

## III | NORTHWESTERN STATE



### A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JAMES T. GENOVESE

December 7, 2025

Dear Faculty and Staff,

The final weeks of the semester are always among the busiest and most rewarding of the year. Our campus has been filled with events that highlight the achievements of our students, the dedication of our faculty and staff, and the expanding reach of Northwestern State University throughout Louisiana and beyond. Below are a few updates from this past week.

#### **High School Robotics Competition**

On Tuesday morning, I joined faculty from the School of STEM as they hosted a high school robotics competition on our campus. The event

brought some of the best and brightest students from across the region to showcase their skills in engineering, coding, and problem solving. I am grateful to our STEM faculty for organizing this outstanding recruitment opportunity. Events like this reinforce our position as a leading destination for future scientists, engineers, and innovators.

### **Criminal Justice Summit Hosted at NSU**

Later Tuesday morning, Northwestern State University was honored to host the Louisiana State Bar Association's Criminal Justice Summit. After a welcome from Judge Loren Lampert, participants engaged in a full day of continuing education programming on recent sentencing reforms, implementation of the Post-Conviction Relief Act, state RICO and gang-related prosecutions, license suspension and interlock requirements, and competency evaluations within Louisiana's criminal legal system. Presenters included judges, state officials, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and academic experts. It was a privilege for NSU to serve as the host site for such an important statewide gathering, and I appreciate our faculty and staff who supported the event.

### **International Students Christmas Party**

Martha and I were honored to host a holiday luncheon at the President's Residence on Tuesday for our international students who are graduating this semester or returning home after study abroad. It is a tradition for these students to create ornaments for the Christmas tree at the residence. Their stories, experiences, and future plans

reflect the global reach of NSU's influence. Martha and I remain inspired by the remarkable paths these students are pursuing.

### **Sabine River Authority Meeting**

On Tuesday afternoon, I joined Laurie Morrow for a meeting with representatives from the Sabine River Authority of Louisiana (SRA). The SRA is responsible for promoting economic utilization and preservation of the Sabine River and its tributaries. Discussions centered on future development opportunities at Cypress Bend Park and surrounding areas, including potential partnerships that support our Hospitality Management and Tourism program. These conversations were productive and highlighted several pathways for mutually beneficial initiatives.

### **Louisiana District Attorneys Association Annual Meeting**

On Tuesday evening, I visited with district attorneys from across Louisiana prior to their Board of Directors meeting. The following morning, I provided an update on the progress we are making at Northwestern. District attorneys play a critical role in public safety in communities across our state, and it was valuable to share our work and explore opportunities for collaboration between their responsibilities and our academic programs. Our own Natchitoches Parish District Attorney, Billy Joe Harrington, was instrumental in bringing this annual meeting to Natchitoches and to our campus.

### **NSU Beacon Society**

The NSU Beacon Society held a campus update and engagement session Tuesday evening. The Office of Economic Development presented an overview of recent progress at Innovation Park, including upcoming milestones and the opportunities this development will create for students, entrepreneurs, and the broader Natchitoches region. Programming is already underway with workshops and resources designed to support small business growth and new venture creation. Attendees were encouraged by how Innovation Park will strengthen NSU's role as a catalyst for innovation, workforce development, and community advancement.

### **CENLA Chamber of Commerce 2025 Annual Meeting**

On Wednesday, representatives from our Natchitoches and CENLA campuses attended the 112th Annual Meeting of the CENLA Chamber of Commerce at the Randolph Riverfront Center in Alexandria. More than 200 business and community leaders gathered to celebrate the Chamber's accomplishments, including the addition of nearly 275 new small businesses in Central Louisiana. The event provided a valuable opportunity to engage with regional partners and discuss strategic priorities for 2026. NSU's presence reaffirmed our commitment to economic development, educational opportunity, and regional collaboration.

### **Title IV-E Child Welfare Statewide Leadership**

Also on Wednesday, our Social Work faculty and Title IV-E Child Welfare Program coordinators hosted statewide leaders for a comprehensive program overview. NSU continues to play a central

role in strengthening Louisiana's child welfare workforce through improved training systems, recruitment strategies, field preparation, and interagency collaboration. Our leadership has helped standardize practices, expand training capacity, and enhance data accuracy across the state. These efforts are positioning the Title IV-E program to better recruit, prepare, and retain a high-quality child welfare workforce that will serve Louisiana's children and families for years to come.

### **DNP Graduation Luncheon**

Later on Wednesday, I delivered remarks at a luncheon honoring our Doctor of Nursing Practice students who are completing their degrees this semester. The DNP program prepares graduates for top-tier careers as nurse anesthetists, healthcare executives, clinical specialists, and advanced practitioners. NSU's program continues to open doors to meaningful professional impact and high earning potential, and I congratulate our graduates on achieving this significant milestone.

### **ROTC Fall Awards Ceremony**

On Thursday, I participated in the Fall ROTC Awards Ceremony. The Army ROTC program at Northwestern State University offers students the opportunity to earn a degree while preparing to serve as commissioned officers in the United States Army. Through classroom instruction, field exercises, and leadership development, cadets gain the discipline, confidence, and decision-making skills necessary for success in both military and civilian careers. Congratulations to our

award recipients, and thank you to the faculty and cadre who support this distinguished program.

### **Salter Endowed Scholarship and President's Reception**

On Friday evening, we gathered with alumni and friends to recognize contributions made to an endowed scholarship honoring former Louisiana House Speaker Joe Salter. Robert "Skeeter" Salim delivered heartfelt remarks about Joe's life, legacy, and devotion to family, including his loving wife and childhood sweetheart of 60 years, Bettye. Skeeter announced that the scholarship is now fully endowed at \$100,000 and will carry both Joe and Bettye's names as the Joe and Bettye Salter Endowed Scholarship. This permanent tribute will support future NSU students and preserve the legacy of two remarkable members of the Northwestern family.

