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On The Cover
Pictured are Creighton students (front, from left) Jamie Wewel, Princella Parker, Aisha Lomax; (middle) Brandon Taylor, Jocelyn Frey, Joe Janus, Jon Aquino; and (back) Tyrone Galbreath. Photo by Mike Kleveter.
Securing Our Financial Future

This past December, we announced a historic gift to Creighton University — a $50 million contribution from a graduate who wishes to remain anonymous. It’s the largest gift from a living alumnus in the school’s 126-year history.

This is truly a transformational gift, one that will allow us to vigorously pursue our emerging national leadership among faith-based universities. The donor’s hope is that this gift will encourage others to give. Indeed, we believe it will.

Over the past year, I have elaborated on four of the five strategic objectives outlined in Project 125, our strategic plan. In this column, I will address our fifth objective: Enhancing the overall financial stability for Creighton University and its schools and colleges.

First and foremost, our University is in excellent fiscal health. Your gifts to the University allow Creighton to enhance its reputation as a national leader in teaching and research.

In the last fiscal year, our endowment climbed to a record $216 million. That was aided by a healthy 17.4 percent return on our endowment investments. A strong endowment is critical to the University. It provides us with a permanent source of funds that make the University less reliant upon tuition and clinic income. These funds provide for student scholarships, faculty positions, programs, libraries, and faculty and staff development.

We have inaugurated four new endowed chairs over the past four years, including the new Charles F. and Mary C. Heider Endowed Chair in Cancer Research in November. We now have a total of 24 endowed chairs at Creighton. We will inaugurate another soon, with the McGrath North Mullin & Kratz Endowed Chair in Business Law. Both the donor and recipient of an endowed chair become part of the legacy of Creighton University. Chair holders are scholars whose talents will leave an indelible mark on their fields, their students and their colleagues. Those who choose to endow a Chair know their names will be linked to quality education and research for generations to come.

Along with endowment, our alumni and friends continue to give generously to our Annual Fund. As the single largest source of unrestricted gifts to the University and its schools and colleges, the Annual Fund is the foundation of the University’s fundraising programs. Last year, we raised a record $4.6 million in support of our Annual Fund, a 34 percent increase over the previous year. More than $1 million of that was realized through our annual Phonathon. Again, that was a record and put us among a select group of universities, many of them much larger than Creighton, to receive that amount of support.

Our financial stability also is enhanced through consistent student enrollment. Our numbers in this area are encouraging, too. This past fall, we welcomed our second largest freshman class ever, with 970 students. Our total enrollment this fall hit a record of 6,723 students. Our new freshmen are bright and energetic, coming to Creighton with an average ACT score of 25.8. They also are more diverse, with 17 percent being ethnic minorities. We would like to see that rise to 21 percent. Attracting an ethnically diverse student population not only enriches the educational experience, but it takes into account our nation’s changing demographics. By 2015, it’s estimated that 64 percent of America’s student population will be students of color. This requires that we reach out to diverse groups of students more than ever. It’s a challenge we welcome.

Finally, our externally funded research was up $5 million in 2004, a 16 percent increase over 2003. These funds are a testament to the important research being conducted by our excellent faculty.

While our financial news is good, we must not rest on this plateau. We must continue to build the University endowment for financial aid, program support and facility maintenance. We must increase external funding, both public and private. We must ensure that financial resources are appropriately aligned with our University priorities. We must increase student enrollment and student retention rates. And we must maintain a quality work force, with a goal of becoming “an employer of choice in the Omaha community.”

Thanks to your support, we move forward confident in the University’s promising future.

John P. Schlegel, S.J.
Stark Differences in Iraq

In response to Dr. Calvert’s article “Iraq Déjà Vu”: While Iraqi history does have areas of repetition, such repetition should not be viewed as sameness. There are stark contrasts between what Britain did with the fall of the Ottoman Empire during and after World War I, and what the United States is trying to accomplish in Iraq today.

First, at least two-thirds of Iraq was liberated by the United States more than 10 years ago, shortly after the United States pushed Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. The United States and its allies contained Saddam Hussein by placing military bases in surrounding countries, enforcing sanctions and imposing no-fly zones. With the no-fly zones, two-thirds of Iraq has been free to trade with the world, developing into a truly democratic country.

