

# PRESIDENT'S OCCASIONAL CAMPUS COMMUNIQUÉ

November 8, 2010

## The President's Perspective – A Brief Essay

As introduced in my communiqués from earlier this semester, I'm commenting this year on the seven ideals which characterize an education at North Park. The second ideal promotes "an education that embraces Chicago as a dynamic context for learning and service."

In my inauguration address I recalled words a friend taught me some time ago when I worked with him in an urban-centered program. He stated: "The city is both text and context for learning." Frequently when I'm with students I paraphrase this by saying, "Chicago is the most important book you'll read while at North Park and Chicago is the most important classroom you'll study in." Or, stated yet another way, "Chicago is our classroom and all Chicagoans are our teachers."

North Park has not always been in the city. When Old Main was built in 1893 this was a very "sparsely settled community." In his history of the first 50 years of North Park Leland Carlson described our immediate context this way:

Within the North Park community were nine homes established by 1894—less than one house per square block. . . . Old Main stood like a lone sentinel surveying the surrounding territory of onion fields, cabbage patches, and cornfields. . . . Provincial and rustic, lonely and deserted—these were characteristic adjectives applied to the community by the casual observer. . . . There were no water mains or sewers, no sidewalks or parking lots, no schools or cafes . . . and hardly any people.

This was not a city! But all this changed over the ensuing decades, such that some 80 years after the school was established our institutional fathers wondered whether the college should remain at Foster and Kedzie. Free land was offered in the countryside; should we sell our buildings and construct a new campus further away? The answer, in 1979, was "No." And with that single word, the place of North Park College was confirmed as a place in the city.

This place we call home, this city of Chicago, is a sanctuary, it is a holy place. It is a place in which millions of people interact each day. It is a place of music and the arts, of work and manufacturing, of trade and retailing, of healing and learning, of technological advance and growing families. People engage the city, and the city engages people.

There was a day when North Park College was an important signpost in this city. One of the stories we like to tell comes from the 1920s when pilots used the cupola atop Old

Main as a landmark to find Orchard Field (today's O'Hare International Airport). Today we're pleased more sophisticated methods guide our pilots. But this symbolically poses a challenge for us: the Old Main cupola is no longer the tallest point on the city's north side. The University remains in the city, but what is its place in this city? Does the city know North Park, and does North Park know Chicago, even if our cupola no longer guides the pilots? Does North Park still make a difference in the city of Chicago? Does Chicago still make a difference in the education of our students?

Do we embrace Chicago to leaven what our students learn in our classrooms and residence halls? Do our graduates remain in Chicago to leaven the life of this place—its places of business and finance, its churches and neighborhoods, its schools and hospitals? Do we offer programs of study which effectively address the needs of Chicago residents and thereby leaven the city itself? Do we tell our prospective students that in coming to North Park they will be leavened by the city and will be expected to leaven the city as well?

Late in 2008 *Foreign Policy Magazine* rated Chicago as the second best city for getting an undergraduate degree...the second best place in the world to attend college. In this ranking, Chicago is second only to London. In 2010 *Foreign Policy Magazine* recognized the deep influence of the city beyond its borders by identifying Chicago as the number six "global city." Factors which influence Chicago's place in this ranking include the presence of major capital markets, a highly educated workforce, an ability to attract international students to its universities (including North park), the presence of a number of Fortune 500 company headquarters, and the size and diversity of the city's immigrant population. In this ranking as a global city Chicago is in the company of New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, and Hong Kong.

This city certainly must be numbered among the greatest resources North Park University possesses for shaping the education of our students. Certainly our faculty is important to the educational process. But our faculty can only be as effective as their supporting resources. And in the case of North Park, the resources of this global city are at the disposal of our faculty and students.

Chicago is our classroom, and all Chicagoans are our teachers.

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## **Viking Champions**

This past weekend the North Park University men's soccer team won the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin (CCIW) tournament! Congratulations to the student-athletes of the Vikings men's soccer team, as well as head coach John Born and each of our assistant coaches.

The conference championship required a win against Carthage College on Wednesday night (with North Park posting a 2-0 victory on our home field) and then a win against

host Wheaton College on Saturday night (with North Park coming through in overtime with a 3-2 score).

The conference tournament championship earns the Vikings men's soccer team the opportunity to represent the CCIW in the NCAA Division III National Tournament. Seeding for this tournament will be announced later today (Monday). We'll continue to follow the team through their games in the national tournament and cheer them to victory.

Go Vikings!

### **Board of Trustee Meetings**

In late October the University's Board of Trustees gathered for its regular fall semester meeting. At this meeting we welcomed five new trustees:

- Renee E. J. Borkowski C'90 – regional vice president for marketing strategy at Razorfish in Chicago
- Randall Y. Furushima – academic vice president at Pacific Rim Christian College in Honolulu, Hawaii
- Donna M. Harris – president of Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Paul A. Hawkinson C'92 – managing director, U.S. Sector Head—Industrial Investment Banking with BMO Capital Markets in Chicago
- Peter Hong – lead pastor of New Community Covenant Church in Chicago

At the October meeting the Board's professional development session was devoted to the topic of accreditation. The Board received an executive summary of the University's self-study document. Three members of the Board will be present for the campus visit of the accreditation team later this month.

