CARDONER at CREIGHTON:
The Vocation of Scholarship at Creighton

As a seminar of 18 faculty members from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business, Law, and Pharmacy and Health Professions, we met numerous times between October 2004 and March 2005 to discuss the vocation of scholarship. Our conversation sought to discern a consensus on the role of scholarship at Creighton as a Jesuit and Catholic university committed to excellence in teaching.

We found that we agreed on the following central affirmations.

1. Scholarship must be a part of the integrated vision of Creighton’s future.
2. Scholarship is supported by the Christian humanist tradition that has been long championed by the Jesuit tradition.
3. Scholarship is a communal vocation committed to service of truth-seeking.
4. Scholarship and teaching are two elements of a single vocational commitment to higher education.
5. Scholarship is enhanced by teaching.

As we discussed the current situation at Creighton, we agreed that the vocation of scholarship is not adequately supported. Simply stated, Creighton needs to encourage excellence in scholarship to the degree that it encourages excellence in teaching. This conclusion led to the following suggested plan for action:

Faculty Hiring
All searches should be national.
Commit financial resources to attract top candidates.

Retaining Faculty
Move faculty compensation upward to market rates.
Ensure that priorities for endowed chairs emphasize scholarship.

Time for Scholarship
Reduce teaching loads.
Reduce service expectation for pre-tenured faculty.
Increase full-year sabbatical support to 75% of annual salary.
Initiate pre-tenure sabbatical.
Increase summer research grants.

Student Scholarship
Increase merit scholarships to attract top students.
Increase support for student participation in faculty research.

Public Promotion of Scholarship
Feature faculty research in the Creighton Magazine.
Recognize faculty research on the Creighton website.
Integrate faculty success in research into development and alumni relations efforts.
Provide opportunities for campus presentation of faculty research.

University Programs and Centers
Assess Centers and Programs for contribution to scholarship.
Develop an inventory of scholarly excellence for strategic planning.

Grants Administration
Expand assistance available through the Grants Office.
Commit indirect costs to support grant recipients.
An Integrated Vision: Teaching and Scholarship

Scholarship is an integral part of our institutional mission. It enhances teaching, contributes to the betterment of society, and advances knowledge. Accordingly, scholarship should be an integral part of our university strategic plan. Scholarship is the prime vehicle by which Creighton University will become nationally prominent and not simply regionally dominant.

In recent years, Creighton University has made great strides. The student body is larger and more talented. New or newly renovated facilities define the campus. Important efforts in many quarters have promoted excellence in teaching. Now we must give comparable effort to promote excellence in scholarship, and do so in a fashion that integrates a commitment to scholarship more fully into the public mission and identity of Creighton as a Catholic and Jesuit University.

As Fr. Schlegel stated, “The Catholic identity of Creighton remains the primary focus of the University. It is our raison d'être; without it Creighton is just another independent institution of higher learning at the crossroads of America.” Fr. Schlegel has encouraged faculty (and staff) “to actively and personally participate in this Jesuit enterprise.” He also reminded us that “Your collaboration is essential for our future success.”

Linking scholarship, teaching and service is a challenge for faculty. Many see scholarship in competition with teaching and service. Working together as members of the Cardoner seminar on scholarship as vocation, we appreciate these real tensions. However, we would like to work towards a unifying vision in which Creighton can become a single community with common and mutually enriching goals of discovering, transmitting, and enacting the truth. Realizing such a community will help produce a vibrant and flourishing intellectual community, nurturing students and faculty alike, and, in turn, will attract to Creighton others who share this understanding of scholarship.

Scholarship and the Tradition of Christian Humanism

The faculty’s scholarly vocation must be situated within the tradition of Christian humanism. The Christian humanist tradition—especially as it emerged in the Renaissance and as it has been embodied in the 450-year Jesuit educational enterprise—points to and draws on two central biblical perspectives: the God-given goodness of creation (Gen. 1) and the God-imbued dignity of the human person (Gen. 1:26).

