

PRESIDENT'S OCCASIONAL CAMPUS COMMUNIQUÉ

September 4, 2008

The President's Perspective – A Brief Essay

Two years ago in my inauguration address I spoke of the role of “voice” in telling our personal and institutional stories. In the address I read a short passage from psychologist and author Mary Pipher, taken from her recent book *Writing to Change the World*. Pipher writes:

Voice is everything we are, all that we have observed, the emotional chords that are uniquely ours—all our flaws and all our strengths, expressed in the words that best reflect us. Voice is like a snowflake—complicated, beautiful, and individual. It is the essence of self, distilled, and offered in service to the world.

In my address I wondered whether a university might also have a voice. Might North Park University have a voice?

Indeed I think a university does have a voice and for the past two years I've been encouraging us to think about our institutional voice—the language we use to understand our work and life together as a learning community and the stories we tell to explain to others how we approach our commitment to “prepare students for lives of significance and service.”

In seeking this voice we're guided by foundational statements – of mission, of identity, and of vision. These sets of core values at North Park come together to shape our distinctive learning community. In this light, we have framed a cluster of seven “educational ideals” which characterize the education of all students at North Park—undergraduate, graduate, and seminarian, younger and older, in the liberal arts and the applied disciplines, in the classroom and beyond.

We hold 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;
- Engages Chicago as a dynamic context for learning and service;
- Embraces all people and celebrates the richness of cultural difference;
- Affirms learning in all its forms—in the classroom and beyond—as a gift, a joy, and a sacred obligation;
- Encourages dialogue as a means of learning where open inquiry, integrity, and civility guide our life together;
- Seeks to form and transform the whole student (intellectually, socially, and spiritually); and
- Values each student for who he or she is and who they will become.

These are the ideals we live by at North Park; these are the commitments which shape our work with students; these are the factors which form a distinctive learning experience for each student. This is part of our institutional voice.

Lee Schulman, the president of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, calls this voice our “signature pedagogy.” He maintains that each college and university should identify those characteristics or ideals which make teaching and learning at the school distinctive. These ideals, as identified in our strategic plan, identify the foundational commitments which inform and shape, indeed which transform, the educational experience for all North Park students.

Each of us is an educator at North Park, and in our role as educators it is our responsibility to know these ideals, reflect on them periodically, and turn to them as we determine how best to fulfill the specific responsibilities assigned to us in our respective positions—faculty and staff, counselors and coaches, teachers and office managers. Each of us is responsible for owning North Park’s “signature pedagogy” and forming our work with students according to these ideals.

For my part, I intend this year to use this brief message at the beginning of each monthly communiqué with the campus community to reflect on these ideals, North Park’s “signature pedagogy.” In each communiqué I’ll select one of these ideals and comment briefly on it. My hope is that my voice will be joined by your voice, my ideas will be complemented by your ideas, my thoughts made stronger by your thoughts. Together we’ll reflect on our mission, identity, and vision as these are articulated in these brief statements. We’ll hear our voice and know our story better.

I look forward to this conversation with you, just as we look forward to walking along side those students who come into our lives each day. Thank you for your partnership in the life of North Park University.

UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION – The campus community is invited to gather on Monday, September 15 for our annual University Convocation. This gathering will be held in Anderson Chapel, beginning at 10:30 a.m., with a reception following.

The primary purpose of the convocation is to applaud certain accomplishments of those who work with us at North Park. Specifically, the program will recognize (a) new administrative appointments, (b) recently tenured and/or promoted faculty, and (c) recently published book authors. The individuals listed below will be recognized in this year’s Convocation:

- New Administrative Appointments
 - Linda Cannell – Dean of Seminary Academic Life
 - Colette Hands – Director of Career Development and Internships

- Terry Lindsay – Dean of Diversity and Intercultural Programs
- Rebecca Nelson – Dean of the School of Education
- Robert Stanley – Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research
- Mary Surrige – Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations

- Recently Tenured and/or Promoted Faculty
 - David Bennett – promoted to professor
 - Chad Eric Bergman – promoted to professor
 - Alan Bjorkman – promoted to professor
 - Dennis Bricault – tenured and promoted to professor
 - Gianfranco Farruggia – promoted to associate professor
 - Elizabeth Gray – tenured
 - Ann Hicks – tenured
 - David Johanson – tenured and promoted to associate professor
 - Rajkumar Boaz Johnson – promoted to professor
 - D. Brent Laytham – promoted to professor
 - Max Lee – promoted to associate professor
 - Joe Lill – promoted to associate professor
 - Johnny Lin – promoted to associate professor
 - Lida Nedilsky – tenured

- Recently Published Book Authors
 - Dennis Bricault
 - Jim Bruckner
 - Helen Cepero
 - Linda J. Craft
 - Scot McKnight
 - Klyne Snodgrass
 - Mary Trujillo

As you can tell, this Convocation has the makings of a grand celebration because we have some significant accomplishments to recognize with our colleagues. BUT, the celebration will be grand only if you attend! So please join the audience for this program. Bring your colleagues with you, and invite students to attend as well.

