

III | NORTHWESTERN STATE



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JAMES T. GENOVESE

August 17, 2025

Dear Faculty and Staff,

As we wrap up on-call week and celebrate the return of our students to campus, we look toward the start of a new academic year with great anticipation. This week has been filled with preparation, reflection, and celebration of the many ways our university is advancing. I am grateful for your commitment and the energy you bring as we begin the fall semester.

Strategic Plan – Key Findings Brief

Prior to on-call week, Frank Hall, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, updated the University Strategic Planning Team on progress in the 2024–2025 Assessment Cycle. This integrated process evaluates our strategic focus areas, administrative, academic, and student service units, athletics, and every academic degree program. It is an intensive effort requiring focus and collaboration, but it ensures a perpetual cycle of improvement and provides the evidence of excellence needed for continued accreditation. I want to thank each of you for the time, energy, and intellectual commitment you dedicate to this process. Northwestern continues to set the example because we have the best people.

On-Call Week

Last week's on-call activities featured several new elements, including a refreshed approach to professional development for faculty and staff. This past spring, an ad-hoc committee met regularly to explore ways to enhance the professional development experience, ensure participation from all Northwestern campuses, and design presentations that would combine meaningful takeaways with hands-on application to advance our academic mission.

The committee, led by Dr. Damien Tristant, and representing all academic colleges, created opportunities for faculty and staff to learn from and engage with one another. Feedback from both presenters and participants indicated that these sessions made a significant impact. Surveys will be distributed in the coming weeks to gather further input as preparations begin for our Spring 2026 on-call week, as well as for our Fall 2026 on-call week.

I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Tristant and the committee members for their leadership and service: Dr. Marcia Hardy, Dr. Amy Craig, Dr. Jennifer Enoch, Dr. Meryn Olivier, Ms. Megan Wedgeworth, Dr. Timothy Bratt, Dr. MaryAnne Candley, Dr. Nicole Lobdell, Mr. Andrew Killion, Dr. Christy Hornsby, Dr. James Smith, Dr. Robert Page, and Ms. Elizabeth Pursell.

Faculty Institute and Faculty/Staff Luncheon

On Thursday, faculty from all campuses gathered for our annual Faculty Institute. This event provided an opportunity to highlight accomplishments, share updates, welcome new faculty, and recognize excellence in teaching, research, and advising. Research Awards were presented to Dr. Christopher Gilson, Dr. Michelle Fazio Brunson, Dr. Patrice Moulton, and Dr. Laura Aaron. Advising Awards went to Dr. Leslie Gruesbeck and Dr. Kristen Walker Authement, and Teaching Awards were given to Scott Burrell, William Housel, Dr. Nabin Sapkota, Jessica Despino, Robin Laborde, Beverly Broadway, and Dr. Qwontice McDowell. The inaugural Outstanding Faculty Awards recognized Dr. Shane Rasmussen (Service), Dr. Thomas Reynolds (Spotlight), Dr. Davina McClain (Teaching), and Dr. Terrie Sanders (Advising).

At the Faculty/Staff Luncheon, we also honored years-of-service recipients:

25 Years: Dr. Dana Clawson, Renee Downey, Sontonia Helaire, Dr. Cynthia Lindsey, Dr. Thomas Reynolds, Sandra Rufty, Kristi Salard, Binky Speir, Dr. J. Mark Thompson, and Kristi Waters

30 Years: Melanie Bedgood, Joann Bell, Dr. Gregory Granger

35 Years: Barbara Prescott, Helen Tousek

50 Years: Albert Velotta

Congratulations to all our award recipients and thank you to our years-of-service honorees for your dedication and impact on our university community. Special thanks also to Cristy Bernard, Terry Wilson, and the Office of Alumni and Development for planning the Faculty/Staff Luncheon, as well as to BOM Bank, Sodexo, and NSU Athletics for generously providing door prizes. I also want to thank Coach Blaine McCorkle for sharing athletics update during the luncheon and extend special appreciation to Senator Mike Reese, a strong advocate for Northwestern, for joining us and showing his support.

In Memoriam: Joe Salter

Northwestern mourns the loss of former Louisiana House Speaker Joe Salter, a distinguished alumnus, Long Purple Line member, and lifelong public servant. Salter represented the 4th Congressional District on the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors and was a strong advocate for Northwestern. He devoted his life to education, public service, and his community, and his leadership was felt across

Louisiana. In honor of his extraordinary contributions to Northwestern and the state, the NSU flag has been lowered to half-staff.

