PRESIDENT'S OCCASIONAL CAMPUS COMMUNIQUÉ

February 23, 2011

The President's Perspective – A Brief Essay

The fifth of North Park's seven educational ideals commits us to providing an education that "encourages dialogue as a means of learning where open inquiry, integrity, and civility guide our life together."

If North Park were a homogeneous community we would not need to worry much about dialogue. Conversation within our community would come to us rather naturally and most often we would easily understand each other's perspective because it would be much like our own. In such a setting we wouldn't hear much from each other we didn't already know or agree with, and as a result North Park would not be a very rich and deep learning community.

By contrast, however, the people who comprise the North Park University community are characterized by their difference and diversity. Throughout the school's history we have agreed that learning is enriched by the inclusion of a wide array of individuals and we have purposefully formed and fostered this kind of community. This is apparent in our faculty and staff and is especially evident in our student body.

As a university we enroll students from all walks of life. Our students come from America and around the world, from the midwest and the south, from large cities and small towns. The majority of North Park students are Christians representing a breadth of denominations and churches from Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions; other students are Muslim, Jewish, and from other faiths. North Park enrolls both women and men and our students identify with a variety of sexual orientations. Some North Park students drift to the left politically, others to the right; some are richer and others are poorer; some are first-generation college students and others come from a deep family legacy of college attendance. North Park students are African American and Caucasian, Asian and Latino; all North Park students speak English, but many also communicate in other languages.

Our community is thereby comprised of people who hold in common a love of learning yet simultaneously represent great difference and diversity. This setting has great potential to be a dynamic learning community, but to achieve this we need to give deliberate and careful attention to dialogue. Conversation in a community of difference doesn't always come easily but when we listen to each other we hear much that is new, and in turn this forms a very rich learning environment.

To function effectively, such a learning community requires wide-spread embrace of a common expectation: that all students who enroll at North Park will be welcomed, accepted, and respected as valued and contributing partners in our educational mission. Each student (as well as each member of the University's faculty and staff) brings to North Park an anthology of life experiences, a personal story. Each story is a true narrative, a story to be shared, a story through which others can learn.

Our embrace of difference—of each student's story—makes the University a special place; this diversity shapes our learning community. But this medley of personal stories can also be a challenge to each of us. Disagreement is inevitable in our University community; yet this very difference contributes positively to our learning environment. The assortment of individual perspectives on any topic favorably fosters, informs, and shapes a dynamic learning community. We wouldn't be much of a University were it not for the difference we embrace.

Yet difference can often lead to misunderstanding; misunderstanding can lead to bias; and bias can sometimes give rise to responses which offend and are occasionally characterized more by hate than by love. Interaction based on hate has no place at North Park, whether the words and actions are expressed in person or through email, named or anonymous, public or private. By contrast, our lives together, our conversation with and about each other, should radiate respect for the other, civility of thought and speech, an embrace of love and care.

Because we affirm difference as a University it is essential that we each learn to live lovingly in this community. As fellow learners we commit to giving each other a fair hearing and we uphold the dignity of others by allowing each person to speak for him- or herself. Our community life must be characterized by <u>civility</u>. We must each be committed to <u>dialogue</u> with the other for we cannot learn from those with whom we do not converse. We must commit to mutual <u>respect</u> for there is no hope for education if we refuse to listen to and learn from the other. We must extend <u>hospitality</u> across our lines of difference for only in doing so will we witness the image of God revealed in the other. These principles guide learning in our community both in the classroom and beyond.

The differences between us—regarding how we express faith, our relative position on a political continuum, our sexual orientation, our ethnic and cultural norms, and a host of other topics, questions, and points of conversation—are real. The question simply is how far apart should these differences keep us from each other? Should our diversity separate us or unite us? At North Park we don't seek to eliminate difference and disagreement within the campus community, yet we do seek to draw people closer together—through inclusion, civility, dialogue, respect, hospitality, and a mutual love for God and all people.

We live together; we learn together.

Board of Trustees

In mid-February we welcomed members of the Board of Trustees to the campus for their winter meeting. As is my custom, I prepared a written report for the Board, in anticipation of the various items of business to be discussed at the meeting. As has been our practice in recent years, this week I will distribute an electronic copy of this report to all faculty and staff; the report will also be posted on the President's Page of the University web site. As you have questions regarding this report please contact me for further conversation.

The Board gave attention to a number of items of business and discussion, including the following:

- Professor Brad Nassif, of the Biblical and Theological Studies Department, presented a devotional for the trustees at the beginning of the meeting.
- Nate Mouttet was introduced as North Park's new Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing
- The Board received an update on the fund raising campaign and viewed many of the promotional materials prepared for this effort, including the video which premiered on campus during Gathering Day 2.0.
- As part of the campaign update the Board was also addressed by Mr. Clyde Watkins who has served as our campaign counsel for the past two years.
- Additionally, the Campaign Executive Committee met during the Board meeting and received a comprehensive report on progress-to-date.
- Both the Board and the Finance Committee received a report from Carl Balsam on recent meetings with Chase Bank to extend our line of credit. The bank has responded positively to the University's present financial stability and will reissue our credit enhancement with a reduced fee.
- The Student Recruitment and Retention Committee received an update on our work in undergraduate student retention. We were also able to report on an improved fall-to-spring retention rate for the current year.
- The University Mission Committee heard from panels of faculty and students regarding core curricula and support for common educational outcomes.
- The Board received an update on our visit with the accreditation team from the Higher Learning Commission; we all eagerly await the final report from the visiting team and commission.
- The Office of Distributed Learning presented a report and workshop for the Board regarding recent activity at North Park with online learning.
- The Board approved tuition pricing for 2011-2012 for all adult and graduate programs.
- The Seminary Committee received a report from the interim leadership team and also approved a sabbatical proposal for Professor Carol Noren.

