

## III | NORTHWESTERN STATE



### A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JAMES T. GENOVESE

May 4, 2025

Dear Faculty and Staff,

As we enter the final stretch of the spring semester, I want to thank each of you for the energy and commitment you bring to our students and our university community. This time of year is filled with celebrations and milestones that remind us of the important work we do together each day.

**Thriving Together**

On Monday, our Office of Economic Development, in collaboration with Louisiana Central and the Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce, hosted *Thriving Together: Navigating Family Dynamics in Business*. This engaging event brought local business owners together to explore the unique challenges and advantages of managing family-run enterprises. Attendees gained practical strategies for improving communication, strengthening relationships, and leveraging family dynamics as a business asset. Events like these are central to our mission of supporting regional economic growth, and more sessions are planned to help equip businesses for long-term success.

### **Lauren Corley Vaughn Memorial Scholarship**

On Tuesday morning, I joined our Alumni and Development staff for a check presentation from the Lauren Corley Vaughn Memorial Foundation. The foundation contributed \$38,000 in proceeds from the annual LV5K run to support the Lauren Vaughn Scholarship, which benefits students in NSU's accelerated nursing program. The scholarship honors the life of Lauren Corley Vaughn, who was tragically killed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. We are deeply grateful to her mother, Bridget, and her family for channeling their profound loss into a meaningful legacy that will support our nursing students for years to come.

### **Beacon Society**

Tuesday evening, I welcomed members of the Beacon Society for a focused discussion on Strategic Enrollment Management. Van Erikson, Director of Enrollment Management, provided an in-depth overview of

our current plan, sparking thoughtful feedback and meaningful dialogue. The insights shared by this dedicated group will be instrumental as we move from planning to implementation, with each academic unit taking ownership of strategies and goals to support university-wide progress.

### **College of Nursing and Allied Health Celebrations**

On Thursday evening, a wonderful gathering at our Shreveport campus commemorated the 75th anniversary of the College of Nursing and the 55th anniversary of the School of Allied Health. This milestone celebration brought together faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners to honor decades of excellence and innovation. A moving highlight of the evening was the tribute to Joel Hicks and the announcement of a scholarship fund established in his memory as a lasting testament to his impact and dedication. The university will continue to celebrate the CONSAH with a CENLA campus reception on Thursday, May 8, 2025.

Later this month, we will celebrate another important milestone: the graduation of the School of Allied Health's first cohort of sonography students. Congratulations to Emily Bumgardner, Tamira Deshautelle, Jamie Fielder, Zackrey Givens, Madison Hall, and Gracie Weaver, all of whom have completed a rigorous academic and clinical program and have secured employment in the field. These graduates are now eligible for national certification in abdominal, OB/GYN, and vascular specialties, and we are proud of their accomplishments.

### **Artificial Intelligence Update**

This semester marked the successful launch of *CIS 4700 OCI*, a first of its kind AI course offered in partnership with IBM and led by NSU alumnus Monty Chicola of Real Vision Software, Inc., a longtime IBM business partner. This hands-on class attracted students from across the U.S. and abroad, providing practical skills in AI programming and real-world application. We are thankful to Monty and the IBM Power Skills Academy for their collaboration, and we look forward to expanding our partnership.

Across the university, our commitment to AI is evident through ongoing investments and academic developments:

- The Division of Mathematics is investing \$100,000 in lab upgrades on the fourth floor of Kyser Hall to support the Computer Science concentration and AI-related instruction.
- Four new AI-infused courses in Computer Science will launch this fall:
  - CSC 1060: Program Design
  - CSC 2100: Data Structures
  - CSC 3040: 3D Print Design
  - CSC 4100: Program R Preparation Lab
- We continue our collaboration with NCPTT and French institutions on environmental sensors for historic buildings. This project incorporates AI to detect trends and provides a strong example of experiential learning.
- We are continuing to work with Dr. Neilank Jha to develop curriculum for his *Leadership in the Age of AI* course and the

accompanying distinguished lecture series to be launched this fall.

Looking ahead, we plan to seek approval for two new degree programs: a Bachelor of Science in Engineering (Industrial and Systems) and a Master of Science in STEM with a concentration in AI and Machine Learning. The master's program will include an industry-partnered capstone project to solve real-world challenges using AI. To ensure the success of these programs, we will allocate lab fee funds toward initial development but will also need to secure an additional \$400,000 for lab and server infrastructure. To meet this goal, we are pursuing federal grant opportunities and private industry sponsorships to support this critical investment.

### **Athletics Update**

The Demon baseball team had a perfect 4-0 week on the road, pushing across the winning run in the ninth inning Tuesday night at ULM, and taking a successful weekend trip to Malibu, Cal., and sweeping 1992 national champion Pepperdine 5-1, 12-5 and 15-12 with the Pacific Ocean not far behind the left field fence. This raises the Demons' record to 31-18, the best win total since 2018 for our program. The team concluded a season-long eight-game string of road games with only one loss in that stretch, highlighted of course by the recent 13-3 win at LSU. Coach Chris Bertrand's ballclub finishes the regular season at home Thursday and Friday evenings and Saturday afternoon against McNeese. It's Baseball Alumni Weekend and we look forward to welcoming former team members and their families back to our campus and refurbished Brown-Stroud Field.

The track and field teams competed well Saturday in their final regular-season action with many quality performances at TCU's Horned Frog Invite in Fort Worth. Raven-Symone Jarrett (13.49 in the women's 100-meter hurdles) and William Achee (a Southland Conference 2025-best 46.49 in the 400-meter dash) each ran massive personal bests to set the tone for the Northwestern contingent in our final meet prior to the SLC Championships May 15-17 in Houston.

Thank you for your continued hard work and dedication. I am proud of all we are accomplishing together, and I look forward to the celebrations and achievements ahead as we close out the semester.

Fork 'Em Demons,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James T. Genovese". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James T. "Jimmy" Genovese  
President  
Northwestern State University

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