA, and we look forward to a semifinal matchup with Washburn on Friday.

We also congratulate head coach Rich Wright and the Bearcat football team on claiming Northwest's 31st MIAA conference championship last Saturday, and are looking forward to a packed Bearcat Stadium on Saturday as we host Central Washington in the first round of the NCAA Division II football playoffs.

Oh, by the way, Northwest's 25 postseason appearances are the most of any Division II football program. Our Bearcats have appeared in the playoffs each of the last 17 years, playing in eight national championship games during that span and winning four of them. Northwest's six football national championships since 1998 also are the most in Division II football.

Kickoff for the football game is 1 p.m. Saturday at Bearcat Stadium, but we encourage you to join us before that at the Bearcat Zone Tailgate. Enjoy performances, starting at noon in College Park, by our stellar Bearcat Marching Band, Bearcat Steppers and cheerleaders.

Further, Jacob Nkamasiai represents our Bearcat cross country team Saturday at the NCAA Division II National Championship meet in Florida. Jacob earned all-region honors this season and ran a 10K time of 30:04.87, the third-best in Northwest history.

As I said, athletics are just one piece of our momentum. We are thankful, too, for Northwest's partnership with Mosaic Medical Center—Maryville as we continue to combat COVID-19 and have resumed vaccination clinics in the Carl and Cheryl Hughes Fieldhouse. On Nov. 8, on behalf of Northwest, I also had the pleasure of accepting an Excellence and Innovation Award for pandemic response from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The award is a result of the efforts of our tremendous faculty, staff, students and significant community-based partners.

Our new Agricultural Learning Center continues to draw praise from all who enter it, and last weekend we were pleased to welcome Gov. Mike Parson for a tour of the facility. We are so thankful for the support of the Rep. Allen Andrews and Sen. Dan Hegeman as well as numerous community members who helped make the Agricultural Learning Center a reality for our region. The facility and its expo center already have hosted numerous large events this fall, including Celebrate Agriculture activities this past week and Mike Adams, who broadcast his "Adams on Agriculture" national radio program live from the center on Tuesday morning.

Tonight, Mrs. J and I invite you to join us for Northwest's annual Holiday Tree Lighting, a tradition we started in 2009 and one that is very special to us as we celebrate the holiday seasons and our diversity at the University. The program begins at 5:15 p.m. at the Memorial Bell Tower in the center of the Northwest campus with remarks by Maryville Mayor Benjamin Lipiec and our students as well as a performance by our Northwest Madraliers. I'm told "Santa Bobby Bearcat" may make an appearance, and we encourage you to bring food items to support our Bearcat Food Pantry.

The work of so many dedicated people make a true difference in our community, and the Northwest culture is something to behold.

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