FROM THE DESK OF PRESIDENT DAVID L. PARKYN

"North Park is an interesting, complex, messy place.

And that's a good thing!"

SUMMER 2007

REFLECTIONS ON OUR FIRST YEAR

Linda and I have spent all of our adult lives together as educators. This is our vocation—to teach, to walk side by side with students as they begin the journey of their own vocation. So it should come as no surprise that when I became president of North Park University a year ago we came together.

Over this past year Linda has taught several courses at North Park. This has been important because, as I'm fond of saying, Linda doesn't know who she is unless she is in the classroom! Along with her time in the classroom Linda has joined me this year in meeting an array of friends of North Park. This has happened on our campus, as friends visit with us for events throughout the academic year, as well as in our visits to many parts of the country. These opportunities to travel and to meet you have been a delight for us during our first year as part of the North Park community.

A few days ago I suggested that Linda might reflect on our first year here, and she has graciously done so. Here are her words:

No longer new...

The best part about Commencement 2007 is that I am officially no longer new! David and I have become part of the landscape of North Park University and that is fine with me. This year has been full of meeting new people, traveling to visit with new friends, teaching new courses, and living in our new city—Chicago. It has been an incredible first year and I am grateful to all who have welcomed us and supported us along the journey.

But now we are no longer new! I don't get lost in Chicago so much anymore. I drive and/or take the El with ease. Directions like "east of, south of" still do not make much sense to me—born and bred as an East coaster—but I can get downtown and pretty much around the north side of Chicago without much trouble. I still cannot locate the lake from afar unless I am standing in front of Anderson Chapel, but who cares? I know that if I am lost I only need to travel toward the buildings in the city's skyline, face the lake, turn left (which I'm told is north), and eventually I'll come to Foster Avenue. Life is good.

Last evening students from my fall semester course on Mexican History and Culture came back from their spring semester studying in Morelia, Mexico. As they all crowded into our living room, they told story after story of the new world that opened up before them



during their time abroad. And as they told their stories I sat back and felt at home here in my new world of North Park. Students are the reason we are here. Having a part in opening their eyes to a different place, to a different way of thinking, to a new world, ironically helped me to feel at home in Chicago.

In our travels to visit you I have often said that our university is a "messy" place. North Park is an interesting, complex, messy place. And that's a good thing! We are a community of traditional, inresidence, 18- to 22-year-old undergraduates; of commuters from Chicagoland; of returning 20- and 30-somethings seeking graduate education; and of seminary students of wide-ranging ages. Furthermore, these students represent an array of cultures and ethnicities—as varied as the Kingdom of God itself. Some students come from a long family line of college graduates, while others are the very first in their families to attempt a university degree. They study disciplines as varied as psychology, nursing, business, biology, art, education, and of course Spanish! This is a messy place and it looks a lot like our messy world. This messiness forces us to take a look at the problems we confront; this messiness inches us along to ask more of ourselves; and this messiness makes sure complacency isn't an option.

Thanks for being a part of the messy world known as North Park University. As alumni and supporters of North Park, you see the value of helping students seek the tools they will need to live lives of significance and service well beyond their years at the University. And remember, the Parkyns are no longer new. We now count ourselves as one of you. So please come to see us here at North Park!

-Linda Parkyn

A VISION FOR NORTH PARK'S FUTURE

We have an exciting project underway at North Park. Collectively we are outlining a vision for what the University can become over the next few years as we approach our 125th anniversary in 2016.

To date nearly all of the activity related to this project has been focused on engaging the creative thinking of our faculty, staff, and trustees. Throughout the year we have held a number of sessions, with each discussion featuring a set of questions designed to stimulate thinking and interaction about what North Park does particularly well, about opportunities we see before us, and about how we might best approach these opportunities.

One of the questions we are asking is, "What does North Park do best?" We want to learn what our own campus community thinks we do better than other schools of comparable size and mission. Answers to this question in turn lead to other questions which are focused particularly on the years ahead. In the near future, we'll take this discussion to other audiences (including you!).

Our objective is to see as clearly as we can how the University's mission ("to prepare students for lives of significance and service") and the University's core institutional identity ("Christian, urban, and multicultural") can best be brought into a more clear focus during the coming years. Doing this will help us to identify the space in the higher education landscape which is uniquely ours.

Over recent years North Park has developed an increasingly strong momentum. This is a place that is on the go! We're delighted by the accomplishments of the past, especially with the significant growth in student enrollment and the very impressive improvements in our campus facilities. Prospective students, recent graduates, and

friends of many years are all excited by the changes that have been evident at North Park over the past decade. And we expect this momentum to continue, indeed to increase, during the years ahead.

