

# III | NORTHWESTERN STATE



## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JAMES T. GENOVESE

June 22, 2025

Dear Faculty and Staff,

As we near the end of June, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your continued dedication and support during these summer months. Whether you're working on campus projects, engaging with prospective students, or preparing for the fall semester, your efforts are deeply appreciated.

### **Honoring the Legacy of Coach Leon Johnson**

It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of Coach Leon Johnson, a beloved member of the NSU athletic family and a respected leader in the national track and field community. Coach Johnson devoted 52 years to coaching student-athletes, including 31 remarkable years at Northwestern. He established our women's track program in 1986, mentored athletes who went on to compete and excel at the highest levels, and served generously in the community through initiatives like Special Olympics and health advocacy programs. His impact was defined not only by the titles and honors he helped secure, but even more so by the countless lives he uplifted through mentorship, encouragement, and unwavering support. As we mourn his loss, we also celebrate a life that embodied excellence and service. Coach Johnson's legacy will continue to guide and inspire us.

### **Visit to the Baton Rouge Rotary Club**

On Wednesday, I was honored to attend the Baton Rouge Rotary Club meeting as a guest of distinguished alumna Lela Mae Wilkes. The guest speaker delivered a timely presentation on the evolving challenges

facing higher education. I want to extend my sincere appreciation to Lela Mae for the invitation and for her continued support of Northwestern. A 1968 graduate, Lela Mae is the owner and CEO of Brown Eagle, a Baton Rouge-based company employing more than 500 people. She has been recognized with numerous honors, including induction into the Long Purple Line and the School of Business Hall of Distinction. In recognition of her remarkable leadership, community impact, and generous contributions to the university, she was awarded an honorary doctorate from NSU. Her commitment to our students and her belief in the mission of our university have made a lasting difference on our campus and across Louisiana.

### **Capital Projects Update**

If you've visited campus recently, you've likely seen the significant progress underway on multiple capital projects. Alost Hall, our new \$44 million academic facility, is nearing completion and scheduled to open this fall.

The David and Sherry Morgan Health Performance Center is also advancing well and remains on track for a spring 2026 opening. Once that phase concludes, we will begin renovations to the athletic fieldhouse, which is 48 years old.

A full renovation of Iberville Dining Hall is also underway through a partnership with our campus dining provider, Sodexo. This transformative project will enhance the student dining experience and is expected to be completed this fall.

Additionally, the enrolled version of HB2 from the 2025 Regular Legislative Session includes more than \$1 million in state general fund appropriations for planning related to Warrington Hall and Innovation Park. These projects, budgeted at \$15.4 million and \$18 million respectively, have each been assigned an architect and are moving forward.

We have also submitted a proposed ground lease agreement with the Demons Unlimited Foundation for \$1.7 million in enhancements to the Walter Ledet Track Complex, including new lighting and a full resurfacing of the Leon Johnson Track scheduled for completion by year end.

### **Athletics Update**

The Southland Conference Commissioner's Spring Honor Roll announced Monday reflected the high caliber of academic excellence among our student-athletes. This honor roll spotlights those team members with a 3.0 GPA or better during their competitive seasons in the spring semester. Northwestern placed 126 student-athletes on this list, an increase of 10.5 percent from the 2024 edition.

The department placed 70.8 percent of its student-athletes on the commissioner's honor roll, its highest percentage of spring sports athletes since at least 2018. Thirty-six spring student-athletes produced a perfect 4.0 grade point average led by 11 baseball players.

Thank you for all that you do to support our students and strengthen the Northwestern community. I look forward to what we will continue to accomplish together.









Fork 'Em Demons,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James T. Genovese". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "G".

James T. "Jimmy" Genovese  
President  
Northwestern State University

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