

PRESIDENT'S OCCASIONAL CAMPUS COMMUNIQUÉ

September 1, 2009

THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE – A BRIEF ESSAY

Place makes a difference.

Learning is always influenced by place, by the environment in which we study. We recognize this at North Park and frequently remind our students that “Chicago is our classroom, and all Chicagoans are our teachers.”

North Park is ideally situated to provide a highly effective learning environment. In 2008, for the first time in history more than half of the world's 6.6 billion inhabitants lived in cities rather than in rural areas. And each week the cities of the world grow by a net of one million people.

Our University now stands with the global majority, whereas many colleges and universities (including most faith-affirming schools) which were established in small towns and distant suburbs are now located within the shrinking minority.

Very little happens around the globe which is not shaped significantly by urban systems—whether economic, political, cultural, financial, social, medical, educational, or religious. Today, more than ever, cities shape the world.

As a result, at North Park we dedicate our whole-hearted effort to shape a generation of young leaders who will link their skills, their privileges, their dedication to justice, their commitment to loving kindness, and their passion for walking with God, to the well-being of the city and beyond.

I deeply believe we are perfectly positioned to offer an excellent and profoundly transformative urban-infused education. In 1979 North Park University had the opportunity to move out of the city. But on that occasion this community said, “No, we will stay in the city.” The responsibility for living faithfully within this mandate now rests on our shoulders. We stand at the intersection of what our University is and what we hope it will be. Tomorrow can be North Park's finest hour.

Preparing students for lives of significance and service in tomorrow's cities requires highly engaged partnerships with the city, with its resources, and most importantly, with its people. In the forthcoming issue of the *North Parker* the feature story tells of one such partnership. Located immediately adjacent to some of our residence halls and apartments in the Albany Park neighborhood, the Hibbard Elementary School is a laboratory for learning—not only for the hundreds of young children who study there each week but also for the hundreds of North Park students, faculty, and staff who

volunteer in the school each semester. The Hibbard School is our classroom, and all students at Hibbard are our teachers!

There are, of course, other partnerships which we have and still others which we should initiate. In my address on Gathering Day I invited all of us to consider the ways in which our particular work units are influenced by our location in Chicago, and beyond this to consider ways in which we could enhance opportunities for student learning by advancing these partnerships even further. I trust you will join me in this venture.

Chicago is numbered among the greatest resources North Park possesses for shaping the education of our students; Chicago is our gift from God. So let's embrace Chicago, and in doing so learn how to ever-more fully prepare students for lives of significance and service in the city and beyond.

SPECIAL THANKS

Beginning a school year takes a lot of hard work on the part of many people. We know this, but too often we assume it without pausing to say "Thanks." So here's my encouragement to each of us as the school year begins: identify one or two individuals or groups who you know went the extra distance in preparing for the start of the academic year and then tell them how much you appreciate their work.

Who might this be? Well, our admissions team recruited the students; the physical plant department made sure the campus was ready for the arrival of thousands; our colleagues in the student life area readied the residence halls, trained the Residence Assistants, and counseled and consoled parents; a group of dedicated team members planned Threshold for new undergraduates and another group facilitated the orientation for new students in the Seminary; faculty wrote syllabi and prepared for classes; the bookstore made sure text books were available; coaches organized practices for their teams; the dining services staff made sure meals were prepared and served; and...so many others.

Join me at the beginning of this academic year in finding ways to thank those who worked so hard to make sure everything was in place for our new and returning students.

KUDOS – new books

Two books have been published recently by members of the North Park community. Our congratulations to Ilup Ahn and Lida Nedilsky for their careful and diligent scholarship:

- Ilsup Ahn – *Position and Responsibility: Jürgen Habermas, Reinhold Niebuhr, and the Co-Reconstruction of the Positional Imperative*, published by Pickwick Publications.
- Lida V. Nedilsky – *Marginalization in China: Recasting Minority Politics*, published by Palgrave MacMillan (co-edited with Siu-Keung Cheung and Joseph Tse-Hei Lee).

