

## **North Park University – President’s Report**

On behalf of the students, faculty, staff and Board of Trustees of North Park University I am pleased to offer greetings and best wishes to the meeting of the Ministerium of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

A year has passed since I had the privilege of meeting with you as nominee for the President of North Park University. It has been my pleasure to serve our students, our mission and our community throughout this past year, and we look forward with optimism and resolve to a bright future. The environment of higher education is extremely challenging these days, with steep competition in the marketplace and demographic population trends in decline. It will take thoughtful planning, careful execution and a deep commitment to excellence across all of our efforts for us to succeed. We have been organizing for that challenge and will dedicate our highest efforts to meeting those challenges and advancing the mission of North Park University together.

Over the months of working with the presidential search committee there were many thoughtful and vital themes covered in our comprehensive discussions. As the process advanced, there were four central areas of focus that propelled our conversation forward at each important stage of the process. These 4 elements became the framework for our efforts and energies as we began our work together in **Year One**, and will continue our work with the Board of Trustees in identifying institutional strategy and goals for the future.

- **Respect**
- **Resource Generation and Management**
- **Responsibilities and Results**
- **Relationships**

**Respect** for the mission and legacy of North Park University is essential. We are elevating our visibility and identity as a Christian university of high academic quality, in the world-class city of Chicago, serving a gifted and talented intercultural community of diverse students.

North Park is a vibrant and relevant university in the Christian higher ed marketplace. And though our mission is strong and compelling, our most critical need in the coming years will center on our ability to build and maintain the **financial resources** necessary (through enrollment and advancement efforts) to advance and support that vital mission. The marketplace is extremely competitive. We are elevating our efforts and execution in all areas of our operation, in order to succeed and fulfill that mission. We have rededicated specific efforts for **recruiting students affiliated with the Covenant Church** and are seeing significant increases.

We have concentrated efforts this year (and will continue to do so) on identifying the critical metrics we must measure for success, and working to achieve those metrics. When we all

know what our **responsibilities** are and how the **results** will be measured, we can more clearly contribute to success and realize the joy that accompanies that contribution.

We prioritized the many important **relationships** this year that advance our mission as well: Our relationships with our students, our faculty and staff, our denomination, our alumni and friends, our leadership through the Board of Trustees, and others, and the financial partnerships we have relating to enrollment, internships and professional development.

Thank you for the great support that has been communicated by so many of you through your words, notes of encouragement and inspiration throughout this year. I have appreciated these and ask for your continued prayers, even as we embark on Year Two.

Some **event highlights** of this year included a joyous Homecoming in October of 2018, two Commencement ceremonies in December 2018 and May 2019 which saw nearly 700 students representing our undergraduate, graduate and Seminary community, complete their degrees and reach their academic goal. We celebrate this joyous accomplishment and pray for God's leading as they step into the next chapter of their lives.

February included the full Inauguration Week of festivities which very intentionally included many friends of North Park representing all areas of our campus community, our alumni community and the ECC. We were delighted to worship together, learn together and celebrate the history and future of North Park University through the inauguration of our 10<sup>th</sup> President. I am grateful to many members of this Ministerium who joined in seeking God's blessing and daily guiding Hand on this office.

I will finish the report for this year, where we began our efforts last August. As part of our opening sessions of the academic year – at our faculty retreat – a few of us were asked to share our personal stories of faith. One of the elements I shared was that, it was during my days as an undergraduate student, through a range of experiences and challenges, that I was introduced to and embraced a personal relationship with God and a daily walk with Jesus. From that day to this – I have been a strong believer and champion for the fact that the college years can be a significantly formative time in education and faith development – and if Christian faith is introduced and developed during those years of formative early independence – it can be the guide for every personal and professional decision in an individual's future.

We have a tremendous **opportunity AND responsibility** with our students every day, and every academic year. And I am grateful to serve at North Park and to serve alongside a devoted faculty, staff and leadership community in this sacred mission. I look forward to your continued prayers for North Park University and all of our students.

With gratitude and respect,

Mary K. Surridge  
President, North Park University