Research in the sciences flows especially from the first: from the sense that creation reflects in a subtle, hidden way the architecture of God, that all investigations into scientific truths—no matter how secular-seeming—are in the end probing the truths of God. The Catholic theological tradition has, in certain classic formulations, stressed
that since God created all things by his Word, all created things are faint but poignant
exemplars of divine ideas and thus “windows” into the mind of God.¹

Research in the humanities and the social sciences flows especially from the
second: from the sense that each human being possesses an inestimable sacred value.
Thus, while investigations into the nature and structure of the human person, into human
societies and histories, into literature and the arts, may seem quite secular, they are, in the
end, investigations into the truth of that sacred human dignity.

The Catholic humanist tradition—which lies at the heart of the Jesuit educational
and intellectual enterprise—deeply values the life of inquiry and scholarship. All truth,
as a reflection of God, has value and is worth pursuing, whether or not the scholar sees it
as God’s reflection. The Jesuit spiritual tradition often speaks of “finding God in all
things.” That formula articulates the vocation of scholarship.

Scholarship and the Service of Truth

The scholar’s pursuits cannot be undervalued. Nor should the scholar rest content
with small achievements. In scholarship, as in other areas of the human spirit, we need to
pursue the magis, “the more,” “the greater.” We must always strive to press further. In
the scholarly realm, this norm enjoins us never to cease pushing the boundaries of
knowledge.

The Jesuit tradition also speaks of becoming “a contemplative in action.” The
scholarly life, in all fields, requires both contemplation and action. Both the most
practical and theoretical disciplines require an intellectually informed insight and a
capacity to apply theoretical knowledge. All scholars should not just grasp, but should
also love the truths they study, and this love moves them to share their knowledge with
others. In keeping with this, the Jesuit tradition has recognized that the pursuit and
contemplation of the truth leads to a flourishing that is both intellectual and spiritual.

The life of scholarship is a life of service. To pursue the truth wherever it leads
requires obedience, humility, and the willingness to sacrifice one’s personal interests.
This life is lived not in isolation, but in community. Scholarship serves the human
community by contributing to others’ physical, affective, and spiritual welfare.
Scholarship serves the intellectual community by enhancing or enabling further
understanding or enactment of the truth. Scholarship thus serves the entire university
community, which flourishes through discovering and enacting the truth,
processes that include initiating students into the life of scholarship. Indeed, the life of
scholarship serves the truth itself.

¹ Anselm, Monologion 10; Bonaventure, The Mind’s Road to God, passim; Aquinas, Summa contra
gentiles 1.29.
The Unity of Scholarship and Teaching

In his encyclical on Catholic universities, *Ex corde ecclesiae*, John Paul II observes, “It is the honor and responsibility of a Catholic University to consecrate itself without reserve to the cause of truth.” Since their beginnings in Paris, Bologna, and Oxford, European universities saw that the cause of truth requires a commitment to scholarship and teaching. This continues to be true today. Disciplines of study are not perpetual motion machines. All disciplines must be renewed and advanced in every generation. To do so, a university must both support ongoing research by faculty and educate young people into the disciplines that now constitute the complex modern university. Thus, the very idea of the university requires the unity of scholarship and teaching; research and teaching are two elements of a single vocational commitment to sustain the university.

The Culture of Learning and the Vocation of Scholarship.

Because of Creighton’s commitment to the cause of truth, it openly advocates the scholar-teacher model for faculty. As a nationally-recognized university, Creighton provides support for ongoing faculty research and educates students within the academic disciplines. Inevitable strains of professional and institutional life may create the impression that scholarship and teaching compete with each other for time and resources, but under Creighton’s teacher/scholar model they are mutually reinforcing.

