

PRESIDENT'S OCCASIONAL CAMPUS COMMUNIQUÉ

October 30, 2008

THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE – A BRIEF ESSAY

In my first communiqué of the academic year I called attention to our “voice” as an institution and suggested that part of this voice is expressed through the seven ideals we have chosen to characterize the learning experience at North Park. And as a means to encourage a collective discussion of these ideals I promised to comment on each of them throughout the year. Here, then, is the first of several commentaries.

Our list of ideals begins by noting that students at North Park University experience an education that **“is rooted in and committed to the Christian faith and its sacred text, the Bible.”**

What a challenging first ideal! This is a great place to begin a conversation on the nature and character of learning at North Park University.

Occasionally I describe North Park as a “borderland” – a place where adolescence meets adulthood, home touches independence, self-affirmation adjoins self-giving, faith interacts with philosophy, learning reaches toward both significance and service. As a faith-affirming university North Park is a place to hear multiple voices, to understand new perspectives, to integrate what one has long believed with new insights discovered from the convictions of others. We are a place where “borders” touch. And we affirm our role as a borderland because we are confident in our starting point. We can engage ideas from around the world and across many faith communities because we hold a faith commitment and embrace a sacred text. These provide a starting point for learning from the world around us, understanding our place in this world, and fostering our conversation with the world – and throughout these processes we discover more of God, more of faith, and more of commitment.

Each student – indeed each one of us – enters this borderland in a distinctive fashion. Some students rush into the challenge of the borderland and get their minds working immediately. Others emulate the positions they read and discuss, and without careful thought decide who they will be. Still others agonize, and hold belief at arms length, because they struggle to process all the ways to make sense of the world. And yet

others sift and pour and change almost whimsically their ideals semester by semester. In this borderland we accommodate each of these approaches and many others as well.

The sources of our learning as a faith community also vary widely. Some students find their first questions of faith in Dialogue I. Others discover something new and interesting in an early Bible course. Some students never miss attending chapel on Wednesday morning while others discover faith as they walk along the sidewalks of our neighborhood. Some warm to the embrace of a chaplain intern with the football team while others reflect on faith through an exhibit in the art gallery. Some learn of faith from their roommate, others never stray far from what they learned in Sunday School, and for a few the place of greatest discovery waits for the final course in a seminary curriculum. Each is a valid and important step on the journey. Each step raises questions and suggests aspects of an answer.

In this borderland we (each of us as student, teacher, mentor, counselor, office worker, custodian, web master, campus pastor) hold in tension commitment with discovery, what is known with what is yet to be learned, who we are with who others are.

Jesus' disciples wrestled with these same tensions. They believed Jesus to be the Messiah, the one spoken of by the prophets, and so they listened when he taught in the synagogues. But they were ill at ease when Jesus engaged a conversation with the woman at the well, and they tried to keep the children and blind Bartimaeus at a distance. Early Christians confronted similar tensions when they wrestled with the question of whether or not to welcome Gentiles without requiring them to follow the Hebrew Law.

We, too, confront mysteries like these. We begin with what is familiar and comfortable – what we have been taught earlier in life, what we have already embraced. And then we meet others – even others who read the same sacred texts – and we discover difference. The faith we hold in common, the text we each revere, takes on a new (or renewed) framework when filtered through the light of our various individual experiences, our family and ethnic cultures, our worldviews and relationships, our very place in life. What was once clear and comfortable becomes mysterious and challenging.

One might wonder why God permits us to be confronted in this place by such mystery, by such messy questions, when it makes us uncomfortable. This discomfort tempts us to seek quick and simple solutions to difficult questions and challenging mysteries. But this is not the way of faith. The trouble with easy solutions to tough questions is that they often push us away from the mystery that confronts us. Perhaps the deepest challenge at North Park University is to find a way to include in our hearts and minds the Christ who includes all those in the borderland, and those beyond as well.

