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NSF Funds New Entrepreneurship Program at Creighton

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OMAHA, Neb. – Creighton University law, science, medical and business students are getting a real-world taste of what it takes to convert scientific research into new business ventures.

Sixteen students – selected through a competitive application and interview process – are enrolled in the inaugural class, which met for the first time on Feb. 13. A three-year, \$536,000 National Science Foundation Partnerships for Innovation grant is funding the effort.

Titled “An Interdisciplinary University-Based Education Partnership to Support Biomedical Technology Commercialization in Nebraska,” the program involves Creighton’s College of Business Administration, School of Law, School of Medicine and Office of Technology Transfer.

“The field of bioscience entrepreneurship is exploding, and yet management talent with the interdisciplinary skills needed to commercialize these discoveries is in short supply – particularly in states like Nebraska. It’s important that we find ways to get Nebraska’s inventions to the marketplace, because they can help improve and save lives,” said Anne York, Ph.D., Creighton associate professor of entrepreneurship, who developed the program.

“Our new program will help fill that void, as well as offer Creighton students unique career paths in this promising field,” she added.

York noted that the program – one of only a few in the country to take an interdisciplinary approach to entrepreneurship – is a perfect fit for Creighton, because it taps into some of the University’s key academic strengths as well as its willingness to cooperate and collaborate with others.

“Our goal is to create a sustainable model for training future entrepreneurs. One of the unusual aspects of this program is that it involves multiple academic disciplines as well as partnerships with the University of Nebraska Medical Center and a diverse group of public, private and nonprofit entities,” said Anthony Hendrickson, Ph.D., dean of the College of Business Administration. All three disciplines –

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health sciences, law and business – play critical roles in turning bioscience discoveries into useful products. Yet, Hendrickson said, a failure to cross interdisciplinary lines has been identified as one of the top obstacles to success in bioscience entrepreneurship.

The entrepreneurship program includes two three-credit-hour courses – one in the spring and the other in the fall – and a six-credit-hour summer internship with a local bioscience startup, technology-transfer office or law firm. The two courses offer a combination of guest lecturers and panels, classroom instruction, and interdisciplinary team projects.

This spring, four teams – comprised of a law student, a science student and two business students – are exploring different markets for selling an invention created by an Omaha vascular surgeon – a new compression garment material. Each team will explore a different potential market for the product. Fifty percent of each student’s grade will be determined by final licensing or startup plans developed by their respective teams and class presentations on those plans.

Other partners in the Creighton program include the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, bioNebraska, the Leslie Kizer Family Foundation, First National Bank of Omaha, Booz Allen Hamilton, Blackwell Sanders Peper Martin, and Stinson Morrison Hecker.

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About Creighton University: Creighton University, a comprehensive Jesuit, Catholic institution located in Omaha, Neb., has embarked on the most ambitious fundraising campaign in the school’s history with a goal of raising \$350 million. The *Willing to Lead* campaign reflects Creighton’s commitment to prepare and inspire tomorrow’s leaders. The freshman class profile consistently ranks in the top five among Midwestern universities of our size and the top 10 Catholic universities nationwide. We enroll more than 4,000 undergraduate and 2,900 professional school and graduate students in its College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business Administration, Graduate School, and Schools of Dentistry, Law, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy and Health Professions. For more information visit our website at: www.creighton.edu.