

PRESIDENT'S OCCASIONAL CAMPUS COMMUNIQUÉ

January 27, 2009

THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE – A BRIEF ESSAY

We claim at North Park that students who study with us will experience an education that **“embraces all people and celebrates the richness of cultural difference.”** This is the third of our seven educational ideals.

All.

A simple word. Two different letters, the second one repeated.

Other words have an approximate meaning – whole, entire, every, each, complete, full, aggregate, total. None is so clear and straightforward, however, as “all.” The word is so simple and the concept so basic that it claims no reference in a thesaurus.

All people. This two-word statement is more complex, yet this too is simple and straightforward, unencumbered by complexity. We understand what is meant. All people . . . no exceptions.

Yet our educational ideal poses a real challenge. We are social beings; we enjoy the presence of others, especially those who are of our clan, of our liking. But to “embrace” all people and to “celebrate” the life of each one...this is more complex, more difficult. Some days it is seemingly impossible.

As a university, however, as North Park University specifically, we are well positioned to reach this ideal. We can reach toward, we can attain this ideal, because we are Christian and urban.

We are Christian. Two concepts are foundational to Christian theology: the embrace of God's love and the inclusivity of the gospel. God created all. Christ died for all. All people. All cultures. We “embrace all people and celebrate the richness of cultural difference” because we are Christian.

We are urban. 60625. These five numeric digits identify our place in Chicago. The campus of North Park University is located in what is widely regarded as the most diverse zip code in America, a neighborhood as complex as the world itself. Our campus neighbors are Latino, Native American, Asian, African, European, Middle Eastern, and beyond. One-half of the residents of our immediate neighborhoods are foreign-born. The people who live in this zip code speak over 150 languages. We embrace . . . we celebrate . . . we are urban.

We are privileged at North Park because in our zip code students, faculty, and staff engage a complex array of languages and cultures. In these neighborhoods we see and know the world, we rub shoulders with human and cultural difference. And in this place, in the midst of this human and cultural complexity, we have opportunity to recognize and embrace, indeed to celebrate, the image of God in others. In our very neighborhood we encounter God, the one who is revealed across the human spectrum, not just in those who are Jewish, male, or free, not only in those who are Gentile, female, or slave.

Walk any street in 60625 and we see, we come into intimate contact with, the richness of cultural difference. Walk any street in 60625 and we see, we come into intimate contact with, the wondrously stunning image of God.

The word became flesh and now dwells among us.

A ROUGH WINTER

It takes no explaining – this has been a challenging winter. We’ve all shared in the extreme cold, the heavy snowfall, the neighborhood parking challenges. And we’ll all be happy to have spring arrive.

The greatest challenge, however, is that faced by our physical plant crew. They are responsible for clearing the snow, chipping the ice, and spreading the salt. They always do this gladly, often coming to campus in the middle of the night to make sure the sidewalks are ready for the morning rush. Doing it gladly, however, doesn’t mean that it is done easily.

We can ease the pain for our physical plant crew with a quick smile and a warm “Thank you.” And if you really appreciate their work, coffee and donuts for the morning break would be well received!

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

A number of people from the campus have achieved special recognition from near and far. Among these we note the following:

- Senior Kelley Thoes has received the 2008 Student Laureate Award from The Lincoln Academy of Illinois.
- Two students, Phil Bloss and Travis Moore, have been selected for scholarship awards through the American Humanics Next Generation Nonprofit Leaders Program.

