

September 11, 2007

One of the many joys of being president of North Park is the opportunity to meet and talk with graduates. Some are younger, others are older; some have yet to marry, others have grandchildren and great grandchildren; some are first-generation college students, others stand in a long line of family graduates from North Park; some live nearby and visit the campus several times each year, others haven't been back to the corner of Foster and Kedzie since they graduated over fifty years ago.

When we're together our alumni/ae listen respectfully as I talk about the many things happening at North Park today. I note that we have more students than at any time in our history; I describe the academic program and opportunities for service through University Ministries; I show them pictures of new buildings and revitalized green spaces. All this is good, and I know the alumni/ae are interested in these things. Yet something is clearly missing in my comments; I haven't satisfied their real area of interest.

What do our graduates really want to know about North Park? Simply this: most often they want to know a certain person is doing. This person is someone who worked at the University when they were here as a student. This person is someone who left their mark on the young student's life. This person was a mentor and friend, a teacher and coach, an encourager and disciplinarian. This person was a counselor, a residence assistant, a custodian, a faculty member, an office staff member, a recruiter. In every case, this person was so central to the student's experience at North Park that all else from those years pales by comparison to the influence of this one person and his/her relationship with this one student.

Over a ten-year period, Richard J. Light, a faculty member at Harvard University, interviewed students from colleges and universities across the country. He wanted to discover what are the significant factors that help students "make the most" of their college experience. After interviewing thousands of students he compiled his findings in a short book published in 2001 and titled, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*. He has a number of things to say. But the most important thing he discovered is simply this: the one thing that shapes a student experience more than any thing else is the relationships the student has with faculty and staff members.

Based on this finding he asserts that students have one primary "task" to complete each semester they are undergraduates. It is this: students should get to know one faculty or staff member reasonably well, and also have that same person get to know them

reasonably well. Richard Light's research has demonstrated that those students who accomplish this will make the most of the undergraduate years.

There's another secret here, however. Those faculty and staff who get to know a small number of students reasonably well each semester find this to be tremendously fulfilling as well.

Just this past weekend, Linda and I hosted a reception in our home for retired faculty from North Park. They were a delightful group to spend an afternoon with as they told of their days at North Park, and of the ways they've continued to be teachers since leaving a full-time assignment in the classroom. But it was the names of students, and the memories those names resurrected, that brought tears to their eyes. Some had been at North Park for fewer than ten years while others had spent close to four decades on this campus. But after leaving full-time work at the University all of them realized that the high point of their career, the single reason they would all do it over again, was the relationships established with students.

This, then, is our opportunity at the beginning of a school year. Each of us, in our respective places of responsibility, will encounter many students. We can't know them all very well, we likely won't even learn the names of many. What we can do, however, is find a small number of students, perhaps one to four, who we can get to know reasonably well and who can, in turn, get to know us reasonably well. In doing so we will be living up to the vocation to which we have been called – to be educators. And in doing this we will be preparing students for lives of significance and service.

UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION – On Monday, September 17, we will host a university-wide convocation at 10:30 a.m. in Anderson Chapel. Members of the faculty and staff are encouraged to attend this event, as are students.

This convocation will be an annual event to celebrate the accomplishments of faculty who have been recently tenured and/or promoted in academic rank. In addition, if new administrators are appointed in an academic year they will be installed as part of this program.

This year several faculty will be recognized, as follows:

- Dr. Rollo Dilworth, promoted to Professor
- Dr. Helen Hudgens, tenured

- Dr. Ida Maduram, tenured and promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Kurt Peterson, tenured
- Dr. Anita Ross, tenured
- Professor Kelly VanderBrug, tenured and promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Ching-eng Wang, tenured
- Dr. Elizabeth Gray, promoted to Associate Professor
- Professor Andrew Lundgren, promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Bradley Nassif, promoted to Professor
- Dr. Lida Nedilsky, promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Mary Trujillo, promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Phillis Sheppard, tenured
- Dr. Mary Chase-Ziolek, promoted to Professor

Three administrators will be installed in their respective positions:

- Rev. Judy Peterson, Campus Pastor
- Dr. Pier Rogers, Director of the Axelson Center
- Ms. Deb Auger, Seminary Dean of Students

And this year the ceremony will include the formal installation of the University's new Provost, Dr. Joseph Jones.

For each part of the program, a brief litany has been prepared so those gathered on this day can participate in welcoming these new members to the university community and celebrate with those who are recognized for their professional accomplishments and achievements. The program will also include music presented by members of the School of Music. A reception will follow the program.

This is a grand occasion for the University community, a moment to celebrate the work we do and to recognize the important contribution to this work from select members of the community. As your schedule permits, please join with your colleagues in attending this program, and invite students to come with you as well.