Second, Saddam Hussein is the very measure of the freedom of the United States forces did and have been doing in Iraq. The British did not accomplish this before and never had the capacity to do what the United States forces did and have been doing in Iraq. The British did not have the full blessings of world opinion that the United States did in imposing such measures.

Those same measures to contain Saddam Hussein are the very measures that inspired the United States forces did and have been doing in Iraq. The British did not have the full blessings of world opinion that the United States did in imposing such measures.

Insightful Article

“Iraq Déjà Vu” was an incredibly insightful article. Dr. Calvert’s historical perspective was presented in a very factual and thoughtful way. I only wish this article had been printed before the election; I really hope it was not purposely held back until after the election. I am not happy about the way the Catholic Church is taking on Christian fundamentalism attributes in terms of directly and indirectly telling practicing Catholics how to vote. “Iraq Déjà Vu” reminded me of the Catholic Church I admire.

Jackie (Gross) Kellogg

Editor’s note: Dr. Calvert’s article was prepared irrespective of the presidential election.
Keep Up the Good Work

As a recent CU graduate (winter 2003), I just received my first Creighton University Magazine. I am impressed with the depth and breadth of material, especially the “Déjà Vu” pertaining to Iraq. I am directing our Mercy Justice people to your website to read this article. If this is your “usual” quality, format, etc., keep up the good work. I definitely look forward to the next edition.

Sister Camilla Verret, RSM
Washington, Mo.

Goodbye to a Good Friend

I read about the recent death of Creighton alumna Mary Lu Kelly Crampton, BS’49, in the Omaha World-Herald and felt compelled to write. Mary Lu was everybody’s friend (real friend); she brought smiles to everyone she met. In college, she arranged a barn dance for about 20 couples, in a real barn with real farmers. Bridge parties, excursions, daily Mass and one good deed after another were part of her routine. Later in life, she worked as a teacher, volunteered at local schools and comforted families in the surgical waiting room at St. Joseph Hospital. In 1984, Mary Lu was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. She fought her illness from her home. In 1994, President Clinton called her to publicize the importance of home care for the chronically ill. She died Nov. 15 at the age of 77. There was just nobody like her. She was so loved by so many.

Marie Tilley McClernan, BSPha’49
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Time for a True Partnership

The Jesuit superior general, the Very Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., said in his major address on Creighton’s campus that we are called to a partnership between religious and lay. I could not agree more. The institutional Church has been driving people away for decades by its judgmental and elitist contentions regarding women, sex, marriage, birth control and homosexuality. More recently its ghastly behavior regarding pedophilic clergy has isolated even the most faithful. In a very real sense, as Dorothy Day said, the Church is the cross that Jesus had to bear.

But in another sense, as Archbishop Oscar Romero came to realize, “the Church is all of us.” It is easy to talk about self-interest, injustice and dehumanization in the global environment, but harder to see it within ourselves, i.e., both the institutional and collective Church. I blame myself for accepting a Church that showed inequality to women. I told myself, I don’t want or need the power that men have in the religion. That was not what my faith was about. Now I feel by overlooking that injustice, I implied tacit agreement that permitted far worse injustices, including the abuse of our most vulnerable, our children. Catholicism is supposed to be about universality and inclusion, not drawing lines in the sand, judging others by political beliefs, holding one life better than another and creating polarity instead of reaching out to solve the core injustices.

The superior general spoke of a “partnership of equality,” “allowing ourselves to be stretched, at times with great personal sacrifice.” I, in turn, ask that of the institutional Church. To overcome its image as misogynistic, homophobic and pedophilic, it has to make drastic changes and sacrifices regarding its own self-interest, injustice and dehumanization.

I don’t expect to see the Church make any major changes on women in the priesthood or allowing married clergy anytime soon. But I have seen individual parishes strip away the pomp, power and elitism inherent in the system by inviting lay people — men and women — to offer interpretations of the Gospel. (Collaborative Ministry allows University employees to offer homilies on the Gospel through its website.) Any parish can invite the same at the Mass. Speaking as one who has sat through some pretty demeaning and insulting sermons, I’d find it very refreshing to hear a married person talking about sex, or a woman talk about abortion and birth control, rather than a celibate male. Many a time I have wished for rebuttal time. Couldn’t a time be set aside after the ceremony for discussion?

These seem like small enough gestures to put into concrete action the advice of the superior general. Though small, a good faith effort holds the potential for a hugely positive step in the process of creating a truly equal partnership. What have we got to lose?