- Trustee and NPU alumnus, Owen Youngman, was recently appointed as Knight Professor of Digital Media Strategy in the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.
- Another trustee and also an alumnus, Jimmie Alford, has been selected to receive the Chair's Award for Outstanding Service from the Association of Fundraising Professionals.
- Several books by faculty members have been published during the past few weeks. These include:
 - Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, *Footsteps Through Athinia: A Traveler's Guide to Greece*
 - Paul De Neui, *Communicating Christ in Asian Cities: Urban Issues in Buddhist Contexts* (William Carey Library)
 - Scot McKnight, *Fasting* (from the Ancient Practices Series published by Thomas Nelson)
 - Kurt W. Peterson, *Lincoln's Land: The History of Abraham Lincoln's Coles County Farm* (Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Historical Farm LLC)

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT

The Brandel Library is host for the premiere of 60625, a photography exhibit organized by three students. Photographers Eric Staswick, Bethany Crino, and Lucas Larson named the project after our neighborhood zip code. The exhibit includes photos of individuals wearing "Chicago" clothing as well as clothing from their home countries. The exhibit is located on the second and third floors and is available for public viewing during open hours of the library.

CONTINUING FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Twice during the fall semester I wrote to the campus community regarding the challenging financial environment we face, both as a nation and also as a University community. The challenges outlined in those pieces of communication continue to be important to us.

In my communication on December 4 I noted that a decision on wage increases will be delayed until mid-March. Though this was a disappointment to each of us, the campus community responded in a thoughtful manner, appreciating the need for us to be deliberate in managing the University's operating budget. I want to thank you for your patience, as well as your understanding, through these days of uncertainty. We will further update the campus community as we are able.

Additionally, we continue to monitor our present operating budget carefully and also plan carefully for the FY '10 budget. To assist with both of these, budget managers have been asked to review their respective budgets and identify areas of potential savings in non-personnel parts of the budget. These will serve us well during the months ahead.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The University's Board of Trustees will meet for its annual winter meeting on February 19-21. A significant portion of the meeting agenda will be dedicated to reviewing our fiscal challenges which reflect the present economic environment. On Friday afternoon the Board will also host a reception for staff members from the Admissions and External Relations Offices. And on Saturday morning, the Board's periodic "professional development" workshop will feature presentations from the Departments of Biblical and Theological Studies, Youth Ministries, and University Ministries.

As is our tradition, the President's Report to the Board will be distributed to the campus community following the meeting, along with a summary report of major items considered by the Board during the meeting. These will be available with the President's Occasional Communiqué near the end of February.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Last year we completed a five-year strategic plan for the University. This will serve us well as an overarching guide for the years ahead.

However, additional attention is required each year to address how we take the principles of the strategic plan and apply them directly to our day-to-day activities. There are a number of ways to do this, and this year we have looked at two means in particular.

- As has been our custom, at the beginning of each academic year the senior administrative team identifies as list of Annual Priorities. This year these priorities were arranged according to the objectives of the Strategic Plan. This statement of priorities was distributed to the campus community as part of the materials discussed on Gathering Day. At mid-year, the senior administrative team evaluated our collective work-to-date on each of the priorities. Summary comments from this mid-year evaluation will be distributed to the campus community within the next few days.
- One of the year's priorities was to undertake strategic planning discussions with each of the University's academic units. These discussions were completed during the fall semester. The major outcomes or "findings" of these sessions

have been compiled in a summary document. This material will also be distributed to the campus in a short while.

Continuing the work of the University requires deliberate care from each of us. We direct most of our attention to immediate needs, making sure that the day-to-day and semester-to-semester requirements of the campus are cared for – that courses are taught, athletic teams are organized, urban service is completed, meals are prepared, sidewalks are maintained, and learning continues. But some attention is required each year for planning for the future. Each of us can, and should, contribute to both of these – addressing the present and planning for the future. As you have ideas about how we can best achieve our mission – to prepare students for lives of significance and service – please advance your ideas by discussing them with others.

OPEN OFFICE DAY

Two days have been reserved on my appointment calendar during February for Open Office Days. The schedule is noted below. Please take advantage of these appointed times to visit with me – individually or in a small group – as you have interest.

- Open Office Day for Faculty and Staff – Monday, February 16, 8:30 am to 3:30 pm
- Open Office Day for Students – Tuesday, February 24, 8:30 am to 3:30 pm