

May 1, 2007

Last week I attended the spring semester concert of the Chamber Singers. What grand music. I was especially taken by a piece composed by Irving Fine, a wonderful 20th century American pianist and composer. The piece was titled “The Lobster Quadrille” and offered a joyful melody, something a bit different from my tired mood that evening.

Though the program notes did not identify it, I recognized the words of “The Lobster Quadrille” to have been adopted from Lewis Carroll’s classic children’s tale, *Alice in Wonderland*. In this tale, Alice learns “what a delightful thing a Lobster Quadrille is” from her friends the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle. The song is actually a dance in which seals, turtles, and salmon, having “cleared all the jelly-fish out of the way,” each partner with a lobster. As the tempo of the dance picks up, each sea-soul lifts his (or is it her?) partner (a lobster) and throws him (or is it her?) far out to sea. This, in turn, leads to concern by some who are not lobsters that they too will be tossed far off to the end of the sea.

Carroll doesn’t compose a melody, but he does offer the lyrics for the dance-tune:

“Will you walk a little faster?” said a whiting to a snail,
“There’s a porpoise close behind us, and he’s treading on my tail.
See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!
They are waiting on the shingle—will you come and join the dance?
Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, won’t you join the dance?”

“You can really have no notion how delightful it will be
When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters, out to sea!”
But the snail replied, “To far, too far!” and gave a look askance—
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join the dance.

“What matters it how far we go?” his scaly friend replied.
“There is another shore, you know, upon the other side.
The further off from England the nearer is from France—
Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the dance.
Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, won’t you join the dance?”

Irving Fine's joyful melody, and the Chamber Singer's masterful performance, almost made me get up to dance. And anyone who knows me will tell you that getting me up to dance requires a whole lot more coaxing than the whiting to the snail.

At North Park we dance. Our vocation as educators—in whatever position we are assigned at the University—is to dance. And we invite students to join us in this dance. We invite them to come to the corner of Foster and Kedzie from throughout Chicago, across the Midwest, as far away as the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, and beyond—to dance!

To learn is to dance. Sometimes we follow prescribed steps. At other times we improvise and create our own moves on the dance floor. On some occasions we dance with a partner, at other times we dance alone, and at still other times we follow step-for-step with all others in the dance line.

Some of us dance better (or with greater skill and talent) than others. For some dancing comes “naturally” while for others the steps are harder to learn and it looks this way even when we walk onto the dance floor. Some of us are sure footed, others of us fear we'll be thrown across the sea too far away to find our way home.

We dance. The tempo picks up. We create a new step. We turn pale. We step on our partner's toes. We trip over our own feet. We let our partner lift us high. We keep our feet really close to the ground. We dance.

The music is about to end. When this happens, we dancers will move off to the side of the dance floor. We need to rest. But we'll return soon. Eager to re-learn the old steps. Ready to learn a couple new dances. We might pick a new partner. Next time someone may even throw us far out to sea.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES – As is our custom, the Board of Trustees met in mid-April. My report to the Board, along with the reports from the four faculty representatives, will be distributed to the campus community along with this Communiqué.

The major items of discussion and action included the following:

- The Board held a pre-meeting workshop on faculty tenure. The goal of the workshop was to better inform trustees of this important tradition in American higher education. The workshop included presentations by four panelists. (a) Jay Phelan, Executive Vice President for

Academics introduced the workshop with comments on the history of tenure. (b) Nancy Arnesen, professor of English and this year's chair of the Faculty Personnel Committee, presented an overview of our tenure review process. (c) Charles Peterson, Academic Dean, discussed ongoing campus discussion about our present tenure review process. And (d) Kristine Strand, a member of the Board who is also a faculty member in psychology at Boston University, discussed “what a Board member who is also a faculty member hopes the Board understands about tenure.”

- The Board hosted a reception to honor graduating seniors.
- On Friday evening the Board attended a special performance of selections from the spring theater production, Kung Fu Suburbia.
- The Board received and approved tenure and/or promotion recommendations for several members of the faculty. These individuals are recognized later in this Communiqué.
- The Board appointed a task force to prepare a proposal for the University's next fund raising campaign, with expectation that the proposal will be presented at the October 2007 meeting of the Board.
- A new investment manager, to oversee the University's investment portfolio, was approved.
- A recommendation was approved to apply any surplus in the 2006-2007 operating budget for capital improvement projects. These will be identified later in this Communiqué.
- Four members completed their term of service and were recognized by the Board: Donna Erikson, Martha Freeman, Ann Alvarez, and Stan Helwig. Special note was made of Stan Helwig's "retirement" from the Board having completed over 30 years as a member of the Board.
- The current officers of the Board were re-elected for another one-year term.