LegisGator 2025

On Friday, I attended LegisGator 2025 in Lake Charles, one of Louisiana's largest annual political gatherings. The event featured updates from Governor Jeff Landry and members of Louisiana's congressional delegation, including priorities such as workforce development, infrastructure, and education. LegisGator provided a valuable opportunity to engage directly with legislators to strengthen relationships and advocate for our university's needs. These connections are critical as we continue to seek support for our capital projects, new academic programs, and workforce partnerships.

Move-In Day and First Night Fest

Campus was alive with energy and Demon pride on Move-In Day as students, families, and the campus community came together to kick off the fall semester in style. Thanks to the outstanding efforts of our Housing and Residence Life team, the Demon Days committee, and the many dedicated volunteers—including students, faculty, staff, and departments across campus—the move-in process was seamless. With the collaboration of First Year Experience, Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, Athletics, Student Services, and University Police, we successfully welcomed nearly 1,500 students into their new campus communities and set them up for a strong start.

The excitement continued that evening with First Night Fest, a highlight of Demon Days Welcome. The event featured rising country music artist Kassi Ashton, along with food trucks, games, and opportunities for students to connect. NSU student organizations were out in full force, showcasing the many ways new and returning students can get involved from the very first day.

New Student Convocation and President's Picnic

On Sunday, we held New Student Convocation to officially welcome the Class of 2029, our largest freshman class in three years. The class includes over 1,100 students representing 273 U.S. high schools and 53 international high schools, bringing a remarkable diversity of experiences and perspectives to our university. During Convocation, students were introduced to the administration and faculty and reminded that we are here to serve them as they begin their academic journey.

Following Convocation, we gathered for the President's Picnic, hosted in the newly renovated Iberville Dining Hall. The event provided a wonderful opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to come together in fellowship and celebrate the beginning of another year filled with promise and Demon pride.

Athletics Update

Our soccer team opened the season with a remarkable victory Thursday night, defeating the nation's 19th-ranked Texas Longhorns, 3-2, in Austin. Emily Senatore scored twice, including the game-

winner with 17 minutes remaining. From that point, the Demon defense and goalkeeper Kennedy Rist stood tall, stopping seven shots—three on goal—to secure what is arguably the most stunning triumph in the 28-year history of our program. Congratulations to Coach Ian Brophy and the team, which travels to Dallas tonight to face SMU.

For our faculty, staff, alumni, and supporters in Shreveport-Bossier, a traditional rallying point for Demon fans is the annual Northwestern State/Independence Bowl Kickoff Luncheon, sponsored by proud alumni John and Lynne Manno. This year's event will be held Thursday at 11:45 a.m. at Superior's Steakhouse (855 Pierremont Ave., Shreveport), co-owned by outstanding alumni Phil Barbaree and Bobby Kirchoff. The all-inclusive lunch cost is \$25 (cash or check), and RSVPs are requested through the Independence Bowl office at 318-221-0721. Demon football coach Blaine McCorkle will serve as the keynote speaker.

Martha and I also hope you will join us for the NSU Athletics Scholarship Auction this Saturday evening, August 23, at the Natchitoches Events Center. Proceeds support scholarships for more than 350 student-athletes who proudly represent Northwestern. Many of these student-athletes will be part of the celebration. A schedule and ticket information are available [here](#).

Earlier that same day, at 1 p.m. in Prather Coliseum, new coach Ben Kaszeta and the Lady Demon volleyball team will host Louisiana Tech in an exhibition match. The newly installed, state-of-the-art video

board will enhance the home court atmosphere. The team's first official home competition is scheduled for September 9 against ULM.

I want to emphasize the importance of supporting all our teams, the Spirit of Northwestern Marching Band, and our spirit groups by showing Demon pride and wearing purple in the stands. Please make plans to attend the first home football game on Thursday, August 28, which will also be Faculty and Staff Appreciation Night. Faculty and staff will receive free food at the tailgate, special discounts, and a complimentary NSU polo shirt. Details and RSVP information are available [here](#). Your presence makes a powerful statement to our students, alumni, and the community.

As we close out a full week of preparation and celebration, I want to thank you for your hard work in setting the stage for another successful semester. Tomorrow, we begin classes, and I know we will continue to demonstrate the excellence and commitment that defines Northwestern.

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

Northwestern **Now**

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