Other business items addressed by the Board, either in full session or in one of its committees, include the following:

- The Seminary Committee received a report on the forthcoming proposal for renewed participation in the Kern Scholarship program.
- The Advancement Committee devoted substantial time to discussion of recent trends in the Annual Fund, with attention to the particular need to increase donor retention.
- The University Mission and Identity Committee heard presentations on University Ministries (from Tony Zamble) and the Collaboratory for Urban and Intercultural Learning (from Terry Lindsay).
- On recommendation of the Finance Committee the Board approved 2011-2012 pricing for undergraduate tuition, housing, and board charges.
- On recommendation of the Finance Committee the Board accepted the audited financial statements for the year ending June 30, 2010.
- The Academic Committee heard presentations from Helen Hudgens, Robert Hostetter, and Kurt Peterson who reviewed scholarship completed during their recent sabbatical leaves.

- The Academic Committee engaged a discussion on the present state of graduate programs at North Park.
- Karen Tamte was elected to serve as the Board secretary.
- On recommendation of the Academic Committee the Board of Trustees granted emeritus faculty status to professor Warren Wade.
- On recommendation of the Academic Committee the Board of Trustees granted sabbatical leaves (during 2011-2012) to five faculty members: Ann-Marie Andreasson-Hogg, Karen Bauer, Cherie Meacham, Brad Nassif, and Mary Trujillo.

Portions of the meeting were attended by several faculty representatives: Nancy Arnesen, Robert Hubbard, Rupe Simms, and Lee Sundholm.

### **Open Office Day**

As is my occasional custom, Wednesday, November 10, has been reserved on my calendar for an Open Office Day. Between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. faculty and staff are welcome to visit with me, individually or in small groups, without a set appointment. I look forward to spending time with many of you on this day; please come by.

### **Walking Alongside Students**

We talk together occasionally about increasing student retention. Research gathered at other institutions identifies relationships with faculty and staff as the primary factor in helping students continue their studies—whether as undergraduates or as graduate students. Certainly there are many factors which influence student decisions, but personal relationships are key among these.

When I discuss this with individuals and small groups at North Park I often refer to it as a commitment on our part to “walk alongside students.” This happens in as many different ways as there are people who work at North Park and students who study with us. Some “walking” is easy to identify and happens quite naturally in our day-to-day activities. Other types of “walking” require more intentional thought and action, a greater sense of awareness of an individual’s life-challenges.

Walking alongside students is as simple as greeting students by name, or inquiring about plans for the coming weekend, or celebrating a good grad on an exam, or asking what the latest news is from home. Walking alongside students might also mean visiting someone in the hospital, attending a concert, or theater production, or athletic event. Walking alongside students might mean sharing a meal together or inviting a group of students to attend a campus lecture with us.

During the early weeks of the semester I’ve seen each of these occur in our interactions with students, and certainly what I’ve seen is only the tip of our individual and collective effort to walk alongside students. Thanks for doing your part!

## Recent Scholarship

We're pleased to note a recent book co-authored by Paul DeNeui and Sawai Chinnawong. [That Man Who Came to Us](#) offers a summary of the life of Jesus in drawings and text featuring traditional Thai art. This bilingual book, in the Thai and English languages, aptly depicts Christ within the context of Thai cultural tradition. The book is published by the William Carey Library.

## Accreditation Campus Visit

We've prepared carefully for our ten-year accreditation review. This has taken place especially through campus-wide involvement in writing our ten-year self-study report. The report was completed earlier this semester and then sent to the Higher Learning Commission and each member of the visiting team.

Our campus visit with the accrediting team is scheduled for next week (November 14-17). The team will arrive on Sunday afternoon and will be hosted at an evening reception in Hawkinson House. On Monday and Tuesday the team will be present on campus and will also visit some of our external program sites. The team's exit interview with the senior leadership team will take place on Wednesday morning.

The visiting team is comprised of the following individuals:

- Dr. James B. North (Team Chair)  
Chair of the Division of Church History  
Cincinnati Christian University
- Dr. Katherine Ann Draughon  
Executive Director of Planning, Research and Assessment  
Professor of Sociology  
University of Southern Indiana
- Dr. Mike L. Edmonds  
Vice President for Student Life  
Assistant Professor of Drama  
Colorado College
- Dr. Kathryn A. Martin  
Chancellor Emeritus  
University of Minnesota Duluth
- Mr. Stephen J. Schmall  
Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services  
Loras College
- Dr. Teresa E. Shafer

Dean of Assessment and Accreditation  
Professor of Sociology  
Tiffin University

Please welcome these individuals during their time at North Park.