Yet the momentum needs to lead to an agreed-upon end—a vision which will direct our activities and commitments, facilitate decision-making, and guide our plans as we move the University forward, day by day, to a grand celebration of our 125th anniversary. We know you'll join us—both in defining the vision and in bringing it to reality!

NORTH PARK'S 114TH GRADUATING CLASS

The month of May always represents a milestone for many students as they receive their degrees. We have four commencement programs each year. In December we have a combined convocation for undergraduate, graduate, and seminary students. In the spring we hold separate convocations, one for each of these levels of study. Taken together, the students who received degrees this academic year form our class of 2007.

We awarded undergraduate degrees to 363 students who came from 28 states and several countries. Nursing, education, business, communications, biology, psychology, and biblical studies were the top seven academic programs, with thirty-one majors in all. Nearly 41 percent of the class graduated with academic honors and 31 percent of the graduates were students of color. Twenty-six percent of the graduates were Covenanters, large numbers came from Roman Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Orthodox and other Christian traditions, while still others follow Jewish, Muslim, and other non-Christian expressions of faith.

Graduate degrees were awarded to 128 students through programs in community development, business and nonprofit management, education, music, and nursing. Nearly half these students completed degrees with academic distinction. In addition, 57 students were awarded graduate degrees through the Seminary. Thirty-seven received Master of Divinity degrees with the other 20 receiving diplomas from 15 different degree or certificate programs. Twenty-three of the graduates were Presidential Scholars.

THE GROWING NORTH PARK FAMILY

Graduation events recognize student achievement, and also signify their transition from student to the ranks of alumni/ae. Often the frenzied pace of final exams, job interviews, and moving can leave seniors without the time to say goodbye to classmates. This year, North Park continued a recent tradition called Senior Week, consisting of events that help seniors reconnect with classmates before graduation and build stronger ties prior to moving across the globe.

Another important North Park commencement tradition is the celebration of the 50-Year Reunion Classes. Members from the Academy, Junior College and Seminary classes of 1957 gathered for commencement weekend activities. We were privileged to meet these alumni and their families, and listen to their memories of North Park's past.

In the coming academic year, Linda and I expect to continue our travels to meet alumni/ae in places near and far. On some occasions we'll be joined by the Gospel Choir (in Minnesota and Kansas), and on another occasion by the University Choir (in northern California). In other places we'll meet up with alumni at competition events for our athletic teams. For example, early in September we'll join many friends in Michigan

to cheer on the men's soccer team as it competes against Hope College and Calvin College. Additional North Park dinner events will be hosted in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Florida, Arizona, Nebraska, and Iowa. Visit www.northpark.edu/alumni for a full listing of Chicagoland and regional events.

Closer to the home, the annual Homecoming celebration is scheduled for the weekend of September 27-30; planned activities will feature over 30 events including a giant Block Party celebration before the football game. Additional events are scheduled for the summer and through the fall. If you have a question or an idea about a North Parker event, please contact Rick Yngve in the Office of Alumni at (773) 244-6248 or at alumni@northpark.edu.

THE WORTH OF ONE VOLUNTEER

I'm joined by a dedicated staff of professionals here at North Park; each takes very seriously their responsibility for our mission—to prepare students for lives of significance and service. But in some instances volunteers, drawn from the ranks of our alumni and friends, contribute in exceptional ways to this mission as well.

One such volunteer is Tom Swanson C'66 of Lowman, Idaho. This past year Tom has helped the University to establish a new football boosters group he has dubbed "The Heavy Lifters." As a volunteer, Tom has been able to reach out to many—literally hundreds—of North Park alumni. This peer-to-peer approach is incredibly effective in reconnecting with our alumni and in growing the relationship with already connected friends.

Whether your interest is in supporting our varsity athletic teams or in furthering the work of an academic program, outreach programs, study-service trips, or any number of other parts of our educational programs we are eager to welcome you as a volunteer leader. Tom Swanson likes to say that his fellow football boosters are "stepping up" to assist North Park, and it would be great if many others also stepped up to help us promote, encourage, and advance other parts of the North Park tradition.

The mark you leave through your gifts, prayers, advocacy, counsel, and assistance makes North Park a fine institution, one that truly sees its graduates enter into lives of significance and service. Thank you for joining with us in this critical task.

David L. Parkyn

President, North Park University

NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY