



**Report to the Board of Trustees  
April 2008**

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**TELLING OUR STORY**

Over the past two years this is the story I've told more often than any other, and quite naturally it has its place in our new strategic plan.

Twenty years ago no one could have envisioned the North Park University of 2008. Led by an entrepreneurial President, with leadership from the faculty, Board, alumni, and senior staff, the last two decades have been ones of great growth and development for the University. North Park has been expanded programmatically, numerically, financially, and physically. We have changed:

- from a small undergraduate college and seminary to a mid-size university encompassing undergraduate and graduate programs in the college of arts and sciences, five professional schools, and the theological seminary;
- from an enrollment of 1050 to a student body of over 3250;
- from an endowment of \$6 million to over \$62 million; and
- from a campus of older buildings in considerable disrepair to a campus with numerous new facilities, increased green space, and an expanding physical footprint.

Something truly extraordinary has transpired among us. There is a renewed and growing momentum at North Park University.

Do we now flatten the trajectory—our rate of change—and choose to make today's NPU the status quo? Or do we use today's NPU as a base on which to build tomorrow's University? We choose to build.

More recently I've added a very important part to my telling of this story. It is an addition which we noted at the close of the case statement our fund raising consultants discussed with selective friends of the University during the past few weeks. My more recent telling of the story adds this narrative.

Changes to our facilities and campus, our financial base and academic programs, are important, but only to the extent that they provide a means to achieve our people-centered mission. We exist not have an attractive campus but to transform lives—to prepare students for lives of significance and service.

We exist to transform student lives. Through learning at North Park University the lives of our students are transformed by what is distinctive to our specific learning community. We believe that graduates of the University—from all our programs—will be:

- people who discovered North Park to be a place of Christian faith and ecumenical dialogue, and who have individually advanced a thoughtful and reflective personal faith commitment;
- people who have learned from, understand, and are prepared to contribute to the city as a dynamic place of commerce, faith, culture, learning, and healing; and
- people who understand others, respect difference, and are prepared to promote, contribute to, and participate in social structures and communities which cross cultural boundaries where diversity and inclusion are embraced and nurtured.

It is to this end that we are called by God. It is to this end that we invite others to join us.

And it is to this end that we will gather for the May meeting of the Board of Trustees. To be sure, we will gather to consider important projects for the future of the University. But more importantly, we will gather to ensure that student lives continue to be transformed.

## **MEETING SCHEDULE**

The schedule for our May meeting differs in certain ways from our normal practice. Please take note of these.

The meeting days have been changed. Because we moved the spring meeting to coincide with commencement weekend, the meeting days are Thursday and Friday (rather than our usual Friday and Saturday). For the most part, the schedule remains the same though the days have been changed.

Additionally, on Thursday evening, rather than gathering in our home for dinner we will meet on campus. This will provide an opportunity for a short program to accompany the dinner. At this time we will meet and hear from several students, acknowledge the completion of terms for several trustees, and recognize the work of Glenn Palmberg over the past ten years as president of the Covenant Church. I anticipate a wonderful time together.

## MAJOR AGENDA ITEMS

The central focus of the spring meeting of the Board of Trustees is closely linked to two pieces of business which we have discussed in recent meetings and which we anticipate bringing to a close at this meeting.

- Strategic Plan. Both the Board of Trustees and the broader University community have given considerable attention over recent months to drafting a new strategic plan. In our February meeting the Board dedicated considerable time to reviewing a draft plan. Subsequently, more recent draft versions of the plan have been presented for discussion and comment to the ECC Council of Administrators and the ECC Executive Board. And during the spring semester we have engaged the wider campus community in discussions based on the most recent drafts of the plan.

We're now prepared for the Board to endorse the plan, knowing of course that this is, and will continue to be, a working document. The Board will be asked to endorse the plan as a guide for our work together during the coming years, but the Board will also have responsibility each year to revisit the plan, assess our collective work toward achieving the objectives outlined in the plan, and periodically modify the plan in light of our changing environment.

The plan document is presented in three parts. (a) Pages 1-12 represent the heart of the plan, and it is specifically this section which requires Board endorsement. (b) Pages 13-34 are supporting materials presented as four appendixes. This material will be reviewed and updated periodically and returned to the Board on an annual basis for information purposes. (c) The Plan Map provides a single-page summary of the plan and will be used as the basis for discussing the overarching commitments of the plan with various audiences over the years ahead.

- Fund Raising and Facilities Planning. During the spring semester we have completed three projects which provide important background information as we determine, in the near future, the direction of our fund raising efforts and possible facilities improvements to the campus. These activities have included the following work:
  - We engaged the services of Grenzeback Glier & Associates as consultants in wealth screening. Their work has been completed, with a report presented in mid-March.
  - We engaged the services of Ter Mollen Watkins & Brandt as fund raising consultants. Their work has involved several projects including an assessment of the "campaign readiness" of our development office and visits to 25-30 donors to undertake a campaign feasibility study. The results of both projects will be presented at the meeting of the Board.