A commitment to teaching helps faculty become better communicators of their own scholarship and the achievements in their disciplines. One does not truly know and internalize one’s subject until one accepts the responsibilities and discipline of teaching. General education courses offer faculty the opportunity continually to revisit the basic, orienting principles of their disciplines. Upper division courses allow teacher-scholars to engage students at more advanced levels, culminating in opportunities to involve students in faculty research projects. Graduate and professional schools permit faculty to mentor students and collaborate with them in the fullest manner possible. Furthermore, the communal project of university education draws us together into conversation about our disciplines and our common intellectual goals. These conversations help break down the contemporary tendency toward isolated specialization and nourish our scholarly lives with cross-disciplinary insights. Thus, in many ways teaching enhances scholarship.

The Community of Inquiry and the Vocation of Scholarship

Not only does teaching enhance scholarship, scholarship enhances teaching. The most fundamental educational goal of a university is to develop in students a commitment to intellectual inquiry. This goal is best achieved by the faculty’s own ability to create a community of inquiry through their own scholarly work. Cultivation of cultural understanding, the reinforcement of a culture of evidence, clear argument, intellectual rigor, the extension of knowledge in natural and human sciences – in these and other

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2 Paragraph 4.
ways, scholarship sustains the intellectual life of a community of inquiry. Teaching then draws students into this community. The goal of a university composed of teacher-scholars is to educate scholar-students.

Few students will continue in the academic disciplines after graduation. Most will enter professions defined by the larger needs of our complex, increasingly global economy. Our research often contributes to larger social projects and needs, and our expertise is crucial for students who are preparing for lives of professional achievement and service to society. However, our vocation as educators is to not simply to convey expertise. The fundamental goal of a university is to form students as life-long learners and to develop intellectual virtues that will enrich and discipline their lives. For this reason, the primary way in which Creighton can serve the common good is by supporting and sustaining a flourishing academic community.

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**A Plan for Action**

The current intent of our Administration to foster an institutional culture of scholarly vocation, where scholarship is shared and celebrated across the campus and communicated to external audiences, is welcomed by the faculty. In an effort to advance this mission, we have identified several areas in which the environment for scholarship could be actively nurtured and promoted. Within each area, we have set forth practical administrative initiatives to strengthen the support for scholarship.

Critical analysis of resources and commitments may mean that some of these steps, while desirable, may need to be achieved over a longer time frame. Accordingly, we have identified a general framework for the achievement of each step as short-term ("ST") (0-1 years), short to intermediate-term ("ST to IT") (1-3 years), and intermediate to long-term ("IT to LT") (3-5 or more years).

**Faculty Hiring**

1. All full-time, continuous faculty appointment searches should be national. (ST)
2. Commit financial resources to attract top candidates. (IT to LT)

A university culture reflects the collective commitments and ideals of its members. Faculty members have a singular role to play in building a culture of scholarship, as they are the creators of scholarly work. This work includes their own independent research, collaborative work with other researchers, critically reviewing the research results of others within their disciplines, mentoring students involved in research, and communicating the results of scholarship in the classroom and to external audiences.
A commitment to hiring faculty who are excellent scholars is essential to our mission as a Jesuit and Catholic University committed to teaching, to uncovering knowledge, and to developing new ways of thinking. This commitment requires constant attention and renewal, as well as the dedication of financial resources commensurate with the scholarly culture we are seeking to establish.

Many departments lag behind their counterparts in the marketplace, both in salary offered and resources provided to launch or support the research agenda of new hires. Both dimensions are critical considerations in attracting the highest quality faculty candidates to Creighton, and they cannot be ignored. Weak financial incentives may also have contributed to a mindset in which national searches are sometimes forsaken for local or regional searches whose goal is simply to attract a candidate who will accept an offer, rather than to secure the highly motivated scholar-teacher who would enrich our academic community. National searches must become the norm, with exceptions made only in the rarest and most academically compelling cases (and never in violation of the principle of hiring with the goal of promoting our scholarly vocation). Competitive salaries and start-up packages in support of faculty research must be made available to assist departments in hiring individuals of the highest caliber and professional promise. Adding faculty members from other units to search committees could foster this pursuit of excellence in faculty hiring by making the process public, and by sending the clear message that the Creighton faculty is a broad-based and integrated community of scholars.