OPEN OFFICE DAYS – Last year I introduced the practice of reserving one day each month on my calendar to meet informally with faculty and staff and another day to meet with students. We'll continue this practice this year, and turn it into a tradition!

On each day, members of the faculty and staff are invited to stop by my office as you have interest and as your schedule permits. Last year people came individually, in twos and threes, and in entire departments. Some people come simply so we can meet one another, others come with a particular question or suggestion, and still others come to celebrate a special moment in their professional or personal life. Most stay for 15 minutes or less.

This occasion certainly isn't the only time we can visit, but it does provide one day each month which is reserved specifically for this purpose. As you have interest, please drop by for conversation.

The schedule for the fall semester includes the following three dates for faculty and staff:

- Wednesday, September 12
- Tuesday, October 23
- Wednesday, November 7

The schedule for each day extends from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Specific appointments are not needed; drop by simply as your schedule permits.

ENROLLMENT – Our specific "census" date is the fourth Monday of the semester. Since we have not yet passed this date in the semester we do not have official enrollment numbers available. Nonetheless, we can affirm a healthy enrollment projection. Recruitment of new first-year and transfer students in the traditional undergraduate program has been strong, enrollment in the GOAL program as well as graduate programs appears to be healthy, and enrollment of new students in the seminary is higher than last year. In addition, retention (especially of traditional undergraduate students) appears to be high as well. All of this is good news for the University and speaks well of our work together. As official numbers are recorded we will present these to the campus community.

One additional change is apparent this year. A larger number of residential students in their junior and senior year have selected off-campus housing options. This means at least two things. First, we have a few empty beds in our student residences. We can consider how best to fill these in the years ahead. Second, we have a new (or increased) opportunity to consider how we can best educate students who move off-campus, especially as we consider our responsibility to educate students toward responsible citizenship. This is an exciting opportunity and one which we will have occasion to consider this year.

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RECEPTION WITH THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES –

Each year the Board of Trustees traditionally meets on campus during the fall, winter, and spring. As part of these regular meetings, we schedule a reception for members of the campus community to informally visit with our trustees. The schedule for this year's receptions includes the following:

- October Meeting – reception with faculty
- February Meeting – reception with staff
- May Meeting – reception with graduating students

Additional information will be provided as we approach each of the meetings.

PRIORITIES FOR 2007-2008 – As we did last year, my senior administrative colleagues have worked together to identify the leading tasks in our respective areas of responsibility for the year ahead. These are organized for each of us and then are presented together under a set of common objectives. Because

our work is a public effort, the stated priorities may be of interest to all members of the faculty and staff. The common objectives and individual priorities are presented for your review on the final pages of this communiqué.

In addition to the specific items mentioned in these lists, members of the senior administrative team will be active in drafting a strategic plan for the University. We began this process last academic year through a series of open forums and discussion groups around the "NPU@125" theme. These conversations from last year provide a good beginning to the strategic planning process. The University's administrative officers will draft selective portions of the plan in cooperation with small groups of faculty and staff, and as the plan is drafted we will have opportunity to consider it in various forums throughout the year. Stay tuned!

**Senior Administrative Team Priorities
2007-2008**



Institutional

- Vision – Bring focused attention to our present and potential support of the University's core institutional identity – Christian, urban, and multicultural
- Planning – Complete a University-wide Strategic Plan and continue program-specific planning within academic and operational units
- Excellence – Advance student learning and overall institutional effectiveness through reflective review
- Finance – Improve the University's overall financial stability and strength
- Facilities – Plan for facilities improvement as a means to address pressing needs and continue the decade-long enhancement of the University's physical environment

David Parkyn – President

- Clarify and promote a unifying tone and vision for the University
- With involvement of the senior administrative team and the wider campus community, propose a Strategic Plan for the University
- Launch the University's next fund raising campaign
- Increase fundraising activity with and effectiveness of the development office
- With the Provost, further develop and enhance the University's connections with Chicago

Joseph Jones – Provost

- Lead the faculty in measuring our present practice and increasing our effectiveness in linking the curriculum with the University's core institutional identity – Christian, urban, and multicultural
- Propose parameters for a viable economic model for all levels of the academic program
- Review mission, programs, and organization structure of cultural initiatives on campus (including the Office of Multicultural Development, the Accountability Council, the Office of International Programs, study abroad opportunities, and the Cultural Centers, as well as collaboration with the Center for Justice Ministries)
- With the President, further develop and enhance the University's connections with Chicago
- Assure continued progress toward implementing an effective program for assessing student learning in the curriculum-at-large and individual academic units
- Initiate plans for the University's next 10-year self-study for HLC/North Central accreditation

Carl Balsam – Executive Vice President and CFO

- Lead continuing work on selective campus development projects including preliminary architectural work on a University Commons and the planning process for the NW corner of Kedzie/Foster.
- Complete a campus deferred maintenance review to inform prioritization in capital expenditure decision-making