THANKS – We had a great beginning to the school year. Faculty and staff joined for a program and good food on Gathering Day and new students were introduced to campus life through a host of activities collectively called Threshold.

These are important events for the beginning of our year together. But they happen only through the careful and diligent work of many individuals. Some among us planned these events, and many more of us participated in one or more parts of the week-long festivity. To each we offer a very grateful “thanks.”

Perhaps those most appreciative of our collective work at the beginning of the school year are the parents and families of our students, especially our traditional undergraduates. Throughout the week I heard from many families of their growing love for the University, and I received a number of note cards during the following week expressing appreciation for the way we hosted them and welcomed their daughter or son to our learning community. These words of appreciation are meant for you more than for me, so please hear them!

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2007-2012 – Over the past 18 months the campus community and the Board of Trustees has worked to develop a new strategic plan for the University. Now completed, this plan serves as a compass to set a direction for our collective work.

The plan has been printed in a short booklet for our convenience. Each faculty and staff member should have received a copy on Gathering Day. The booklet may also be helpful in telling others about the direction we are planning for the coming years here at North Park. As you need additional copies of the booklet, please request these through the President's Office.

PRESIDENT'S CAMPUS ADDRESSES – Some in the community have requested a printed copy of the State of the University address I presented on Gathering Day and the comments I offered at the Convocation for new students and their families. Both addresses are available on the University web site. From the University home page click on [About North Park](#), then click on [President's Office](#), followed by [Campus Speeches and Communication](#).

PRIORITIES FOR 2008-2009 – On Gathering Day I commented briefly on a set of priorities the senior administrative team has identified for this academic year. These are presented together with the nine strategic goals identified in the University's Strategic Plan. They reach a rather broad spectrum of interests and program areas:

- from completing the faculty's review of the general education curriculum to considering an intensive urban semester program;
- from addressing concerns about student retention to enhancing our program in career development and internships;
- from identifying ways to challenge and support students of exceptional academic ability to introducing a senior assessment project;

- from implementing a coordinated university-wide integrated marketing communications plan to designing and implementing an economic model for our academic programs; and
- from considering how best to recruit transfer students to clarifying our existing policies on faculty tenure and promotion.

The full list of priorities was distributed at Gathering Day. Some of you may have missed it on that occasion. The list is available on the University's web page in the same section as mentioned above.

NEW THIS YEAR – One of the priorities identified in the above note is to “implement a coordinated university-wide integrated marketing communications plan.” This is a multi-faceted effort and the campus community will be introduced to parts of it throughout the academic year.

One step in this process is to revamp our institutional “look” in places like the University web site, institutional letterhead, business cards, etc. And one of the early applications of this new visual image comes with this edition of the President's Occasional Campus Communiqué. The design applied at the beginning of this piece illustrates the visual identity which will be introduced in various print and online pieces over the next few weeks. This design will also soon be applied to other major internal communication pieces including Nyvall News and Notes, Faculty and Staff Announcements, Campus Announcements, and Memorial Notices.

The Office of External Relations is responsible for the new design and will coordinate the introduction of the new visual identity over the next several weeks. Further information will soon be provided by this office for all members of the faculty and staff. The success of this venture depends on active participation by all offices and programs, as well as each of us in our individual roles.

CHICAGO CONNECTION – One of the commitments of our new strategic plan is to identify ways to strengthen the connection between North Park and the city of Chicago. In this vein, we recently arranged for the University to be a host site for the Chicago Children's Choir.

Founded in 1956, the choir is a multiracial, multicultural choral music education organization. The choir is structured through sub-choirs located in a number of Chicago neighborhoods which hold rehearsals and performances convenient to the respective parts of the city.

The new arrangement between the University and the Chicago Children's Choir supports the beginning of a new sub-choir in Albany Park. In addition to having rehearsal and performance space provided by the University the children in this choir

will have opportunity to work with Professor Rollo Dilworth and to perform on occasion with University choral groups. In addition, this collaboration provides North Park with another way to support the Albany Park neighborhood, it brings students and families from the neighborhood onto our campus, and it provides us with a means to be affiliated with this highly respected choral organization in Chicago. As events with the choir are hosted on campus we'll look forward to hearing the children's performance.

Dan Tepke has been appointed as the University's "point person" for helping us consider ways to increase our connections with Chicago. As you have ideas toward this end please discuss these with him.

HOMEcomings 2008 – Late in September we'll host a large group of visitors who come back to the campus for our annual Homecoming festivities. This year's program, stretching over two weekends and the days between, promises to be a wonderful opportunity to attend lectures, concerts, and theater performances, cheer for the Vikings, and renew acquaintances with former students and their families. A full list of activities for the ten-day period is posted on the University's web site.

PRESIDENT'S OPEN OFFICE DAYS – This year we'll continue this tradition established two years ago. On the scheduled days, individuals from the campus community are invited to visit with me for brief periods. Some come in groups while others are by themselves, some want to show photos of their new grandchild while others want to tell of summer travels, some note a student whose accomplishments we should celebrate while others note a student who needs special assistance, some point to a way North Park has become a better place while others point to ways where improvement is still our goal.