FALL SEMESTER ENROLLMENT

Students come and go throughout the academic year. Some begin their studies in the fall semester, others transfer in January. Most enroll in courses at the beginning of a semester, but a few in adult and graduate programs enroll for the first time in a Quad B course. Most students complete their studies at the end of the spring semester and graduate in May but an increasing number of students now complete their work in the fall semester and take advantage of our December commencement program.

Nonetheless, higher education traditionally uses the beginning of the fall semester as its official census point. Our “official” numbers for the year represent those students who are enrolled for the beginning of the fall semester. As our numbers are tallied this year we note a continued increase in overall enrollment at the University. Enrollment growth has moderated, however, with total enrollment between last year and this year increasing from 3251 to 3288 students.

One of the welcome changes in this year’s enrollment is a significant increase in the number of first-year undergraduates. This year we reached a record high of 415, an increase of 11% over last year. This increase in first-year students was tempered by an almost equal decrease in the number of new transfer students enrolling in our traditional undergraduate program.

Two tables are attached to the end of this Communiqué. The first presents a summary of new students for each of our academic program units. The second table provides total enrollment numbers for each of these programs. Each table also includes corresponding numbers for the past several years so we are able to note changes over time.

FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

As the fall semester is underway two members of our faculty have achieved considerable success in their respective areas of scholarship.

Scot McKnight (biblical and theological studies) has published a new book, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible*, with Zondervan Publishers.

Nnenna Okore (art) is exhibiting her work in several venues this fall: (a) a collaborative show at the Tall Grass Arts Association in Park Forest, IL; (b) a collaborative show at the Museum of Art and Design in New York City, with her work featured in a book publication produced as part of this exhibit; and (c) a solo exhibit, titled “Ulukububa – Infinite Flow,” at the October Gallery in London, England.

Congratulations to both Scot and Nnenna!

BOARD OF TRUSTEES – OCTOBER MEETING

As is our tradition, the Board of Trustees met on campus in mid-October. Several new members joined the Board this year, including the following:

- Ann Alvarez – President and CEO of Casa Central, Chicago, Illinois
- Donna Erickson – Executive Producer/Host of PBS “Donna’s Day,” Minneapolis, Minnesota
- David Hanson – Finance and Administration Managing Director at Bayside Covenant Church, Sacramento, California
- Lori Lindstrom – Physician on staff at Providence Medical Center and Saint John Hospital, Kansas City, Kansas
- Amy Rohler – Pastor at Bethesda Covenant Church, New York City, New York
- Efreem Smith – Senior Pastor at Sanctuary Covenant Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Karen E. Tamte – Pediatrician, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Gary Walter – President of the Evangelical Covenant Church, Chicago, Illinois
- Louise Wilson – Professor at Bethel University, St. Paul, Minnesota
- Owen Youngman – Senior Vice President of Strategy and Development with the Chicago Tribune, Chicago, Illinois

A variety of materials are prepared and distributed for each Board meeting. Central to these is a report I write, which (a) summarizes recent activity and developments on campus and (b) notes the major items of business the Board will address at its meeting. As a means to keep the campus community informed of what I communicate with the Board I distribute this report to all faculty and staff following each meeting. The report will be distributed by way of email immediately following this Communiqué.

As we might imagine, considerable attention was given by the Board of Trustees to evaluating the University’s financial context. This is normal for the beginning of each school year as enrollment numbers are confirmed, but it took on special interest, and special intensity, this year in light of (a) the national and international economic environment and (b) one-time expenses the University faces for recovery of damage from the flooding of the Chicago River.

The Investment Committee received reports from our various investment managers and considered the impact of recent instability in the markets on the University’s various investments. It does not come as a surprise that North Park’s endowment and other investments are affected negatively by the present economic environment. The Board is fully aware of our present circumstances, and also realizes that these investments are best considered “over the long-term.” Because the draw-down from the endowment, which helps to support our annual operating budget, is calculated on the basis of investment value over twelve consecutive quarters the down-turn in the markets will have an impact on our budget for the next few years, regardless of how quickly and how fully the markets respond. Members of our Board are diligent in monitoring this aspect of our University finances. In addition, in the interest of more fully informing our work

together as members of the campus community I am preparing a more detailed memorandum on this topic and will distribute this to faculty and staff next week.