Retaining Faculty

1. Commit financial resources to move faculty compensation toward market conditions, with appropriate attention to rewarding scholarship. (IT to LT)
2. Ensure that endowed Chairs emphasize scholarship, rather than program administration and development. (ST to IT)

The development of a talented, productive, loyal and contributing faculty is the best investment the University can make in its future. Our administrative and faculty leadership must work collaboratively to identify those extrinsic and intrinsic rewards that keep productive faculty at Creighton. Faculty who feel valued for who they are are likely to remain where they are.

Creighton’s commitment to Ignatian spirituality, justice, truth-seeking, and student development should extend to the culture of scholarship. More opportunities must be made available for faculty to interact and feel intellectually connected to their colleagues across the campus, and proactive steps must be taken to foster a culture of scholarly camaraderie. High University honors such as endowed Chairs must be standardized to consistently emphasize scholarly creativity and reward scholarly productivity. Salary structure should be merit and expectation-based, appropriately compensate faculty for excellence, and take into account the competitive nature of the academy.
Time for Scholarship

1. Reduce teaching loads to support ongoing research activity. (IT to LT)
2. Reduce expectations for university-level service from pre-tenured faculty. (ST to IT)
3. Change the sabbatical policy to allow 75% compensation for annual sabbatical leaves. (ST to IT)
4. Initiate pre-tenure sabbatical opportunities. (IT to LT)
5. Commit financial resources to increase the number and level of summer research grants. (IT to LT)

Historically, Creighton faculty (particularly those in the Arts and Sciences) have been hired to teach. Scholarship has never been adequately factored into the workload. Some faculty become frustrated trying to undertake meaningful scholarship between classes and student office hours. While some faculty require financial support of some kind in order to maintain a viable program of research, time for scholarly thinking and engagement can sometimes be a more precious commodity than money. For most faculty, quality scholarship cannot be conducted “piecemeal.” Creative thinking and its conversion into experimentation and scholarly writing requires periods of unrestricted time, sometimes brief but more often extended.

If the University is serious about establishing a reputation as an institution of scholarly excellence, it must pay heed to the lack of time as a serious impediment to the full development of the scholarly vocation. Many institutions recognize the need to provide new faculty the time to establish programs of research and scholarship by offering reduced teaching and service loads in the first several years of employment. Some institutions provide up to one semester of pre-tenure release time to complete projects and write articles, chapters or books.

Widespread and sustained increases in scholarly productivity will require a reduced teaching load (e.g., a 3-2 arrangement in Arts and Sciences). Summer research stipends should be expanded both in number and in the level of funding, with additional funds made available to engage student research assistance (see below). Sabbatical leaves should be supported at a significant level, and faculty should also be held accountable for their productivity.

Student Scholarship

1. Enhance financial resources for scholarships to attract top students in undergraduate, professional and graduate programs. (IT to LT)
2. Enhance financial resources to support student participation in faculty research. (IT to LT)
A University that affirms the scholarly vocation for its faculty must expect its students to participate in the culture of inquiry. According to the University’s Mission Statement, “Creighton exists for students and learning.” Learning must include sharing the excitement of the discovery, integration and application of new knowledge with the next generation of leaders and thinkers. Energy and resources must be expended to recruit students with intellect, drive, curiosity and a strong desire to both understand and contribute to the world around them. Once a part of our community, these capable students must then be provided with the opportunity to grow intellectually and professionally under the mentorship of Creighton scholars. Smaller classes are needed to create the kind of academic community in which instructors work closely with students who are engaged in pre-professional quality work.

In addition to fostering opportunities for research among the undergraduate population, the University should explore whether the development of graduate programs in selected disciplines at the Masters or Ph.D. level is consistent with our mission as an institution dedicated to scholarship. Attention should be given to the ability to: 1) generate a critical mass of scholars in an area, and 2) foster interdisciplinary collaborations in the mentoring of graduate students. Whether or not Creighton elects to pursue the development of graduate programs, instruction should provide students with the preparation in scholarship necessary for admission to advanced degree programs at nationally-ranked universities.

