

**October 23, 2006**

Over my years in higher education I've discovered that each college and university has a unique culture. This partially explains why prospective students and their families visit a variety of schools in the process of deciding where to study. If all that mattered was the objective reality of a campus (things like which majors are offered, the size of the student body, the level of athletic competition, and the number of books in the library) students could easily determine which school to attend by reading the catalog or perusing the university's web site. However, students (whether undergraduate or graduate, younger or older) are looking for much more than the objective facts which describe a place.

Students care about the institution's culture. And the best way to learn of culture is to be present—to walk on the campus, to talk with faculty and students, to listen to the traffic drive by, to read the student newspaper. To know the culture of a place you need to get you arms around that place; and you can't do this by reading a catalog or looking at a web site.

Campus culture is very often the deciding factor in the college selection process. It doesn't stand alone, as though nothing else matters, but it is central to defining the essence of an institution. And this is one of the reasons why when asked to explain why they chose their school students often respond: "I knew this was where I wanted to study the minute I stepped onto the campus."

What is it that shapes a campus culture? I'm not aware that anyone has tried to answer this question in a systematic way. But Richard Light gives it a try in his recent book about student life on college and university campuses (*Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*). He claims campus culture is shaped by "history, faculty values, leadership, and student expectations." I think we can say it more simply: it is people who shape campus culture.

Later in his book Light refers to an interview with a dean from a college he visited who told him that our responsibility is to "admit a talented group of students and then 'just get out of their way.'" Light disagrees; he claims we "should make a thoughtful, evidence-based, purposeful effort to get *in* each student's way." Shaping a campus culture, I believe, is one of the more important responsibilities we have, and it is a responsibility that belongs to all of us regardless of what specific assignments and tasks we have at the university. We're all responsible "to get in each student's way." This is the grand challenge, and profound responsibility, we face each day as we work in this university

community.

Fall break is the symbolic half-way point in the semester...the quarter-point in the academic year. If you haven't yet gotten "in each student's way" there isn't a better time to begin than now!

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**S**AYING "THANKS" – The fall is always a busy time at North Park, but we out-did ourselves this year with two consecutive weekends of celebration. The festivities surrounding the dedication of the Helwig Recreation Center on one weekend and a very successful Homecoming one week later brought many visitors to campus. And it made for two very busy weeks for many people in offices and work units across the campus.

These types of successful events don't "just happen." They "happen" only because people work hard to bring them about. And hard work deserves a moment of recognition. I wish there were a way for us to gather together everyone on campus, along with all of our alumni/ae, along with the parents of each student, along with our trustees and friends, along with our community neighbors...and in this large gathering give a standing ovation to each North Park employee who made these two outstanding weekends possible.

But a standing ovation like this can't be organized (at least I can't organize it) so we'll have to be satisfied with just saying "Thanks." Thanks to those who planned, those who cooked, those who organized, those who cleaned up, those who greeted, those who offered their special gifts, and all those who came along to celebrate. Thanks for helping us celebrate these special moments in our life together this academic year.

**E**NROLLMENT NUMBERS – We're always interested in how many students decide to enroll at North Park. And this year we have strong numbers to report. The official numbers, tallied on our annual census date (the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the school year), are

presented in Exhibit A at the end of this communiqué. Because of the hard work of our recruiters (both in the admissions office and in program units across the institution) we were able to enroll a strong class this year, matched by an equally strong year in retention of students who were here this past year.

In our program for traditional undergraduates, we enrolled a group of nearly 610 new first-year and transfer students, matching last year's record enrollment. In addition, an analysis of this year's incoming class demonstrates that the academic quality of these students has increased over recent years. And, now in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of our tuition and financial aid restructuring, we have been able to attain an increased average net revenue per student. Though trends take longer to establish than one or two years, we are on our way!

The numbers reported in Exhibit A also provide enrollment figures for our other academic programs, both undergraduate (GOAL) and graduate (including the seminary). In some of these areas enrollment of new students increased over last year (most notably in the certificate and graduate programs in education as well as graduate programs in business). In a few areas enrollment of new students is lower than it had been last year (most notably in GOAL, nursing, and the seminary). These areas of decreased enrollment are of some concern to us.

Exhibit B compares the recruitment of new students for all academic programs in 2005 and 2006, and demonstrates where we have had significant success and where we face some challenge. Jay Phelan and Dan Tepke

are collaborating with recruitment and program personnel in the areas where enrollment of new student declined to analyze our efforts and to propose ways to respond accordingly.

**B**OARD OF TRUSTEES – As is our tradition, the Board of Trustees will meet on campus this week for their October session. Several new individuals are joining the Board this fall; they will come to campus for an orientation session on Thursday evening. The full Board, along with representatives from the campus, will meet on Friday and Saturday.

In addition to new trustees there are two new “players” this year. Kyle Becchetti, who has served on the Board for several years, has been appointed the new chair of the Board. And this will be my first occasion to meet with the Board as the university president.

Much of the agenda for this meeting is comprised of traditional fiduciary assignments of the Board. We’ll review enrollment figures, consider modest adjustments to the budget, receive a final report on completion of the Helwig Recreation Center, and hear reports from various campus units across the spectrum of academic programs, student life programs, development work, and others.

In the November communiqué I will include a summary report for the campus on the items discussed and acted on by the Board. As you see Trustees on campus this week, please greet them and extend our collective “thanks” to them for their service on behalf of the university.