The dates for the fall semester are noted here; please join us as you have interest.

Open Office Days for Faculty and Staff

- Tuesday, September 16
- Monday, November 3

Open Office Days for Students

- Monday, September 22
- Monday, November 17

STAFF GATHERING FOR BREAKFAST AND DISCUSSION – In the fall semester calendar we have scheduled two morning events for staff members in our community. On these occasions, we'll gather for a continental breakfast with opportunity for conversation with the President and members of the senior administrative team. The

gathering will be held at 8:30 a.m. in Hamming Hall on the dates noted here. Please join us.

Staff Breakfast Gathering

- Thursday, October 16
- Tuesday, November 25

CIVIL DISCOURSE – This fall our country holds a presidential election. This brings with it a number of educational moments for us. We'll want to take this opportunity to help our students understand the importance of citizenship and the responsibility we have to be informed on topics of interest and importance to our life together in America and the world.

I imagine that our students' response to the presidential election campaign will influence discussion and debate on campus. It should also influence learning. This provides us with an occasion to identify and hold before our students one of our "educational ideals." I refer specifically to the ideal which notes that the NPU educational experience "encourages dialogue as a means of learning where open inquiry, integrity, and civility guide our life together."

Can a discussion about presidential elections be characterized by "open inquiry, integrity, and civility?" This semester we can advance student learning by teaching our students (and ourselves!) how to be open to the opinions of others and to speak with each other in ways which are both truthful and civil. Let's step up to this challenge...it comes our way only every four years.

VIKING ATHLETICS – The early fall semester is the best time of year to enjoy outdoor athletic contests. And our Viking athletes deserve our enthusiastic support. This also is a great occasion to bring our families to campus—younger children and grandchildren, parents and grandparents, visitors and extended family.

Fall women's team competition is hosted in soccer, volleyball, cross country, and golf, while the men compete in football, soccer, and cross country. Go Vikings!

PERIMETER CAMPUS – Even as we have taken steps in recent years to improve the central green on campus we also want to give attention to the perimeter campus, our "face" along the major campus boundaries on Foster and Kedzie Avenues. To this end one of the priorities identified for this year is to revisit our campus master plan and update it as appropriate.

Additionally, near the end of the recent academic year the University purchased a parcel on the NE corner of Kedzie and Argyle Avenues (from the corner north to but not

including the North Park Auto Garage). We expect that this parcel may be used for expanded surface parking, but this will be reviewed as part of the campus master planning work. Because this review is not completed we have not yet set a schedule for improvements on the newly purchased parcel.

We'll keep the campus community apprised on the work of campus master planning throughout the academic year.

CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY – During the summer months the Office of Campus Security has implemented several activities designed to ensure the increased safety of students, faculty, and staff. The most conspicuous improvement is the introduction of a new electronic locking system. In this system, electronic locks are accessed by use of the new institutional ID cards. The system has been fully implemented in Burgh Hall as part of that residence hall renovation project and it has (and will continue to be) selectively applied at other campus locations to provide secure access control. We expect that this locking system will become the institutional standard and we will gradually implement the solution in other locations, starting with areas of highest security interest such as the main entry doors to residence halls.

In addition to introduction of this security access system, the following improvements have also been implemented over recent months:

- We have hired an additional full-time security officer, Rick Rice, to provide additional campus coverage and to manage some of the logistics required to support the new electronic access system and security cameras.
- We have purchased an additional security vehicle (a Ford Escape hybrid) to allow more patrol coverage of the campus perimeter and to expand our student escort services and to patrol parking lots in the evening for our adult and graduate students as they come and go to classes.
- We have selected and trained a number of student security officers who will be assigned to Carlson Tower lobby from 5:30 to 10:00 p.m. on class nights to provide assistance to students and visitors, as necessary, and to monitor the lobby area.
- We have trained nearly all of our security staff in the proper use of Automated External Defibrillators (AED's) so this equipment can be effectively deployed across the campus and our personnel can participate in the Illinois Masonic's EMS program as necessary.
- We have purchased emergency notification software which is presently being vetted and will eventually be rolled-out allowing students, faculty, and staff to register their mobile phone number to allow quick emergency notification (via voice mail or text message) in case of an incident or perceived threat or emergency.
- We have added additional video security cameras in selective locations.
- We have produced a personal safety video which has been used in new student orientation and which can be viewed on the University's security web site along with other personal safety tips.

- Throughout the summer we continued to hold bi-weekly meetings of the Emergency Response Team and they conducted several “table-top” exercises to help bring into focus the kind of thinking, actions, and response that will be required should there be an emergency on or near the campus. This group will continue to meet throughout the academic year to refine emergency response procedures and protocols.

Carl Balsam and Dan Gooris have given leadership to the various projects noted above. As you have occasion, please thank them for their work in this important part of campus life.