

Gather Covenant Annual Meeting June 29, 2019

Mr. Moderator. (Pertaining to Item #33a in the agenda,) ... on behalf of our students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends, I bring you greetings from North Park University.

Dynamic in our Christian identity, with a mission founded in 1891, we are centered in the world-class city of Chicago; we are distinguished by the rich diversity of our intercultural student community; and we are dedicated to preparing ALL of our students for their lives of significance and lives of service. This mission has never been more relevant or more imperative, than it is today, and we are grateful that you join us in this vital ministry. We will depend on your support, and that support is now more important than ever before.

As I share a few highlights of the academic year, I begin with a sincere word of thanks for your prayers and encouragement of our family, as I stepped into the first year of service in the presidency at North Park.

This has been a year of relentless effort in listening, learning, discerning, and preparing — preparing to meet the many challenges ahead in the field of higher education, while celebrating North Park's many strengths and opportunities.

Our family — Jack, Jessie and I — have been very grateful for your prayers — and will continue to seek that support in the days ahead. This photo was taken at the Presidential Inauguration on our campus in February — which was a broad celebration of faith, mission, education and community.

In planning the Inauguration we sought intentional representation of our alumni community, student community, along with leaders and representatives from across the Evangelical Covenant Church.

We enjoyed an inspiring week, which included a run to raise scholarship support for the North Park Fund, a community worship service, where Rev. Donna Harris preached the Word of support and challenge, and many leaders who joined in prayer and partnership for our university.

We hosted a provocative academic symposium on campus, studying the history, challenges and opportunities of the City, and we heard from our talented students who performed during a special concert on Thursday evening. We finished the week with an Investiture service that invited hundreds of representatives to our campus from the broad community of higher education from across the country.

It was an inspiring time to celebrate the legacy of our past, even as we turn our eyes to the future with the goal of strengthening our mission and our institution, as we face the very competitive marketplace of higher education.

The headwinds are before us. Challenging demographics — a steep decline in the number of students of college-going age — will mean that we must raise the level of excellence in all that we do. We must optimize our operation in a way that will give us the best opportunity for success.

There are some tailwinds with us, too. And that is good news ...

We have raised our academic profile, over the last two years ...

- We have raised more than \$1.3M for student scholarships this year alone
- We advanced the restoration project in our beloved Nyval Hall
- We conferred more than 700 degrees (in two commencement ceremonies across the year)
- And we have seen an increase in Covenant enrollment through assertive, dedicated recruitment efforts. This fall, we will nearly double the number of Covenant-affiliated students in the incoming class.

We celebrate these advances, even as we recognize that the marketplace of higher education is facing more intense competition than ever before.

At North Park University, we are prepared to elevate the visibility of our school and focus on the three core distinctives of our Christian identity, our strategic Chicago location, and the rich tapestry of the diverse student population that we serve.

This intensely competitive environment, will require us to be 100 percent focused on the recruitment and retention of our students ... the relevant and excellent educational opportunities we provide for them ... and the ways we must be devoted to supporting the needs of EVERY student who enters our gates ... and accepts our invitation to study, to live and learn on the campus at North Park.

We have an extraordinary opportunity ... and a corresponding responsibility. Students who choose North Park, will have much demanded of them in the classroom and on the campus. We ... ALL of us ... have the responsibility to support and sustain every one of our students, in every way that we can.

I renew to you, the promise I made one year ago — to do all I can to serve the students and the mission of North Park University.

But I will need your help — we are counting on your help. The Kingdom of God comes right through the front gates of our campus every year. And we are helping create the future through



Christian higher education. We must help ALL students develop their unique identities and exceptional gifts, find and pursue their calling, and step into the world prepared to lead and serve in the 21st Century.

God has sustained our mission and our institution for more than 127 years. May He guide us now, as we love, educate and champion our students.