SPRING COMMENCEMENT – It's that time of year again! At the end of each semester we bid farewell to a group of students completing their course of study.

On the weekend of May 11-12, the Baccalaureate Service will be held on Friday evening. The undergraduate commencement program is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, followed at 3:00 p.m. by the commencement for GOAL and graduate students.

The seminary commencement will be celebrated on the following weekend, May 18-19.

This year's honorary degree recipients include:

- C. T. Vivian, civil rights leader
- LeRoy Johnson, life-long friend of North Park
- Henry Greenidge, Covenant pastor from Oregon

PERSONNEL SEARCHES – The campus community is presently involved in several faculty and administrative searches. Active searches continue for a faculty position in chemistry, the director of the School of Music, the Campus Pastor, and the Provost. These searches always involve considerable time and attention by people closely associated with the positions and offices represented. As the searches are completed, we will announce the appointments to the campus community.

CAPITAL PROJECTS – Though we will not be completing a large building project on campus this summer, as was the case last year, nonetheless, several campus improvement projects will be undertaken. Among these will likely be the following:

- Renovation of the second (and final) stack of bathrooms in Burgh Hall
- Renovations to allow accessibility in some student apartments
- Renovation of a space in the basement of Carlson Tower for use as a Psychology-Biology Lab.
- Reconfiguration of a small number of office spaces.
- Cosmetic improvements, including new carpeting, to the entry and first-floor hallway of the Magnuson Center.

In addition to these projects, it is likely (but not certain) that the Army Corp of Engineers will oversee a project to shore up and improve (with new pilings, etc.) the crumbling bank of the river as it runs near the Magnuson Center. This is a long-awaited project and we are now hopeful that work will begin this summer.

CONGRATULATIONS! – I'm very pleased to announce recent tenure and/or promotion

decisions for several faculty members. These include:

- Mary Chase-Ziolek – promotion to full professor
- Rollo Dilworth – promotion to full professor
- Elizabeth Gray – promotion to associate professor
- Helen Hudgens – tenure
- Andrew Lundgren – promotion to associate professor
- Ida Maduram – tenure and promotion to associate professor
- Bradley Nassif – promotion to professor
- Lida Nedilsky – promotion to associate professor
- Kurt Peterson – tenure
- Anita Ross – tenure
- Phillis Sheppard - tenure
- Mary Trujillo – promotion to associate professor
- Kelly VanderBrug – tenure and promotion to associate professor
- Ching-eng Wang – tenure

The North Park faculty is strengthened by the exceptional work of this group. Student learning is advanced by their teaching and our own lives are enriched by the opportunity to work side-by-side with these colleagues. Best wishes to each of you.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION – When I agreed to come to North Park I worked with the Board of Trustees to include in my contract the stipulation that I would receive an annual performance evaluation. And since I'll soon be completing my first year it is time to give attention to this.

The structure for this review will follow several steps:

- The President prepares a self-evaluation and discusses this with Board Chair and Vice-Chair (June)
- The Board Chair and Vice-Chair interview the President's direct reports and other selected individuals (Summer)
- The Board Chair and Vice-Chair discuss the interview reports (August)

- The Board Chair and Vice-Chair prepare a draft report of the President's performance evaluation (September)
- The Board Chair and Vice-Chair discuss the draft report with the President (September)
- The Board Executive Committee reviews and may revise the draft report (October)
- The full Board considers the revised performance evaluation (October)
- The performance evaluation, as approved by the Board, is reviewed with the President (October)

Performance evaluation is an important part of the work-experience, in whatever position we hold at the University. Most often this process is a routine part of our annual work-life; occasionally it can involve a much more extensive evaluation, such as is the case for faculty members who apply for tenure or promotion in rank. Though not everyone on campus undergoes such an evaluation in the summer months, many of us do. I trust that as our individual performance evaluation is completed you (and I!) will find this to be a rewarding (and constructive) process.