

**Newspaper column**  
**Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021**  
**Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University president**

The fall semester at Northwest Missouri State University culminated Friday with our winter commencement ceremonies! On behalf of all of us at Northwest, thank you for the important role you play in helping our students succeed. It is all of us working together to make our University such a special place and a leader among our peer institutions in the nation, state and region.

During three ceremonies in Bearcat Arena we celebrated the achievements of more than 670 graduates – 338 bachelor’s degree candidates, 254 master’s degree candidates and 78 education specialist candidates. Business management was the most common bachelor’s degree among our winter graduates, and education leadership in K-12 was our most common master’s degree. Our graduates ranged in age from 20 to 60.

The graduates included four of our own employees. Melissa Chesnut, office manager in our assessment office, received her degree in accounting with a private industry emphasis; Kala Dixon, senior marketing specialist in the Office of University Marketing and Communication, and Courtney Gard, a circulation specialist in B.D. Owens Library, received their Master of Business Administration degrees.

Geographically, we had 442 graduates from the state of Missouri as well as 75 from Iowa, 55 from Nebraska and 24 from Kansas. Other states represented are Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. Nineteen of our graduates represented countries other than the United States.

Furthermore, we celebrated 495 graduates who completed degrees last summer and walked during Friday’s ceremonies. They comprised 137 bachelor’s degrees, 290 master’s degrees and 68 specialist degrees.

As I shared with our graduates and their families during Friday’s ceremonies, I submit there are at least six ways Northwest students are prepared for a successful future when they graduate. They have persevered, attaining a goal that just about one-third of the U.S. population achieves in completing a bachelor’s degree or higher, and only four in 10 Americans hold a post-secondary degree or credential of any sort. They have contributed to Northwest’s ongoing excellence and our mission of focusing on student success – every student, every day. They are building a foundation to help ensure our society celebrates and respects differences. They have learned to be engaged in and out of the classroom as they enter the workforce and new communities. They connect with others. And they understand what it means to be a Bearcat.

Record enrollment and retention rates and graduation rates that exceed our peers – our outstanding culture – do not happen without the support our community shows to students and to Northwest. Thank you for the roles you play every day in fostering transformative experiences for all Bearcats!

Additionally this week, we hosted our annual Employee Recognition Dinner. On Tuesday, we honored 90 Northwest employees who have achieved cumulative years of service totaling 1,145 years. Headlining the list is Ronnie Adamson, a supply clerk and material handler in our purchasing area who has achieved 40 years of service. Also, Head Tennis Coach Mark Rosewell, Professor of Music Dr. Stephen Town and Purchasing Manager Cindy Wood, have achieved 35 years of service.

Friends, we are fortunate to reach the end of another semester – another semester in the midst of a global pandemic – and have so many great things to celebrate. At the top of that list are some incredible students who completed impactful collegiate careers and are moving forward to embark on careers through which they will continue spreading Bearcat pride.

In less than a month, we'll welcome back those students who continue to diligently pursue their college degrees and career goals. Northwest's spring classes begin Wednesday, Jan. 12.

Until then and during this holiday season, I hope you take time to do things that you enjoy and that make you happy. Take care of your well-being and help others as well. Note that the Carl and Cheryl Hughes Fieldhouse is open to the public, too, and we hope you take advantage; check the Northwest website for details and hours. We also encourage you to adopt mitigation measures to keep yourself and others healthy and safe as we continue to combat COVID-19.

Thank you, Bearcats! Have a joyous Christmas and a happy, safe and restful holiday season!

*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).*