SUMMER WORK ON CAMPUS

River Bank – The long-planned and long-awaited river bank restoration project (behind Anderson Hall and Magnuson Campus Center) was started in mid-summer. Work on this project will extend into the fall semester and be completed by mid-October. The completed project includes not only work on the river bank itself but also beautification of this area, construction of new fencing along the river, and development of a new walkway from the bridge to the Magnuson Center. Funding for the project is shared in part by North Park, with the project directed by the Army Corps. It is important to note that this project is not related to the flooding of the river this past fall. This project has been planned for nearly eight years. It will restore the riverbank but it will neither improve nor deteriorate flood protection.

Parking Lot – The small parking lot at the corner of Spaulding and Carmen Avenues has been upgraded with new pavement and a new fence. This project also improves the visual presentation of this part of campus and will complement the river bank project as it is completed.

Hamming Hall – The sidewalk and main approach to Hamming Hall was improved this summer. The walkways were widened and moved further from the building to allow for improved landscaping, and the approach from the street to the front steps of the building was improved with the installation of brick pavers consistent with the campus standard.

Additional improvements occurred in some of our student residences, including a new stair tower with disability access to one of the apartment buildings.

CONGRATULATIONS – Celebrating Professional Accomplishments

As is our tradition, the University community will gather early in the semester to recognize the professional accomplishments of our peers. The convocation will be held on Monday, September 21, at 10:30 a.m. in Anderson Chapel. The program will be followed by a reception in the chapel narthex.

At this event we'll recognize the following individuals:

- Recently Appointed Administrators
 - Carol J. Callahan, Assistant Vice President of Development
- Newly Tenured and/or Promoted Faculty
 - Joan Andrea (nursing) – promotion to associate professor
 - Rachelle Ankney (mathematics) – promotion to associate professor
 - Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei (education) – promotion to associate professor
 - Stephen Chester (New Testament) – tenure and promotion to professor
 - Jim Dekker (youth ministries) – promotion to associate professor
 - Gianfranco Farruggia (business and nonprofit management) – tenure
 - Karla M. Fogel (nursing) – tenure
 - Alice S. Gorguis (mathematics) – promotion to associate professor
 - Rajkumar Boaz Johnson (biblical and theological studies) – tenure
 - Max Lee (New Testament) – tenure
 - Barbara Levandowski (education) – tenure
 - Soong-Chan Rah (church growth) – promotion to associate professor
 - Mary Adams Trujillo (communications) – tenure and promotion to professor
- Recent Book Authors
 - Ilsup Ahn – *Position and Responsibility: Jürgen Habermas, Reinhold Niebuhr and the Co-Reconstruction of the Positional Imperative* (Pickwick Publications)
 - Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei – *Footsteps Through Athina* (Palo Albums)
 - Paul De Neui, editor – *Communicating Christ in Asian Cities* (SEANET)
 - Robert Hubbard – *Joshua* (NIV Commentary Series – Zondervan)
 - Brent Laytham, editor – *God Does Not . . .* (Brazos Press)
 - Wesley Lindahl – *Principles of Fundraising: Theory and Practice* (Jones and Bartlett Publishers)
 - Scot McKnight – *Fasting* (Thomas Nelson) and *The Blue Parakeet* (Zondervan)
 - Lida Nedilsky, editor – *Marginalization in China: Recasting Minority Politics* (Palgrave MacMillan)
 - Kristy Odellius – *Strange Trades* (Shearsman Books)
 - Kurt W. Peterson – *Lincoln's Land: The History of Abraham Lincoln's Coles County Farm* (Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Historical Farm LLC)
 - Soong-Chan Rah – *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (InterVarsity Press)

This is an impressive group of colleagues, and each deserves the recognition of our community of scholars. Please join your friends and co-workers at the convocation and extend your personal congratulations to those being recognized.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING – Hosted by NPU