The Board also received a report on damage estimates from the river flooding. We expect our expenses from this event to reach close to \$2 million. Most of this expense is related to repairing or replacing mechanical systems which support the Magnuson Campus Center. Some of these systems were quite old and needed to be replaced over the next few years. Nonetheless, this represents a considerable expense for the University. With the Board's encouragement we will be soliciting a variety of sources to assist in covering these expenses. These will include a special appeal to donor friends of North Park, special requests to Chicago-based foundations, and loans potentially available through government sources.

In other business, the Board of Trustees also:

- Received a clean audit report for 2007-2008;
- Approved faculty sabbatical proposals for 2009-2010;
- Adopted a policy for an honorary appointment of Trustee Emeritus/a;
- Implemented a new committee structure for processing Board business;
- Adopted a renewed Multicultural Vision Statement for the University;
- Expressed support in principle for a proposal to implement a faculty portfolio project (with the specific details to be outlined by the faculty through revisions to MAPP);
- Endorsed in concept a procedure for promotion review for professional faculty, following a system similar to that presently used for tenured and tenure-track faculty (with the specific details to be developed in MAPP); and
- Adopted a tuition and fee structure for 2009-2010.

The trustees also hosted a reception on Friday afternoon which was well-attended by faculty from across all of the University's academic units.

As President I am delighted to work with this caring and dedicated group of individuals. Each member brings a portfolio of expertise which supports the needs of the University. Some are experts in finance, others are academics; some work directly in the church, while most follow a variety of professional careers; some live nearby and are familiar with campus life, while others come from across the country and view the University from a greater distance; some are alumni/ae of North Park, while others have come to know the University through a variety of experiences; some are parents of graduates, and others are yet to be parents. Together they comprise a competent, highly skilled, and loyal group with a high level of interest in assuring the very best for the future of North Park University.

Exhibit A
New Student Enrollment Summary
 Fall Semester

	2005	2006	2007	2008
<i>Undergraduate (traditional)</i>				
First-Year	359	374	373	415
Transfer	246	229	217	179
Visiting				12
TOTAL	607	603	595	606
<i>Undergraduate (non-traditional)</i>				
College Bridge	2	0	0	1
ESL	53	20	22	19
RN Completion	34	11	33	15
GOAL	66	41	61	45
Education Certification	12	26	48	19
TOTAL	167	98	137	99
<i>Graduate</i>				
SBNM	85	95	88	88
MS Nursing	40	32	30	39
Adult Nurse Practitioner	2	5	10	2
MA Education (all sites)	40	55	61	61
MA Community Development	10	7	10	0
Master of Music	7	7	5	4
TOTAL	184	201	204	194
<i>Seminary</i>				
Traditional	75	47	61	40
Cross Registered	0	3	3	0
TOTAL	75	50	64	40
International Exchange (non-revenue)		18	10	21

Exhibit B
Headcount Report (Total Enrollment)
 Fall Semester

	2006	2007	2008
<i>Undergraduate (traditional)</i>			
Returning	1133	1255	1276
First-Year	374	373	415
Transfer	229	217	179
Visiting		9	12
TOTAL	1736	1854	1882
<i>Undergraduate (non-traditional)</i>			
College Bridge	0	0	1
ESL	31	29	24
RN Completion	47	83	81
GOAL	210	237	240
Education Certification	42	69	63
Special (students-at-large)	7	0	0
TOTAL	337	418	409
<i>Graduate</i>			
SBNM	344	329	353
MS Nursing	144	136	151
Adult Nurse Practitioner	15	21	20
MA Education (all sites)	141	162	169
MA Community Development	30	28	13
Master of Music	13	15	14
TOTAL	687	691	720
<i>Seminary</i>			
Traditional	287	284	269
Cross Registered	4	4	5
TOTAL	291	288	274
GRAND TOTAL	3069	3251	3285
International Exchange (non-revenue)	0	9	23