

## **Nancy and G. Timothy Johnson Center for Science and Community Life Provides Best Equipment and State of the Art Technology to North Park University, Transforms Lab Management Program**

CHICAGO, IL (September 12, 2014) — When Chicago's North Park University conceived the new Nancy and G. Timothy Johnson Center for Science and Community Life, they utilized "big-picture" thinking to ensure that the science faculty had strong input in the design process. The faculty worked closely with the architects and the lab planners to make the new facility "the very best it could possibly be," said Dr. Jon Rienstra-Kiracofe, professor and chair of the Chemistry Department, who served as lead faculty liaison on the project.



*The Johnson Center includes 40 Smart classrooms and laboratories to enhance teaching and learning.*

From proper ventilation needs, cutting edge audio and visual technology, to ensuring every lab is ADA compliant for wheelchair accessibility, the \$45 million building, which is anticipated to achieve LEED Gold status, features more than \$850,000 in state-of-the-art science equipment. Laboratories were designed for many disciplines of study including molecular genetics, zoology, microscopy, laser spectroscopy, and anatomy—including a cadaver lab.

Faculty and staff worked closely with HERA (Health Education and Research Associates) to do an initial assessment of what laboratory and classroom spaces were needed. "The Johnson Center for Science and Community Life is a complete experience for students," said Rienstra-Kiracofe, who has been at North Park University since 2007. "The facility is packed with smart classrooms that are truly among the best any school has to offer, with each classroom equipped with HDTVs, interactive TVs, writable screens, lecture capture, and wireless display capabilities." Indeed, Vernier Technologies, which supplied much of the lab equipment said they know of "only one other university in the nation who has put together labs of this caliber," according to Rienstra-Kiracofe.

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The Johnson Center also offers fully modern laboratory spaces for biology, chemistry, and physics. “Many of the lab spaces are also equipped with smart classroom AV technology, creating smart labs. The smart lab technology can interface with lab equipment at each student's bench, creating interactive smart—or ‘super-smart’—labs that are unparalleled virtually anywhere in the nation.”

Equipment purchases even included a Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) machine which is an analytical chemistry technique used in for determining molecular structure. Often used in graduate study or in industry, having an NMR machine in the classroom is rare for a school of North Park’s size.

With a strong emphasis on safety, the new equipment and facility has allowed the University to totally transform its lab management program as well, including the creation of a new Chemical Hygiene Officer/Lab Safety Officer (CHO/LSO) position, making North Park’s science programs safe and environmentally responsible.

As a rule-of-thumb, academic science labs are generally updated every 40 years. “We had a ‘wish list’ and a vast majority of what we wanted to accomplish was achieved,” Rienstra-Kiracofe said. “We paid attention to make sure the space, facility, and infrastructure were built to incorporate changes for the future as well.”

That sentiment was echoed by Dr. G. Timothy Johnson, the North Park alumnus for whom the building was named, who said, “Obviously, the knowledge and skill base in the sciences is constantly exploding with new developments. So while the new science building at North Park is currently ‘state of the art,’ the building will have to be constantly updated to meet new challenges in teaching and research. However, the current core science faculty is outstanding and will, I am sure, be up to the task of keeping North Park’s science programs up to date in the years ahead.”

For more information about Dedication Celebration activities for the Johnson Center, September 12 and 13, 2014, including ribbon-cutting, a community open house, and a Medicine & Media Symposium featuring Dr. Johnson, ABC’s Charles Gibson, and Dr. Joseph Martin, visit North Park online at <http://www.northpark.edu/News/Nancy-and-G-Timothy-Johnson-Center/Dedication>.

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## **ABOUT NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY**

Founded in 1891 by the Evangelical Covenant Church, North Park University is located on Chicago's north side and enrolls 3,200 students from around the country and the world. At North Park, excellence implies not only a deep tradition in the liberal arts and the Christian faith, but also a spirit of innovation, reaching out to serve and to learn from the dynamic community around us. For more information, visit [www.northpark.edu](http://www.northpark.edu)

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### **CONTACT:**

Lori Keenan  
Smarthinking PR for North Park University  
[Lori@SmarthinkingPR.com](mailto:Lori@SmarthinkingPR.com)  
(847) 902-2905

Marcia Mawe  
Director of Marketing  
North Park University  
[mmawe@northpark.edu](mailto:mmawe@northpark.edu)  
(773) 244-5750

North Park University  
3225 W Foster Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60625  
[www.northpark.edu](http://www.northpark.edu)