Rachel Heaney Dowd, R.N., BSN’81, BA’83
Omaha

Having been educated by Ursulines, Dominicans, Viatorians and the Jesuits, I had a unique experience. Fr. Holbrook will stand out in my mind and memory as a pinnacle of my educational experience.

Thomas Kelty, BA’67
Springfield, Ill.

Time to Move Up?

Creighton has been ranked the No. 1 Midwest comprehensive university many times over the years in U.S. News & World Report. Our University now offers many doctorate-level degrees that are also of high quality and it may be time to move to the Best National Universities ranking.

Christopher DeMoss, DDS’95
Phoenix
Dead Man Walking Performed on Creighton Stage

When Creighton University Assistant Professor of Theatre Alan Klem learned of the opportunity to direct the stage adaptation of Dead Man Walking, he jumped at it.

Tim Robbins — who wrote the screenplay and directed the 1996 movie based on the book by Sr. Helen Prejean — wrote the theatrical script. According to Klem, the script is a draft version that Robbins has offered Jesuit high schools and universities nationwide the chance to perform.

“It was a really strong script,” Klem said. “And I like doing plays that deal with tough issues.”

Although he’s read the book, Klem didn’t want to see the movie before directing the Creighton production that opened in late February at the Lied Education Center for the Arts.

“When I found out I had an opportunity to do this script, I made the choice that I wouldn’t see the movie,” Klem said. “I didn’t want to be influenced by it.”

The movie is based on the story of Sr. Prejean, a compassionate New Orleans nun who became the spiritual adviser to Louisiana death row inmate Patrick Sonnier in the early 1980s. Robbins was nominated for an Oscar as the film’s director.

“It was a tough play to do because it deals with a very difficult issue,” Klem said. The play also was difficult for a college-age cast not familiar with the prison or legal systems, Klem said. At Klem’s request, Creighton’s Vice President for Academic Affairs Christine Wiseman, who advised a death row inmate in Texas, talked with the cast about her experience to give them some perspective.

“The students who accepted the roles did an outstanding job,” Klem said.

Rusty Perry assumed the role of the death row inmate, Mathew Poncelet (played by Sean Penn in the movie), and Jeanne Tiehen was Sr. Prejean (the role that won Susan Sarandon an Oscar). Tiehen’s performance was part of her BFA thesis project.

Creighton held several talks and panel discussions in connection with the play. One of the stipulations set forth by Robbins was that the production includes other academic disciplines beyond fine arts. Klem, as director, also agreed to provide Robbins feedback on the script — what worked and what didn’t.

“I welcome you as collaborators with me on this creative endeavor,” Robbins wrote in an open letter explaining the project. “I will take into account your experiences and suggestions as I write the definitive version of the play for publication.”

Klem said this was the only production of the play in Nebraska, which has the death penalty.

“It was a real challenge,” Klem said, not only for the cast but for the audience. “The audience watched an execution by lethal injection (acted out).”

It was a tough subject to deal with, Klem admitted. “But it was very interesting … and thought-provoking.”

Hixson-Lied Science Building Recognized for Outstanding Design

Creighton University’s Hixson-Lied Science Building graced the cover of American School & University’s November architectural portfolio issue. The 434-page issue showcases award-winning and outstanding education design and construction. HDR Architecture, Inc., of Omaha designed the building.

The $18 million Hixson-Lied Science Building was completed in January of 2003. The facility houses undergraduate and health sciences faculty offices, classrooms, computer rooms and student spaces. The new building was part of Creighton’s $56 million upgrade of its undergraduate and health science education facilities. Other components included the $15 million renovation of the Rigge Science Building and $23 million in improvements in the Criss II and III buildings.

The Hixson-Lied’s dramatic circular six-story glass Walter and Suzanne Scott Atrium is highlighted in the publication, noting that “because of the lower ceiling heights required from adjoining buildings, the six-story atrium helps alleviate the ‘compressed’ feeling of the floors, as does the reflective lighting in common areas surrounding the atrium. The view up the six-story glass atrium is inspiring; the downward view to the atrium’s terrazzo floor also was designed to impress. The grand mosaic is a depiction of an atom, its ‘electrons’ colorful medallions representing all of the University’s colleges and schools.”
New Mentorship Program May Bring More Gates Scholars to Creighton

This past fall, Creighton University went on the road in an effort to bring Native American scholars who dream of going to college a little closer to their goals.