Public Promotion of Scholarship

1. Include faculty research as a monthly feature in Creighton magazine. (ST)
2. Enhance the Creighton website to recognize faculty research contributions. (ST)
3. Coordinate efforts in Development, Alumni Relations, and Public Relations to identify achievements in research and scholarship, and to catalog areas of expertise for purposes of promoting and funding research. (ST)
4. Provide additional opportunities for campus-based presentations of faculty research. (ST)

The image of Creighton as a University dedicated to research and scholarship should be celebrated in public. While it is certainly important to understand and celebrate who we are as a community, it is equally important to share ourselves and our scholarship with the public. An institution is shaped by the way it is perceived externally, and we must project our image as a scholarly institution.

Graduates take pride in their alma mater, and alumni proud of their institution are more likely to support it with gifts of time, money and professional services. Prospective students and their parents want to know that their University is held in high esteem nationally and internationally before they enroll. A faculty better informed of the scholarship done on their campus are in a better position to establish fruitful collaboration. Administrators aware of award-winning research become better advocates of the university to donors. For all of these reasons, Creighton must take advantage of
every opportunity to publicize our dedication to research, scholarship, and intellectual creativity.

University Programs and Centers

1. Review and assess the contribution to scholarship from existing University Centers and Programs. (ST to IT)
2. Develop an inventory of scholarly excellence for use in strategic planning (ST to IT).
3. Encourage Development Office support for university centers and programs committed to scholarship (ST).

Programs and centers based around scholarly pursuits are a hallmark of the highest quality research-intensive institutions. A university dedicated to scholarship should have and support prestigious programs or centers of excellence in which research and publication bring attention to the university as a leader in higher education.

Creighton’s current centers vary significantly in their scholarly agendas and in their contribution to our institutional image. The University should clearly articulate its definition and expectations of a program or center and assess levels of compliance. The investment of resources to advance the scholarly mission of current centers should be considered and new centers established that take advantage of current areas of scholarly excellence. Programs and centers must communicate clearly how they advance the scholarly mission of Creighton and regularly publicize the initiatives they undertake to support the vocation of scholarship. Maximizing the productivity and visibility of centers of excellence in scholarship should be a focus for University strategic planning initiatives, and it should also be a priority when budget decisions are made.

Grants Administration

1. Expand personal assistance through the Grants Administration Office. (ST to IT)
2. Commit indirect costs to support grant recipients in research, including reductions in teaching loads, lab assistance, and other administrative support. (ST to IT)

The work the Grants Administration Office does is very helpful. However, additional assistance will improve our ability to successfully win external funding. Personal assistance with grant writing should be available for new faculty members or for established ones with heavy teaching and/or service loads. The option of qualified proposal critiques prior to submission should be coordinated through this Office to increase funding success rates.

Additional support for grants management services (e.g., budget tracking) should also be provided. The administration of grant awards by faculty members constitutes additional service to the University, which is not currently recognized by many departments. In addition, there is no official policy in place which guarantees that the principal investigator(s) will receive a percentage of the indirect costs associated with their grant.
Rather, the decision is left to the deans and/or department chairs who may not necessarily provide financial support to the faculty member (release time, hiring technical staff, etc.) to complete the project. Therefore, an official policy which guarantees that a portion of indirect costs is reinvested to support grant recipients (e.g., funding to hire additional research personnel and subsidy to meet the cost of reduction in teaching loads for grant recipients).