**P**RESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION – As was announced some time ago, North Park will observe my appointment as president during the weekend of November 10-12. More than being focused exclusively on my appointment, however, the weekend will offer another opportunity to “celebrate North Park.”

And good celebrations happen best when many people join in the celebration. I hope

you’ll be part of this group; please join us for one or more of the planned events.

The signature academic element in the inauguration weekend is a symposium scheduled for Friday, November 10. The symposium will feature members of our faculty discussing ideals which are central to our university mission. Three faculty members will formally present prepared papers, with three other faculty members responding to each paper.

All members of the faculty are encouraged to attend the symposium (or some part of it) as well as other educators from across the campus who have an interest in the university mission. In addition, faculty members are also invited to encourage their students to attend one or more of the symposium sessions. (This might be a good occasion “to be in their face!”)

On Saturday evening a gala dinner will be held at the University Club in Chicago. This is the only event throughout the inauguration weekend where tickets are required. If you plan to attend, please be sure to purchase tickets in advance.

The inauguration ceremony on Sunday (Nov. 12) at 2:00 p.m. is open to the public. The faculty marching in the processional will be joined by delegates from neighboring colleges and universities. In the investiture ceremony a few new traditions will be introduced, including a new university mace designed and executed by Neale Murray, professor of art.

Music will also be a featured element throughout the inauguration weekend. On Friday evening the University Orchestra will perform Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf* (and they have invited me to be the guest narrator). Students from the School of Music will also perform at the gala dinner on Saturday evening. And the inauguration ceremony will feature a piece by Rollo Dilworth, director of choral activities, composed for this event and performed by the University Choir. And there

is more, but to hear it all you need to attend the events!

A full schedule of events is available on the university web site. Please join us for as many of these as your schedule and interest permit.

**WHAT'S NEXT?** – Caught up in the enthusiasm of the dedication of the Helwig Recreation Center many people asked me, “What’s next?” Others visiting the campus for Homecoming on the following weekend asked the same thing, “What do you have planned next for North Park?”

This is the same question many of you have asked me personally, “What is your vision for the future of North Park?” And often, I’ve turned the question around and asked it of you.

This is an important question. Though it is not mine alone to answer, articulating an answer for it is one of my responsibilities. And I’m inviting you to join me in this task over the next several months.

We have an opportunity to cast this question in the context of anticipating the university’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in just ten years, 2016. And for this reason, I’ve begun to use “NPU@125” as a short-hand reference for this project.

Leading this effort is my responsibility, but contributing to the discussion is everyone’s responsibility and opportunity. The University Council is already engaged in considering this task through a discussion of Jim Collin’s booklet, *Good to Great for the Social Sectors*. This discussion will extend through January, and perhaps beyond. In addition, the Board of Trustees will give some attention to “generative” thinking in their meeting this week as they consider the future potential of the university. And, more importantly, as we enter the spring semester we’ll provide venues for people from across the campus to engage this discussion as well.

These are exciting days to be a part of North Park University. Over the past ten or fifteen years people have worked hard to secure a good foundation for the university, to provide for its essential stability. And with this base to build on, we can now advance our thinking into the years ahead.

NPU@125. Where do we want North Park to be in 2016 when we celebrate the university’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary? Stated another way: Within the academy, and in the city of Chicago, what “space” can we own and should we logically own within the next ten years?

Start dreaming.

## Exhibit A

### Fall 2006 Enrollment Report

	New	Returning	Total
<b>Undergraduate (Traditional)</b>			
Returning		1133	1133
First-Year	374		374
Transfer	229		229
Specials		0	0
Readmits	0		0
Total Undergraduate (Traditional)	603	1133	1736
Exchange (Non-Tuition)	18		18
<b>Undergraduate (Non-Traditional)</b>			
College Bridge	0	0	0
ESL	20	11	31
RN Completion	11	36	47
GOAL	41	169	210
Ed Certification	26	16	42
Special (Students at Large)	6	1	7
Total Undergraduate (Non-Traditional)	104	233	337
<b>Graduate (College)</b>			
MBA	95	249	344
MM (Management)	0	0	0
MS Nursing	32	112	144
Adult Nurse Practitioner	5	10	15
MA Education (all sites)	55	86	141
MA Community Development	7	23	30
Master of Music	7	6	13
Total Graduate	201	486	687
<b>Seminary</b>			
Traditional	47	240	287
Cross Registered	3	1	4
External Orientation	0	0	0
Total Seminary	50	241	291
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>2093</b>	<b>3069</b>

## Exhibit B

### New Student Enrollment Summary Comparison Fall 2005 and Fall 2006

	2005	2006	% Change
<b>Undergraduate (Traditional)</b>			
First-Year	359	374	4.2
Transfer	246	229	(7.0)
TOTAL	607	603	--
<b>Undergraduate (Non-Traditional)</b>			
College Bridge	2	0	--
ESL	53	20	(62.3)
RN Completion	34	11	(67.6)
GOAL	66	41	(37.9)
Ed Certification	12	26	116.7
Special (Students-at-Large)	9	6	(33.3)
TOTAL	176	104	(40.9)
<b>Graduate (College)</b>			
MBA	85	95	11.8
MS Nursing	40	32	(20.0)
Adult Nurse Practitioner	2	5	150.0
MA Education (all sites)	40	55	37.5
MA Community Development	10	7	(30.0)
Master of Music	7	7	--
TOTAL	184	201	9.2
<b>Seminary</b>			
Traditional	75	47	(37.3)
Cross Registered	0	3	--
TOTAL	75	50	(33.3)