Statement on Global Citizenship

The *Creighton Global Initiative* is aimed at transforming the student experience in response to changes in the wider world. Thus, the initiative seeks to enhance our entire institution’s ability to answer a central question related to our mission:

> How can students emerge from their time at Creighton University better equipped to dwell more effectively, ethically and comfortably amidst the turmoil of a globalizing world?

The answer to this question must be rooted in an ongoing dialogue at all levels of our institution because it requires us to understand key dimension of the global context, as well as psychological and sociological perspectives of “being” (how students come to Creighton already partly formed through their biographies) and “becoming” (learning theories, students’ finding / creating themselves through their lives at Creighton University and beyond).

The *Creighton Global Initiative* is about *all* our students. While the domestic-international student nexus is certainly part of this initiative, the issue is really one of empowerment of *all our students* to build capabilities to recognize, withstand and challenge the defensive fundamentalisms that arise when identities are threatened. They *all* must gain a sense of how they stand in the world which rests upon the will, the confidence, and the capabilities to seek out perspectives of others and to adopt critical stances to their own established thoughts and behaviors. This requires a holistic interpretation of learning, of individual agency, and, therefore, of the educational process.

The processes collectively termed “globalization” have resulted in a world where “contacts between people, their values, ideas and ways of life have been growing and deepening in unprecedented ways” (United Nations, 2004, p. 10). This requires us to continually be thinking about what type of new knowledge and what type of new graduates our future societies need. Global citizenship is a broad concept, but captures some elements central to Creighton University’s educational vision of preparing students to contribute positively to local, regional, national and global communities.

The Creighton Global Initiative seeks to invigorate current programs and stimulate new ones that directly or indirectly contribute to the development of global citizenship in students. Programs that enhance global citizenship in faculty and staff will be considered to the degree to which they have an expected impact on students.

*Global citizenship* is shorthand for the habits of mind and complex learning associated with global education. The following list of dimensions could be much longer and more detailed. However, the concept of global citizenship – and proposed projects – should create conceptual and practical connections rather than cleavages. The commonalities between what happens at home and "over there” should become visible. The characteristics that human beings share should be balanced against the differences that are so conspicuous.

Some valued dimensions of global citizenship to be considered in proposals are the following:

- **Global citizenship is a choice and a way of thinking.** While national citizenship is an accident of birth, global citizenship is a voluntary association with “ways of thinking and living within multiple cross-cutting communities – cities, regions, states, nations and international
people to consider themselves as global citizens through different formative life experiences and have different interpretations of what it means to them. The practice of global citizenship is, for many, exercised primarily at home, through engagement in global issues or with different cultures in a local setting. For others, global citizenship means firsthand experience with different countries, peoples, and cultures. For most, there exists a connection between the global and the local. Whatever an individual's particular "take" on global citizenship may be, that person makes a choice in whether or how to practice it.

- **Global citizenship is self-awareness and awareness of others.** It is difficult to teach intercultural understanding to students who are unaware that they, too, live in a culture that colors their perceptions. Thus, awareness of the world around each student begins with self-awareness. Self-awareness also enables students to identify with the universalities of the human experience, thus increasing their identification with fellow human beings and their sense of responsibility toward them.

- **Global citizenship is the practice cultural empathy.** Intercultural competence occupies a central position in higher education's thinking about global citizenship and is seen as an important skill in the workplace. Cultural empathy, specifically, helps people see questions from multiple perspectives and move deftly among cultures - sometimes navigating their own multiple cultural identities, sometimes moving out to experience unfamiliar cultures.

- **Global citizenship is the cultivation of principled decision-making.** Global citizenship entails an awareness of the interdependence of individuals and systems and a sense of responsibility that follows from it. Navigating "the treacherous waters of our epic interdependence (Altinay 2010, 4) requires a set of guiding principles that will shape ethical and fair responses. Although the goal of a university education should not be to impose a "correct" set of answers, critical thinking, cultural empathy, and ethical systems and choices are an essential foundation to principled decision-making.

- **Global citizenship is participation in the social and political life of one's community.** There are many different types of communities, from the local to the global, from religious to political groups. Global citizens feel a connection to their communities (however they define them) and translate that sense of connection into participation. Participation can take the form of making responsible personal choices (such as limiting fossil fuel consumption), voting, volunteering, advocacy, and political activism. The issues may include the environment, poverty, trade, health, and human rights. Participation is the action dimension of global citizenship.

**References**