Following the scholarship announcement, Martha and I hosted a reception for generous donors prior to attending the Christmas Gala performance. We remain deeply grateful for the donors whose support makes it possible for NSU to advance its mission. Special thanks to the Office of Alumni and Development for organizing these meaningful events.

### **37th Annual Christmas Gala**

After the receptions, Martha and I were delighted to attend the thirty-seventh Annual Christmas Gala presented by the Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts. More than 300 NSU students, faculty, and staff took part in this celebrated production, which serves as one

of our most anticipated traditions and serves as a kickoff to the Natchitoches Christmas Festival. School groups from across the region attended special matinee performances, giving young students an early and formative experience with the arts. This year's Gala followed a whimsical search for Santa Claus through cities across the United States, including Honolulu, New York City, Chicago, Minneapolis, and even Natchitoches. Ensembles from across CAPA showcased musical, theatrical, and dance performances highlighting the talent and unique culture and spirit of each location. The NSU Jazz Orchestra, Musical Theatre Ensemble, NSU Dance Company, Demon Heat, NSU Choirs, NSU Percussion Ensemble, Natchitoches-Northwestern Symphony Orchestra, and the Demon Dazzlers all contributed to an unforgettable experience. Congratulations to Director of Choral Activities, Dr. Shane Thomas, and everyone involved in producing this year's outstanding Gala.

### **Distinguished Guests at the President's Residence**

This weekend, Martha and I were honored to welcome two distinguished guests to the President's Residence for the Christmas Gala and Festival.

Lela Mae Wilkes, an NSU alumna, Long Purple Line inductee, and CEO of Brown Eagle, has been a steadfast supporter of our university. Her leadership of a company employing more than 500 people and her record of community service exemplify the values of Northwestern. She has been the recipient of numerous honors, including an honorary doctorate from NSU. We are grateful to her for her continued support

and for sponsoring the City of Natchitoches Christmas Festival Reception on behalf of the university.

Bruce D. Greenstein, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health, and his wife, Cindy, also joined us this weekend. As the leader of Louisiana's largest state-funded agency, he oversees essential programs that support millions of residents. I appreciated the opportunity to strengthen our relationship and explore future collaborations that could benefit both NSU and the state. His visit provided meaningful pathways for future engagement with the Department of Health.

### **NSU CoRec Teams Earn State Honors**

Northwestern State University's CoRec flag football team won the 2025 state championship and the Sportsmanship Award at the LCIRSA State Championships hosted by the University of New Orleans. Our men's volleyball team finished as the state runner-up. NSU fielded seven teams and brought more than 80 students to the tournament. The women's flag football and CoRec volleyball teams advanced to the semifinals, and the men's flag football team advanced to the quarterfinals. NSU will host the LCIRSA State Championships for softball, soccer, and basketball on April 23 through 26. Congratulations to all student competitors and to the staff who support our intramural and club sports programs.

### **Federal Grant Consultant Annual Update**



On Friday morning, I met with representatives of Merchant McIntyre and Associates, the federal grant consulting firm that has helped secure significant funding for NSU during the past three years. Their strategic guidance continues to strengthen our ability to pursue external resources for academic, research, and workforce initiatives. I appreciate their partnership and the support of the Office of Economic Development, which coordinated this productive meeting.

### **99th Annual Natchitoches Christmas Festival**

On Saturday, Martha and I enjoyed the Natchitoches Christmas Festival and were honored to participate in the parade. I want to thank Mayor Ronnie Williams and the City of Natchitoches for partnering with us and helping host a reception for visiting dignitaries. This celebration remains one of the most cherished traditions in our community, and it was a pleasure to be part of it. We were blessed with beautiful weather, good crowds, good food, and good music.

### **Athletics Update**

The Southland Conference basketball season is underway, and our teams already have a couple of impressive road wins. The Lady Demons opened conference play with a strong victory Sunday afternoon, defeating defending champion Southeastern 69-52 in Hammond. Last season's Southland Conference Freshman of the Year, Vernell Atamah, delivered an outstanding performance with 22 points and 16 rebounds. The team will return to action next Monday.

The NSU men are two games into their Southland schedule, which concludes in early March. The Demons fell Friday night to two-time defending conference champion McNeese, but responded on Sunday with an impressive comeback win at Southeastern. After trailing by six points with five minutes remaining, they rallied to secure a 76 to 68 victory. The team travels to Cal Berkeley on Saturday and will head into Christmas with a 1-1 conference record.

The three-day Early Signing Period for college football ended Friday, with eleven high school seniors committing to Northwestern. Four of these student athletes are still competing for state championships. Quarterback Luke Delafield, who has strong family ties to NSU, has led North DeSoto High School back to the Caesars Superdome for a state championship game for the second time in his career. Reggie Roberson Jr. is starring as both a running back and defensive back for Mangham High School as it prepares for its state title matchup later this week in New Orleans. Two North Shore High School standouts, offensive lineman Isaac Aranda and defensive lineman Jayden Curry, have helped their team reach the Texas state semifinals for the third consecutive year. Congratulations to Coach Blaine McCorkle and his staff on a successful Signing Day, and a special thanks to all university personnel who support the team's extensive recruiting efforts.

As I close this update, we have just arrived in Nashville, Tennessee, to join members of our accreditation team for the 2025 SACSCOC (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges) Annual Meeting. Accreditation is vital to the strength and future of our university. I look forward to working closely with our

team as we prepare for our 2027 reaffirmation and accreditation.  
Thank you for all you do for Northwestern State University.

Fork 'Em Demons,



James T. "Jimmy" Genovese  
President  
Northwestern State University

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