February's Snowstorm

The warm weather of this past week helped to clear our streets and lawns of the deep snow cover from the early February storm. Nonetheless, we want to thank the many members of our campus community who assisted so diligently during the days of the storm. This includes most particularly the crew in the physical plant office who moved more snow than they ever dreamed possible, our security staff who responded to calls in many directions, the staff in the Helwig Center and Brandel Library who kept these buildings open during much of the storm period, and our team from ARAMARK Campus Dining who provided food for hundreds of hungry students.

I trust that during the days immediately following the storm we've all taken the opportunity to thank those who worked so hard on our behalf.

Spring Semester Enrollment

We have good news regarding enrollment for the spring semester. Undergraduate retention is up slightly, recruitment of traditional undergraduate transfer students was strong, recruitment of new students in our adult undergraduate program remained stable, and recruitment of new students for graduate programs declined slightly in business and nursing and increased modestly in education. Overall, these numbers combined to reach the largest spring semester enrollment total in our history, reaching 3084 students plus 37 international exchange students. Two data tables summarizing both new student enrollment and total enrollment for all programs are attached at the end of this communiqué.

We often say recruitment and retention belong to everyone. Indeed this is true and so a good enrollment report represents an achievement for all of us. Many thanks for your individual part in this achievement and congratulations to our community collectively. Additionally, we extend a special thanks to members of the enrollment team for their leadership effort in student recruitment.

Living Faith

Members of the seminary faculty have worked over the past two years to prepare a book manuscript which provides historical and theological reflections on the central affirmations of the Evangelical Covenant Church. The resulting book, titled *Living Faith*, was released earlier this month by Covenant Publications.

This book represents a gift of scholarship from our faculty to all clergy and lay members of the church. We also recognize the editorial leadership provided by professors James Bruckner, Michele Clifton-Soderstrom, and Paul Koptak.

I'll be delighted to provide a copy of this book to any members of our campus community who wish to read the book and learn more of the University's founding denomination. Tell us of your interest and we'll make sure you receive the book.

Staff Breakfast

All staff members are invited to gather for breakfast and a brief campus update at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 2. We'll gather in the Magnuson River Room. Individuals who have questions or topics they wish to have addressed by the senior leadership team in this conversation may submit these to the Human Resources Office.

New Student Enrollment Summary
Spring Semester – Annual Census Data

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Undergraduate (traditional)							
First-Year	14	12	16	10	7	17	16
Transfer	45	57	92	59	54	67	78
Special		2					
Readmits	1						
Visiting			7	3	2	9	
TOTAL	**60**	**71**	**115**	**72**	**63**	**93**	**99**
Undergraduate (non-traditional)							
College Bridge	9	2	5	1	1		
ESL	31	23	14	21	10	7	7
RN Completion	6	5	18	19	15	7	11
School of Adult Learning	30	58	39	38	26	41	44
Education Certification	5		14	8	6	9	2
Special (Students at Large)	12	5					
TOTAL	**93**	**93**	**90**	**87**	**58**	**64**	**64**
Graduate							
SBNM	54	65	63	54	71	63	53
MS Nursing	22	10	24	27	24	30	23
Adult Nurse Practitioner	4	7	2		5		1
MA Education (all sites)	9	5	12	13	20	20	24
MA Community Development	6	7	3				
Master of Music		1	1				
TOTAL	**95**	**95**	**105**	**94**	**120**	**113**	**101**
Seminary							
Traditional	24	24	21	17	17	45	7
Cross Registered		11	12	9	5	10	11
Credential							3
Non-Degree Seeking							20
TOTAL	**24**	**35**	**33**	**26**	**22**	**52**	**41**
GRAND TOTAL New Students	**304**	**318**	**343**	**279**	**263**	**325**	**305**

International Exchange (non-revenue)	32	24	16	20	26	28	30

Headcount Report (Total Enrollment)
<u>Spring</u> Semester – Annual Census Data

	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Undergraduate (traditional)							
Returning	1300	1450	1565	1633	1646	1603	1628
New First-Year	14	12	16	10	7	17	18
New Transfer	45	57	92	59	54	67	78
New Visiting	1	2	7	8	7	14	5
Returning Visiting							8
TOTAL	**1360**	**1521**	**1682**	**1710**	**1714**	**1701**	**1735**
Undergraduate (non-traditional)							
College Bridge	9	2	5	1	2	0	0
ESL	43	43	26	28	19	7	12
RN Completion	45	50	57	87	77	76	70
School of Adult Learning	217	231	218	209	222	225	242
Education Certification	38	29	87	58	49	47	37
Special (students-at-large)	15	8					
TOTAL	**367**	**363**	**363**	**342**	**369**	**355**	**361**
Graduate							
SBNM	263	312	331	351	350	353	371
MS Nursing	138	122	140	139	149	163	162
Adult Nurse Practitioner	14	14	13	17	25	16	10
MA Education (all sites)	107	107	132	134	162	162	143
MA Community Development	46	29	24	23	11	4	0
Master of Music	7	11	13	13	12	9	9
TOTAL	**575**	**595**	**653**	**677**	**709**	**707**	**695**
Seminary							
Traditional	414	273	245	238	219	293	205
Cross Registered		14	15	12	5	12	12
Credential							7
Non-Degree Seeking							69
TOTAL	**414**	**287**	**260**	**250**	**224**	**305**	**293**
GRAND TOTAL Headcount	**2751**	**2794**	**2958**	**2979**	**3016**	**3068**	**3084**

International Exchange (non-revenue)	35	24	10	22	34	28	37