March 15, 2020

Dear North Park University Faculty, Staff, Students, Parents and Families,

To all North Parkers on this Sunday evening, we offer our earnest prayers for God’s protection for good health and peace.

As our local and national environment constantly changes in relation to COVID-19, at North Park University we have been bringing the very best thinking and planning to our institutional response and plan of action. Our two fundamental priorities remain:

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

Our present situation has changed considerably since our originally published timelines for both online instruction and residential operations at North Park.

A national emergency has been declared; local and statewide directives have closed all K-12 educational institutions and restricted gatherings; we have seen travel bans and just this afternoon, Governor Pritzker has ordered restaurants to close primary operations across our state for the next two weeks, at least.

There are numerous credible sources projecting, based on what is occurring in other countries, that the spread of COVID-19 may become exponentially worse over the coming days and weeks. The strain on our local healthcare facilities and the U.S. healthcare system will be significant.

I have been in constant contact and consultation with campus leaders, including the leadership of our Board of Trustees. The President’s Cabinet and the Emergency Management Team have been studying information and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with health officials for the State of Illinois and City of Chicago and meeting daily to address the continuing and evolving challenges that COVID-19 presents to our campus. Those meetings and the guidance from these authorities have consistently informed our plan of action.

I have engaged in discussion with many leaders across higher education, medicine and business. There is now a consistent and shared belief that for the health of our campus and community, we need to take every step possible to distance our individual and group interactions, on campus and in our communities.

Today, following many hours of campus discussion and consultation with experts, we have made two critical decisions as we seek to meet our priority commitments:
1. As previously announced North Park University will begin its online learning platform for all students of all levels on Thursday, March 19. We will officially extend our move to online learning through the remainder of the spring semester.

2. North Park University is officially closing its residential housing for the remainder of the spring semester. Options for moving out of residence halls will go into effect immediately and can be accessed by contacting housing@northpark.edu.

We recognize these decisions may cause unexpected challenges for those students who had applied to remain on campus during our initial online learning experience. However, the situation has changed considerably, even over the past few days, requiring these measures.

On campus housing will only be made available to international students who cannot travel home or have no alternative place to reside due to extenuating circumstances. International students must contact housing@northpark.edu.

For information about making arrangements for move-out procedures please refer to our dedicated website and contact housing@northpark.edu.

Financial Considerations

We recognize that there will be financial questions around how we will handle prorated housing and board charges. While we do not know all of those answers at this point, we will be working on that immediately and will provide specific information as soon as we can. Know that we will be committed to doing what is fair and right. We seek your patience and understanding as we resolve those issues.

For now, my primary concern is for you and for the greater health and safety of our campus, our city, and nation as we all do everything we can to reduce the curve and trend line of this dangerous virus.

We will continue to keep you apprised. Please visit our website for answers to frequently asked questions, ongoing updates, and additional information.

With 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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