- Advance the budget development process for FY09 for earlier completion and approval at the May Board meeting
- Refine the multiple-year financial model and incorporate selective financial targets (for compensation, student-faculty ratios, contingency, IT, etc.)
- Enhance and continue to support University-wide policies and practices which provide for a hospitable and embracing environment reflecting the University's core institutional identity

Andrea Nevels – Vice President for Student Development

- Review recent changes in student housing patterns and propose and implement a strategy for addressing these changes
- Design and implement an assessment program which encompasses the various parts of the student affairs program
- Consider data gathered on the “sophomore slump” survey and propose approaches to program improvement, with specific attention to student retention
- Propose plans for renovation of student residences (with Carl Balsam)

Jay Phelan – Seminary President and Dean

- Oversee successful re-accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools
- Initiate a strategic planning process for the Seminary consistent with the continuing vision of the University-at-large
- Review mission, organization, and program effectiveness of all Centers in the Seminary and propose recommendations
- Review and clarify administrative structures and responsibilities within the Seminary
- Renew seminary-related fund raising activities with increased funding for student scholarships

Dan Tepke – Senior Vice President

- In collaboration with the President, launch the University's next fund raising campaign
- Assess the overall effectiveness of the development office, set clear expectations for MGOs, and establish a system of accountability for all development staff
- Lead a review of our student recruitment practices for all program levels (undergraduate, graduate, GOAL, and seminary) to attain enrollment expectations for the next five years
- Engage the external relations office in an intentionally designed and implemented marketing plan for the University-at-large
- In collaboration with the development and alumni relations offices establish and implement plans to engage distant/lapsed donors and alumni

Sr Admin	2007-2008 Priorities
Vision – <i>Bring focused attention to our present and potential support for the University’s core institutional identity – Christian, urban, and multicultural</i>	
DP	Clarify and promote a unifying tone and vision for the University
DP / JJ	Further develop and enhance the University’s connections with Chicago
JJ	Lead the faculty in measuring our present practice and increasing our effectiveness in linking the curriculum with the University’s core institutional identity
JJ	Review mission, programs, and organizational structure of cultural initiatives on campus (including the Office of Multicultural Development, the Accountability Council, the Office of International Programs, study abroad opportunities, and the Cultural Centers, as well as collaboration with the Center for Justice Ministries
CB	Enhance and continue to support University-wide policies and practices which provide for a hospitable and embracing environment reflecting the University’s core institutional identity
AN	Lead student development staff in measuring present practice and increasing effectiveness in linking the co-curriculum with the University’s core institutional identity
DT	Engage the external relations office in an intentionally designed and implemented marketing plan for the University-at-large
Planning – <i>Complete a University-wide Strategic Plan and continue program-specific planning within academic and operational units</i>	
DP	With involvement of the senior administrative team and the wider campus community, propose a Strategic Plan for the University
JP	Initiate a strategic planning process for the Seminary consistent with the continuing vision of the University-at-large
Excellence – <i>Advance student learning and overall institutional effectiveness through reflective review</i>	
JJ	Assure continued progress toward implementing an effective program for assessing student learning in the curriculum-at-large and within individual academic programs.
JJ	Initiate plans for the University’s next 10-year self-study for HLC/North Central accreditation
AN	Design and implement an assessment program which encompasses the various parts of the student affairs program
AN	Consider data gathered on the “sophomore slump” survey and propose approaches to program improvement, with specific attention to student retention
JP	Oversee successful re-accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools
JP	Review mission, organization, and program effectiveness of all Centers in the Seminary and propose recommendations
Finance – <i>Improve the University’s overall financial stability and strength</i>	
DP/DT	Launch the University’s next fund raising campaign
DP	Increase fundraising activity with and effectiveness of the development office
JJ	Propose parameters for a viable economic model for all levels of the academic program

CB	Advance the budget development process for FY09 for earlier completion and approval at the May Board meeting
CB	Refine the multiple-year financial model and incorporate selective financial targets (for compensation, student-faculty ratios, contingency, IT, etc.)
JP	Renew seminary-related fund raising activities with increased funding for student scholarships
DT	Lead a review of student recruitment practices for all program levels (undergraduate, graduate, GOAL, and seminary) to attain enrollment expectations for the next five years
DT	In collaboration with the development and alumni relations offices establish and implement plans to engage distant/lapsed donors and alumni
Facilities – <i>Plan for facilities improvement as a means to address pressing needs and continue the decade-long enhancement of the University's physical environment</i>	
CB	Lead continuing work on selective campus development projects including preliminary architectural work on a University Commons and the planning process for the NW corner of Kedzie/Foster
CB	Complete a campus deferred maintenance review to inform prioritization in capital expenditure decision-making
AN	Review recent changes in student housing patterns and propose and implement a strategy for addressing these changes
AN/CB	Propose plans for renovation of student residences