On Thursday, September 10, at 9:00 a.m. North Park will host a gathering of representatives from local, state, and federal government bodies. The event is sponsored by the Albany Park Community Center, Peterson Pulaski Business and Industrial Council, Pulaski Elston Business Association, and Sauganash Chamber of Commerce. The event will include formal comments from invited guests followed by a question and answer period. Guests attending the event will include:

- State Senator Ira Silverstein
- State Representative John D'Amico
- State Representative Deb Mel
- Alderman Margaret Laurino
- Cook County Commissioner Bridget Bainer
- U.S. Senator Richard Durbin's District Director, Clarisol Duque
- U.S. Representative Mike Quigley's District Director, Kimberly Walz

The event will be held in Hamming Hall; members of the University community are welcome to attend.

HAWKINSON HOUSE – Naming Ceremony

As we previously announced, the Board of Trustees recently approved a recommendation to name the President's Residence as the Hawkinson House. The name serves to recognize the life and service of three couples:

- Eric and Lydia (Myhren) Hawkinson
- Zenos and Barbara (Gustafson) Hawkinson
- Jim and Alyce (Larson) Hawkinson

As part of the Homecoming Weekend, the University community will host a "naming ceremony," reception, and open house on Friday, October 2, at 3:30 p.m. at the President's Residence. Members of the Hawkinson family will be our special guests, but all members of the campus community are also welcome to attend this event.

NSSE – A Survey of Student Engagement

This past academic year, North Park University administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to students completing their first and final undergraduate years. This particular assessment instrument has become widely accepted as a primary tool to determine how well students are "engaging" the campus learning environment.

We have just recently received the results of these surveys. As we analyze the data from the surveys, and as we compare the responses from our students with those from other colleges and universities, we will be able to learn much about what types of

learning activities are most frequently adopted by our students, and where there may be shortcomings in the habits and practices of our students.

Once the results of the survey have been formatted for presentation we will distribute and discuss the student response with faculty and other audiences on campus. More information will be available throughout the fall semester.

HLC Accreditation Review

Throughout this academic year we can expect to hear much about, and be busy preparing for, the University's continued accreditation. The accreditation is provided by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Secondary Schools, our primary university-wide accreditation agency. It serves us by assuring our graduates, the graduate schools they may attend, and those who will hire them, that students leave NPU with a creditable degree which satisfies commonly-accepted standards of achievement. In addition, this accreditation serves as one of the bases on which NPU is approved to receive student aid through federal and state governments.

The accreditation review will be guided by an HLC procedure called the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ). This procedure employs a five-step comprehensive evaluation process to determine continued accreditation status. During the current academic year the University will engage in a self-study process and through this prepare a report of its findings according to Commission expectations. Several teams of people from across the campus have already been appointed to undertake much of the work involved in the self-study. Though these teams will lead the self-study project they will rely on additional people from across the University, in every department, to provide data, prepare reports, and otherwise assess and comment on our work together over the past ten years.

The accreditation review will also include a campus visit with an external Peer Evaluation Team. This group will be on our campus a year from now on November 15-17, 2010. The Peer Evaluation Team will consider the University's self-study, interview numerous people from the campus during the visit, and then issue a report with recommendations regarding North Park's continued accreditation. The primary function of the team is consultative in nature thereby offering information that helps the University improve the quality of its educational programs and the services provided to students. Similarly, the team also evaluates and confirms the quality of our programs based on the commission's five major criteria for accreditation.

This is an intensive process and will require dedicated effort on the part of many. However, it is a process we should readily embrace as the ultimate goal is to identify what we do that works well in accomplishing our mission and where we can improve our work and thereby improve student achievement and enhance the University's learning environment.

In our strategic plan, one of the four primary objectives we've identified for the coming years is to "offer students a transformational education of measurably improved quality which reflects the distinctive learning community at North Park University." The PEAQ process will help us "measure" learning at North Park and identify ways to "measurably improve" our learning environment and our use of the resources for learning available at North Park and in Chicago. We have much to look forward to in this process of review.