University Update

March 14, 2020

As our local and national environment changes in relation to COVID-19, at North Park University we are doing our very best to respond and modify our plans in ways that continue to focus on our two fundamental priorities:

1. Protection of the health, safety and wellness of our students, faculty and staff.
2. Successful completion of the academic semester, delivering quality instruction in a safe format, honoring the diligent work invested in this semester to date.

Late Friday afternoon, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker announced specific plans to close all K-12 educational institutions across Illinois for an initial period of March 17-March 30, 2020.

Additionally, Governor Pritzker expressed recommendations and suggestions for employers across all industries to help promote safer working environments during this time.

Both of these announcements have significant implications for the North Park University community.

The President’s Cabinet and Emergency Management Team (EMT) for North Park have been working daily to address the existing challenges for our community. Following the gubernatorial announcements, the Cabinet participated in an evening teleconference on Friday night to discuss the impact these most recent announcements may have on the North Park University community. Together, we generated ideas for a modified working structure to promote a safer working environment, meet our professional responsibilities and provide effective service for our students, while being as sensitive as possible to personal and family needs. This structure was then reviewed this morning with the Executive Team of the EMT for application and execution.

Faculty and Staff – Remote Working

Over the next few days, we will establish an initial structure for employees (faculty and staff) who are able to pursue working remotely, accomplishing full responsibilities from off-campus locations. Laptops will be used for personal workloads, and team connection will be encouraged and made possible via online technologies. All employees should report to campus Monday, March 16 so that we may work collaboratively on a sustainable structure for this new reality that will go into place beginning Tuesday, March 17.

Institutionally, we must provide a full and accurate accounting of our interim educational plan and support structure to HLC and others who will rightly keep us accountable for our best efforts during these unprecedented times. With your help, we will keep an accurate record of individuals who will be working in this manner in the coming weeks.

The President’s Cabinet will be working with their direct reports to manage effective remote working structures and schedules for their areas of responsibility. The Office of Human Resources will keep the necessary documentation and work with the Cabinet for a smooth and effective process.

University faculty members should expect to hear from their Deans and Provost Johnson, Seminary faculty from Dr. Clifton-Soderstrom and Dean Kersten, to manage this structure for faculty as we move into our online framework for students, beginning this week.
Campus Security and Safety

Please note that many critical personnel will remain on-site and on-duty during this time to assure safety and security for our community. We are deeply grateful for those who are working diligently to monitor and protect our campus.

Campus security staffing will continue around the clock. Safety escorts and the Viking Shuttle will be available for those students approved to remain in on-campus housing. To arrange, please call 773-244-5600.

Access to most campus buildings will be limited to those students, faculty and staff who currently have access on their North Park ID’s, effective immediately.

Significant increases are being made to our cleaning and disinfecting practices and schedules on campus in order to maintain as healthy an environment as possible.

Updates to previous communications are listed below:

All Students

- March 16 -- 18, 2020

No classes. These three days will allow faculty and staff to prepare for the successful transition to a fully online delivery of instruction via Canvas with primarily asynchronous (not live) content. Information will continue to be provided to faculty through the Office of the Provost. Our thanks to the professionals in the Center for Online Education and their commitment to the training and support that is necessary for faculty and students to succeed in this method of delivery.

- Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Students will be receiving information about how online classes will be administered by 3 pm on Wednesday, March 18. Information on academic advising and registration for Fall 2020, will follow.

- March 19 -- April 9, 2020

Online instruction is currently scheduled to begin on Thursday, March 19 and continue through Thursday, April 9, 2020. A decision will be made no later than noon on April 9 regarding a return to in-person instruction, scheduled for April 13.

- Friday, April 10, 2020

We will observe Good Friday on April 10 as scheduled, when no classes will be held in any format.

- Monday, April 13, 2020

April 13 will be retrieved as a day of teaching and learning, when we plan to resume all normal academic operations on campus, including face-to-face classroom instruction on the regular schedule.

We all know this is an evolving situation and we will evaluate circumstances on an ongoing basis. Please be alert to updates and information when posted at www.northpark.edu/covid-19.

Residential Students

Undergraduate residential students should return to their permanent addresses or make arrangements to move to other off-campus locations while online instruction is in place.

Residents may return briefly to their rooms or apartments to collect academic materials and personal belongings.

We understand that for some students, including international students and others, there may be a very compelling reason to remain on campus. Key campus services will be in place to support nutrition, health and wellness for those approved to remain on campus. The request form to remain in residence must be completed here: Resident Student Registry Form and must be submitted by 10 pm, Sunday evening March 15. Applications will be approved on a limited basis.
University Ministries

We are delighted to announce that University Ministries has been active in building a creative and robust online platform in which students can engage and remain connected in faith development and relational opportunities during this challenging time. Chapel messages, opportunities for small group Bible Study, personal encouragement and pastoral care will be available online.

Please visit www.northpark.edu/campus-life-and-services/university-ministries for more.

Viking Athletics

With both understanding and sadness, I must report that the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin (CCIW), through a unanimous vote of the Council of Presidents, has decided to cancel all CCIW competition for the remainder of the spring season.


We are grateful for all of our Viking student-athletes and coaches who compete and represent North Park in a manner that best reflects the pursuit of excellence in academics and athletics at the NCAA Division III level. Additional thanks to our outstanding team of Certified Athletic Trainers who keep our student athletes healthy and active. We share the disappointment over this shortened season and look forward with hope to the future.

Campus Services Available

Residence Life staff, dining services, academic support services, University Ministries, Counseling and Health Services, the Helwig Recreation Center and Brandel Library—will remain open with a very abbreviated schedule, but available during this time to students who have been approved to remain on campus. More information will be available through these facilities.

If a student is sick, experiencing symptoms of an illness or has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, they should isolate themselves and contact Health Services (healthservices@northpark.edu or 773-244-4897) or their Resident Director, immediately.

Observing Distance, Staying Close

We all cherish the fact that North Park University is a deeply relational community where we thrive best when we can meet together to personally uplift, encourage and uphold one another in an active and personal way. As our personal and professional environments continue to change around us, we are compelled to adhere to the sound advice of medical professionals who promote specific practices for “distancing” ourselves from one another, for reasons of health and safety. We respect this advice and will continue to follow it diligently.

So, in this rare time where we promote our human distancing, may we continue to turn to God’s Word to give us a way to stay together. May we take encouragement and model from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians -- may we all find creative and meaningful ways to support and encourage each other -- a note, a phone call, a letter, an email, FaceTime or Marco Polo! Even as we are encouraged to draw physical space between us, we may ALWAYS draw ever nearer to God in faith, seeking His assurance and promise of HOPE in a time of uncertainty.

I thank you for your faithfulness and support of North Park’s mission and our students. May God Bless You and Keep You!

“I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance and His incomparably great power for those who believe.”

Ephesians 1:16-19
With deep gratitude and respect,

Mary K. Surridge, President
David Otfinoski, Chair – North Park Board of Trustees
Craig Johnson, Provost
David Kersten, Vice President for Church Relations and Dean of Seminary
Andrea Nevels, Vice President for Student Engagement
Anthony Scola, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing
Scott Stenmark, Vice President for Finance and Administration and CFO
Ingrid Tenglin, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources
Melissa Vélez-Luce, Executive Director of Operations and Interim Vice President for Advancement
Jon Heintzelman, Senior Advancement Advisor and Consultant to the President
Hunt Helm, Senior Consultant, Marketing and Communications

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