

III | NORTHWESTERN STATE



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JAMES T. GENOVESE

November 16, 2025

Dear Faculty and Staff,

As we near the Thanksgiving break, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your dedication to our students and to the continued progress of Northwestern State University. This week was another reminder of the many ways our faculty, staff, and students are leading through innovation, service, and collaboration across our campus and region.

Many Police Department MOU Signing

On Monday, I joined representatives from the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of Economic Development, and the NSU Police

Department to formalize a new partnership between Northwestern State University and the City of Many Police Department. This agreement establishes NSU as a training provider for law enforcement personnel, offering specialized courses and workshops in leadership, crisis response, community engagement, legal and ethical practices, and technology. The partnership reflects our shared commitment to education, professional development, and service throughout northwest Louisiana.

Community Coalition Breakfast

On Wednesday morning, I joined District Attorney Billy Joe Harrington, Sheriff Stuart Wright, Police Chief Nikeo Collins, Natchitoches Regional Medical Center CEO Kirk Soileau, Mayor Ronnie Williams, NSU Police Chief Craig Vercher, and Director of Title IX Compliance Julie Powell for the Community Coalition Breakfast hosted by the NSU Title IX Office. The coalition strengthens collaboration between the university and community partners to prevent and address sexual misconduct. The event concluded with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) reaffirming our shared commitment to coordinated services and clear processes that protect and support NSU students.

Inferno Pitch Competition

Later Wednesday morning, I attended the Inferno Pitch Business Plan Competition, which celebrates innovation and entrepreneurship among our students. After a series of strong presentations, three teams emerged as winners:

- First Place: TableHero – an intelligent restaurant reservation platform by Valeria Mendieta Montoya.
- Second Place: Smart Farm – a smart collar and app to monitor farm animal health and location by Angee Mariana Bedoya Rivera (team lead), Katherine Clary, and Maria Camila Valencia Gonzalez.
- Third Place: Prism Analytics – an affordable analytics service for small businesses by Santiago Tobon Cardona.

The competition, sponsored by the Entrepreneurial Accelerator Program (EAP), featured judges representing business, industry, and local government. Special thanks to Dr. Weiwen Liao, Associate Professor and Coordinator of Inferno Pitch 2025, for her outstanding leadership in organizing this successful event, and congratulations to our student entrepreneurs for their creativity, professionalism, and commitment to innovation.

LACRAO Conference

NSU proudly hosted the Louisiana Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (LACRAO) Annual Conference last week, welcoming more than 130 professionals from across the state. The event provided opportunities for collaboration, professional growth, and discussion of best practices in admissions and enrollment management. NSU faculty and staff presented educational sessions and supported conference logistics. Congratulations to Van Erikson, Director of Enrollment Management, who was elected President of

LACRAO. His leadership will help advance statewide collaboration in enrollment and student success.

BOM Bank Named Anchor Tenant for The CoLab at Innovation Park

On Thursday, NSU announced BOM Bank as the anchor tenant for The CoLab within Innovation Park, a joint initiative between Northwestern and the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts. As the anchor tenant, BOM Bank will maintain an office and teller space, supporting financial literacy programs, student internships, and business development efforts.

The CoLab will serve as a central hub for entrepreneurship and innovation, providing coworking areas, offices, and collaboration space for students, faculty, and regional partners. We are grateful for BOM Bank's commitment and look forward to the continued progress of this important project as Innovation Park advances toward construction.

NSU Supports Regional Talent Development at the 2025 Level Up Conference

On Friday, the Office of Economic Development served as a Track Sponsor for the 2025 Level Up Conference, hosted by the Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce in the NSU Student Union. The event brought together professionals from across Central Louisiana for a day of leadership development, communication training, and networking. NSU was well represented by faculty and staff participants including Travis Mitchell, Dr. Li Ma, Ty Whatley, and Dr. Kaleigh MacQueen. I extend my gratitude to the Office of Economic Development and the Chamber for bringing this outstanding

professional development opportunity to our campus. Their collaboration underscores our shared commitment to workforce development and regional innovation.

Recognition of Service

Congratulations to Lauren Jackson, Director of Financial Aid, who was recognized at the Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SWASFAA) Conference in New Orleans. Lauren received the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) President's Choice Award, given to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the association during the President's term. Her leadership and dedication continue to positively impact students and strengthen our commitment to service excellence.

NSU Early Childhood Education Service-Learning Project

Congratulations to Dr. Michelle Fazio Brunson and the Early Childhood Education program on receiving a literacy grant from Weyerhaeuser to expand outreach to preschool and kindergarten children and families in Natchitoches Parish. Through the Cradle to College initiative, NSU students and faculty assemble family literacy bags filled with books and educational materials to promote reading and learning at home. This project exemplifies the spirit of service learning at Northwestern—connecting classroom experience with community impact.

Athletics Update

The annual Louisiana High School Athletic Association Cross Country Championships, being contested Monday at the Walter P. Ledet Track Complex, are bringing thousands of visitors and hundreds of high school competitors to Natchitoches. Northwestern has proudly hosted this event since 1992, providing a meaningful economic boost to our community and offering generations of high school students a memorable visit to our campus. Thank you to track and field coach Mike Heimerman, his staff, and all university personnel involved in hosting these state championships.

Martha and I were in Thibodaux on Saturday to watch the Demon football game at Nicholls and were extremely impressed with our team's performance and competitiveness. Our young men nearly pulled off the upset of the season in the Southland Conference, but Nicholls scored midway through the fourth quarter and intercepted a pass at the goal line in the final minute to secure a 26-21 victory. Our season concludes at home in Turpin Stadium this Thursday night at 6:30 against a very strong Stephen F. Austin team. I encourage you to come out and support our student-athletes and coaches, along with our spirit groups and the outstanding Spirit of Northwestern Marching Band.

Our basketball teams made their home debuts in Prather Coliseum on Friday with dominant non-conference victories over Ecclesia College. The Lady Demons set two school records by making 18 three-point baskets and winning by a 78-point margin (108-30). They will play at

home again Friday night, while our men's team travels to the West Coast for games at San Francisco and Grand Canyon.

The volleyball season concluded Saturday afternoon, and fall baseball wrapped up on Sunday. Volleyball coach Ben Kaszeta and his staff now begin a full recruiting season aimed at revitalizing the program in his second year. Coach Chris Bertrand and the Demon baseball team have completed an outstanding fall and are preparing for a spring schedule that will include three games against 2025 College World Series participants LSU and Arkansas.

As we continue through the semester, I am grateful for the dedication, professionalism, and teamwork that define Northwestern State University. Thank you for representing our institution with pride and purpose in all that you do.

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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