The first Creighton University/Red Cloud High School Immersion-Mentorship Program drew students to several sites in October for how-to sessions on applying for the prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship.

But even more important, the weekend continued the on-going process of familiarizing Creighton faculty and staff with the context of Native culture, establishing key relationships important to the Native community.

The scholarship program, sponsored by Bill and Melinda Gates, offers 1,000 awards annually in the U.S. to highly motivated, low-income minority scholars. The awards fully cover the costs of a college education for each student.

Creighton currently enrolls 10 scholars and boasts a Gates graduate.

Creighton’s Gates Scholarship mentors, led by Tami Buffalohead-McGill, BA’89, and the Rev. Raymond Bucko, S.J., first met with students at the Holy Rosary Mission in Pine Ridge, S.D., on Oct. 18. Here, the Creighton team — which also included 10 additional Creighton faculty from Arts and Sciences, Business Administration and Nursing — reviewed scholarship forms with applicants and visited with them about procedures for the awards program. Then, it was on to the Pine Ridge Reservation, where more applicants met with the Creighton mentors.

This special Lakota Immersion-Mentorship program was an excellent two-way “window” on Creighton and Lakota culture, according to co-organizer Fr. Bucko.

The special weekend, he says, “combined tours of the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations and dialogue with Lakota students currently enrolled at Creighton as well as with other Lakota living on the reservations.”

Fr. Bucko added that the Creighton student-mentors will continue the relationship until the students complete their college applications. Such support is key, Buffalohead-McGill and Fr. Bucko believe, to help ensure the applicants’ success.

Student-mentors at Creighton, who hold the Gates Millennium Scholarship, are: Donnel Ecoffey, sophomore; Janelle Whipple, sophomore; Ari-el Earth, sophomore; Ashley Lone Wolfe, freshman; Ted Peters, sophomore; Jaime Reese, sophomore; Blake Tyler, freshman; Marie Zephier, freshman; Angela Bad Heart Bull, freshman; and Robin Kills The Enemy, freshman.

Keyonna King, the first Gates Millennium Scholar at Creighton, also served as a mentor. King graduated from Creighton in 2004.

The mentorship program, which will continue next year, offers many benefits both to Creighton and prospective Gates scholars. For one, the program is an excellent way to “familiarize faculty and staff with the cultural context of many of Creighton’s Native students,” Fr. Bucko said. He added that the inter-cultural dialogue that results is an excellent learning opportunity, too. Finally, the new program “contributes to the strength of the Lakota community by mentoring some of their students applying to college.” Fr. Bucko added that “the Lakota community has contributed to the strength of Creighton by entrusting their young scholars to our institution.”

And that adds up to the best of both worlds for Creighton University and the Native communities.
Smith, City of Omaha, NETV Recognized at Commencement

At the Dec. 18 Commencement ceremony, Creighton University presented degrees to 287 students. In addition, the University recognized J. Clay Smith Jr., BA’64, with the 2004 Alumni Achievement Citation, and conferred two Presidential Medallions on the city of Omaha and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications.

Alumni Achievement Citation

J. Clay Smith Jr. has spent his life in a tireless pursuit of justice.

A former dean and now professor at Howard University’s School of Law in Washington, D.C., Smith grew up in Omaha. While a junior at South High School, he became the first African-American elected governor of Nebraska’s Cornhusker Boys’ State, an annual program sponsored by the American Legion in which students campaign for office and learn about the governmental process. He graduated from Creighton University in 1964, later earning law degrees from Howard University and George Washington University Law School in Washington, D.C.

J. Clay Smith Jr. speaks to the crowd at December commencement.

Smith’s distinguished career has taken him from the Judge Advocate General’s Corps in the U.S. Army to private practice, the Federal Communications Commission and an appointment by President Jimmy Carter to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

He was a member of the Clinton/Gore presidential transition team and served on the Creighton University Board of Directors from 1991 until 1995. He was the first African-American lawyer to be elected president of the Federal Bar Association, and he has received the C. Francis Stradford Award, the National Bar Association’s highest honor, in addition to numerous academic awards.

In the courtroom and the classroom, he has been an outspoken advocate for those who cry for justice. A prolific writer, his books and articles have addressed some of the most pressing legal concerns affecting the poor, including topics such as chronic alcoholism, public housing, due process, minorities in business, labor laws, affirmative action and employment rights.

