

III | NORTHWESTERN STATE



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JAMES T. GENOVESE

May 18, 2025

Dear Faculty and Staff,

As we close the spring semester, I want to reflect on recent highlights that celebrate the achievements of our students, faculty, alumni, and campus community.

Spring Commencement

Commencement is one of the most joyful and meaningful traditions we celebrate at Northwestern. It is a time to recognize the hard work, resilience, and accomplishments of our students as they transition into the next chapter of their lives. Last week, over the course of three ceremonies across two days, we conferred 934 degrees to graduates representing every college and academic program. The energy, pride, and spirit of Northwestern were on full display.

On Tuesday evening, I had the honor of participating in the Stole Ceremony for our student-athlete graduates. This tradition celebrates those who have excelled both in academics and athletics while demonstrating leadership, discipline, and a strong commitment to the university. Their success reflects the very best of NSU.

Each of our three ceremonies featured commencement speaker Jerry Adkins (Jaf) Fielder II, President and CEO of Willis Knighton Health. We were also proud to present Mr. Fielder with an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities during the commencement program for graduates of NSU's College of Nursing and School of Allied Health, in which his daughter, Jamie Fielder, earned a Bachelor of Science in Radiologic Sciences with a concentration in ultrasound. Mr. Fielder is one of the University's and College of Nursing and Allied Health's most dedicated and influential supporters. His visionary leadership has been instrumental in advancing healthcare across our region, and his steadfast support has played a critical role in the development and accreditation of the DNP Nurse Anesthesia program and several radiologic sciences specialties. His contributions extend beyond NSU through initiatives that have improved lives throughout Louisiana.

This year's ceremonies also marked a historic first as graduating high school seniors who completed enough dual enrollment courses to earn an Associate of General Studies from NSU participated in commencement. These students are a testament to the power of early college access and academic ambition, and we are proud to recognize their achievement as they begin their collegiate journeys ahead of the curve.

Following the Wednesday afternoon commencement, I attended a commissioning ceremony hosted by our Department of Military Science, where graduate Caiden Matthews of Shreveport was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Matthews earned a degree in business administration with a minor in military leadership and has been selected for active duty in the Quartermaster branch. A standout student leader, he served as Battalion Commander of the Demon Regiment and held key leadership roles across campus. We are proud of his accomplishments and grateful for his future service.

We were also honored to welcome back members of the Class of 1975 to celebrate their Golden Jubilee. During Thursday morning's ceremony, these alumni were recognized and awarded 50-year diplomas. It was a pleasure to host a reception and breakfast for them, and later visit during the annual 50+ luncheon, where I shared a state of the university update. Their return reminded us of the enduring bond our alumni share with Northwestern.

Our spring commencement ceremonies were a powerful reminder of the lasting impact of a Northwestern education. From our newest

graduates to our Golden Jubilee honorees, the Demon spirit continues to thrive across generations. Congratulations again to the Class of 2025. We look forward to their continued success as alumni of this great institution.

AACSB Accreditation

I am proud to share that the School of Business has received confirmation of reaccreditation through AACSB. This comprehensive review included a detailed written report and on-site visit earlier this semester. As a result, our Accounting, Business Administration, and Computer Information Systems programs are now reaccredited through the 2030–2031 academic year. This achievement is a reflection of the continued excellence and dedication of the faculty and staff within the College of Business and Technology.

Nurse of the Year 2025

The College of Nursing and School of Allied Health has named Dr. Melissa Rennie as the 2025 Nurse of the Year. Since being appointed Shreveport Campus Coordinator in August 2024, Dr. Rennie has demonstrated visionary leadership, operational excellence, and a strong commitment to collaboration. A two-time NSU graduate, she has served the nursing profession in roles ranging from bedside care to academic leadership. She is recognized not only for her teaching and scholarship, but also for her active engagement in professional organizations and community service. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Rennie on this well-deserved honor.

Athletics Update

Not only did our women's track and field team repeat as Southland Conference Outdoor champions this weekend, they literally ran away from the competition, scoring 180 ½ points – 63 more than the second-place team. Senior Maygan Shaw won the 200 and 400 meters and ran on first-place 4x100 and 4x400 relays, accounting for four of the nine event championships and 17 medals (top 3 finishes) by the Lady Demons. Combined with the SLC Indoors title won in March, our women have swept the two championships for a second straight year. Congratulations to these outstanding student-athletes and the coaching staff, led by Mike Heimerman and Adam Pennington – whose program had 13 graduates in Wednesday morning's commencement.

Our men's team finished sixth with 70 points. The season continues for our best competitors late this month with the NCAA East Regionals, the final step to reaching the NCAA Championships in June.

The Demon baseball team had 15 players in a special Sunday evening commencement ceremony, held since they were playing their opening game Wednesday in the Southland Conference Tournament's Hammond Bracket. Defeating McNeese and host Southeastern, the Demons reached the championship round but suffered a second straight one-run loss to UNO. This has been an outstanding spring for Coach Chris Bertrand's ballclub, whose 35-21 record is the program's most overall wins since 2018, and the best SLC win total (19) in nine years.

Looking Ahead

Congratulations to all of you for wrapping up another successful semester. As we transition into the summer months, we look forward to welcoming new students and their families during our Freshman Connection sessions, which begin this week. We will also continue working closely with academic units to assess needs and finalize our strategic enrollment goals for the coming year. Thank you for all that you do to support our students and advance the mission of Northwestern.

Fork 'Em Demons,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James T. Genovese". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" and last name "Genovese" clearly legible.

James T. "Jimmy" Genovese
President
Northwestern State University

Northwestern Now

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