- We continue to work with VOA Architects as our campus professionals in reviewing potential facilities improvement projects on the campus. A representative from this group will join us for part of the Board meeting.

Each of these projects requires an important process of deliberation for the Board. Our discussion and decisions must be both informed and wise. We have worked hard to be able to bring to the Board the best information on which to build future decisions. We'll gather around this information and discern collectively what will be the best, and the wisest, direction for the University.

### **OTHER BUSINESS MATTERS FOR BOARD ATTENTION**

There are numerous other, often more routine, items which require Board attention. Many of these are enumerated in the materials presented for each of the Committees. Among these are the following:

- An update will be presented on the current status of the FY 08 budget. We have a very positive report to present.
- A budget will be proposed for FY 09. This traditionally is prepared later in the budget year, and presented for approval by the Executive Committee in late June. We have intentionally advanced the budget-planning cycle this year with the goal of presenting the proposed budget for approval by the Board in the regular spring meeting.
- Recommendations for faculty promotions and tenure will be presented through the Academic Committee and the Seminary Committee.
- Revised Faculty By-Laws will be presented to the Academic Committee.
- The Board will also receive reports on recent changes in policies for student housing, plans for renovation of Burgh Hall, and numerous faculty and administrative searches undertaken during the spring semester.

### **BACCALAUREATE AND COMMENCEMENT PROGRAMS**

Spring is the time for celebration as the academic year comes to a close. Our Baccalaureate Service will be held on Friday evening, May 9, at Queen of All Saints Basilica in Sauganash. The Undergraduate Commencement is scheduled for Saturday morning, May 10, and the GOAL and Graduate Commencement will take place in the afternoon on that same day. One week later the Seminary Commencement will be held on Saturday morning, May 17.

Honorary degrees this year will be presented to three individuals:

- Ivor H. Jenkins, democracy leader from South Africa (undergraduate commencement)
- Brenda Salter McNeil, advocate for racial righteousness (undergraduate commencement)
- Jean Lambert, Covenant theologian (seminary commencement)

We're delighted this year that, with the change in date for our spring Board meeting, a good number of trustees will be joining in the undergraduate commencement program. This will add to our celebration!

## HONORABLE MENTION

A number of our students and faculty members have achieved significant accomplishments over recent months. Especially to be noted are the following:

- Rebecca Miller, graduating senior, is the first student in North Park's history to receive a Fulbright award. She will soon be headed to Indonesia where she will teach English for a year, using American rock 'n' roll as the medium of instruction.
- A number of students presented their research at our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual spring Honors Symposium, under the direction of Professor Johnny Lin in Physics.
  - Kara L. Beck (psychology) – "Alcohol Use and Academics: The Roles of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation" (Elizabeth Gray, advisor)
  - Michele Good-Hanson (global studies) – "Currency Reform: Reconstruction Germany and Iraq" (Cherie Meacham, advisor)
  - Matthew Kemp (biblical and theological studies) – Thomism in Sanskrit Disguises: Brahmabandhab Upadhyay's Approach to Mission and Theology (R. Boaz Johnson, advisor)
  - Jonathan Nehring (mathematics and physics) – "Tools and Techniques for Running Climate Models on Multi-Processor Platforms" (Johnny Lin, advisor)
  - Stina Peterson (Scandinavian studies) – "The Importance of Food in Swedish Christmas Celebrations" (Anne-Marie Andreasson-Hogg, advisor)
  - Muhammad Saha and Sean Welander (biology) – "Regulation of the ctaA Promoter: Rex Serves as a Negative Regulator of ctaA Transcription" (Matthew Schau, advisor)
  - Melinda Smith (biblical and theological studies) – "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament" (Joel Willits, advisor)
- Professor Tim Lowly (art) has an exhibit with Koplín Del Río Gallery in Culver City, California, titled "Rise Up Children, Sing a Glorious Future"
- Professor Mary Trujillo (communications) co-edited a book titled *Re-Centering Culture and Knowledge in Conflict Resolution*, published this spring by Syracuse University Press.

- Professor Lee Burswold (music, retired) had several compositions, with orchestration for young musicians, published by Latham Music.
- Michele Clifton-Soderstrom (seminary) was awarded a grant from the Association of Theological Schools Lilly Research Program for research foundational to a book project titled *Faith Active in Love: A Companion to the Early German Pietists*.
- Professor Rollo Dilworth (music) composed a piece commissioned and first performed by Chicago a *cappella*. Additionally he recently traveled to China as guest conductor for a 500-voice choir representing high school students from Chicago, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles.

### **THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM**

The founders of North Park University chose to leave a mark, a word of advice, in the walls of Old Main for future generations. I imagine the advice was meant primarily for students, but it certainly speaks to me each morning as I walk into the building.

Chiseled into the concrete, in Swedish, are words from Psalm 111:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;  
 All those who practice it have a good understanding.  
 His praise endures forever.

May we discover God's wisdom and direction for North Park University as we meet.