The academic units in Health Sciences view extramural funding in ways that encourage and reward externally funded research. Health Science faculty are generally eager to seek external support for their research and scholarly endeavors, because mechanisms are often in place for faculty to manage their workload so as to secure appropriate time and personnel resources to complete funded projects. This is not true elsewhere at Creighton. Faculty in Arts & Sciences often must bear the responsibility for completing the proposed work without the prospect of receiving release time needed to productively engage in the project. A University policy should give funded faculty members an expectation to negotiate reasonable workload arrangements with their department, school, or college administrators.

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**Epilogue: A Willed Future**

Buildings are rising on the east side of campus. More and more capable and qualified students are coming to Omaha to study at Creighton. Record-breaking donations are being made. In this time of institutional vitality, Creighton has the potential to give its intellectual life the same energetic, optimistic, and ambitious reach into the future. Such a future will not happen automatically. It must be willed: by faculty, by administrators, by alumni and donors.

Participating in the Cardoner at Creighton Vocation of Scholarship Seminar, we believe that we are impelled by our own sense of vocation as university professors to will a future of enhanced scholarship at Creighton. As faculty committed to the Jesuit and Catholic mission of Creighton, we believe that a willed future of scholarship bears witness to the dignity and integrity of a devotion to truth-seeking. As committed teacher-scholars it is our duty to will a future of scholarship that can provide an exciting culture of inquiry that will energize and challenge young minds.
Scholarship as Vocation Seminar Participants:

Tom Baechle, College of Arts and Sciences
Leda Chen, College of Business
Isabelle Cherney, College of Arts and Sciences
Christina Clark, College of Arts and Sciences
Terry Clark, College of Arts and Sciences
Marianne Culhane, College of Law
Mary Ann Danielson, College of Arts and Sciences
Joan Eckerson, College of Arts and Sciences
Ernie Goss, College of Business
Bill Harmless, College of Arts and Sciences
Jeffrey Hause, College of Arts and Sciences
Gail Jensen, College of Pharmacy and Health Professions
Bruce Mattson, College of Arts and Sciences
Ed Morse, College of Law
Rusty Reno, College of Arts and Sciences
Victoria Roche, College of Pharmacy and Health Professions
Janet Seger, College of Arts and Sciences
Greg Zacharias, College of Arts and Sciences
Appendix A:
Plan of Action Sorted by Time Frame

**Short-Term (0-1 year):**
All full-time, continuous faculty appointment searches should be national. (Hiring)
Include faculty research as a monthly feature in *Creighton* magazine. (Promotion)
Enhance the Creighton website to recognize faculty research contributions. (Promotion)
Coordinate efforts in Development, Alumni Relations, and Public Relations to identify achievements in research and scholarship, and to catalog areas of expertise for purposes of promoting and funding research. (Promotion)
Provide additional opportunities for campus-based presentations of faculty research. (Promotion)
Encourage Development Office support for university centers and programs committed to scholarship. (University Programs)

**Short to Intermediate Term (1-3 years):**
Ensure that endowed Chairs emphasize scholarship, rather than program administration and development. (Retain)
Reduce expectations for university-level service from pre-tenured faculty. (Retain)
Change the sabbatical policy to allow 75% compensation for annual sabbatical leaves. (Time)
Review and assess the contribution to scholarship from existing University Centers and Programs. (University Programs)
Develop an inventory of scholarly excellence for use in strategic planning. (University Programs)
Expand personal assistance through the Grants Administration Office. (Grants Admin)
Commit indirect costs to support grant recipients in research, including reductions in teaching loads, lab assistance, and other administrative support. (Grants Admin)

**Intermediate to Long-Term (3-5+ years):**
Commit financial resources to attract top candidates. (Hiring)
Commit financial resources to move faculty compensation toward market conditions, with appropriate attention to rewarding scholarship. (Retain)
Reduce teaching loads to support ongoing research activity. (Time)
Initiate pre-tenure sabbatical opportunities. (Time)
Commit financial resources to increase the number and level of summer research grants. (Time)
Enhance financial resources for scholarships to attract top students in undergraduate, professional and graduate programs. (Student Scholarship)
Enhance financial resources to support student participation in faculty research. (Student Scholarship)