Presidential Medallion

The city of Omaha and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications each received Creighton’s Presidential Medallion. This award recognizes individuals and organizations that have displayed excellence in an academic discipline; distinguished local civic, cultural or volunteer service; and commitment to the educational and community ideals espoused by Creighton University’s mission statement.

City of Omaha

In celebration of the city of Omaha’s 150th anniversary of its founding, Creighton University conferred the University’s Presidential Medallion to honor the past, present and future of the great city of Omaha. Receiving the medallion was Omaha Mayor and 1973 Creighton graduate Mike Fahey.

The history of Omaha dates to the Gold Rush of 1849, when travelers on the Mormon Trail helped dispel the myth that Nebraska was “the great American desert.” Travelers found this land ripe for settlement. Through delegation with the Omaha Indians, the government decreed the city of Omaha under the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

A few years later, Edward Creighton moved to Omaha and mapped out the transcontinental telegraph route linking the nation’s east and west coasts. Edward, his brother John and their family were integral figures in Omaha’s growth. Through their efforts, Omaha’s mercantile, banking and health care industries took root. After Edward’s death, his wife, Mary Lucretia Creighton, honored his longtime dream of building a university to educate the children of the frontier pioneers.

Today, Omaha provides a rich atmosphere for its 500,000 diverse residents. Forbes Magazine recently named Omaha as one of the top 15 cities in the nation and Parenting Magazine recently cited Omaha as one of the top 10 cities in which to raise a family.

Nebraska Educational Telecommunications

For 50 years, Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET) has entertained Nebraskans by inspiring and educating its audience. With its growing cultural repertoire, it is no wonder that people all across the state turn to NET as the standard for television and radio programming.

The roots of Nebraska Public Television stem from the initiatives of John “Jack” McBride, BA’48. Known as the “one man band,” McBride was hired by the University of Nebraska with a dream and mission to package educational programs for commercial stations. Soon after, with television still in black and white, NET was born.

NET has always been a vibrant source for innovative network broadcasting. Programs Nebraskans have enjoyed since they were children, such as “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” “Reading Rainbow,” still enrich America’s youth. Furthermore, NET’s unique documentaries, such as the “Mark Twain Series” and “In Search of the Oregon Trail,” have attracted local and national attention.

Through the efforts and dedication of NET’s creative staff, some of whom are Creighton graduates, Nebraskans have been privileged to enjoy the finest television and radio programs that both inform them and touch their heart.
Seger Receives Grant from Department of Energy

Janet Seger, Ph.D., professor of physics at Creighton University, has been awarded a three-year $418,000 grant from the Department of Energy, EPSCoR Program.

The Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) is a joint program of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and several U.S. states and territories. The program promotes the development of the states’ science and technology resources through partnerships involving a state’s universities, industry and government, and the Federal research and development enterprise.

The grant will fund work at the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider (RHIC) at Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York. This world-class scientific research facility began operation in 2000, following 10 years of development and construction. Hundreds of physicists from around the world use RHIC to study what the universe may have looked like in the first few moments of creation. RHIC drives two intersecting beams of gold ions head on, in a subatomic collision. What physicists learn from these collisions may help people understand more about why the physical world works the way it does, from the smallest particles to the largest stars.

Seger’s research, however, concentrates on when the particles miss, or rather ultra peripheral collisions.

“We are interested in what we call ultra peripheral collisions which are not really the focus of the RHIC,” Seger said. “In ultra peripheral collisions, gold nuclei (which are traveling at near the speed of light) actually miss each other. But because they are charged, and they come so close to touching, they have a very strong electrical interaction. The RHIC provides a really nice facility for studying the effects of these intense electric fields, because oftentimes when you are trying to collide things, you miss. We will be able to probe our theoretical understanding of electromagnetic interactions with nuclei in ways that have not been possible.”

Seger’s research partner on the grant is Spencer Klein, Ph.D., who works at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California. Creighton students, both undergraduate and graduate, have been involved in this project for the past four to five years. The grant will fund hiring a new post-doctoral researcher to focus on this study. It also will provide funds for students to work closely with research collaborators at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and to travel to the Brookhaven Laboratory to participate in the experiments.

“This project is purely to expand our understanding of the world. It is very fundamental physics,” Seger said. “Once we begin to understand what happens, we can think about what can be done with the research in terms of something practical. Overall, the monies from this grant will provide excellent research opportunities for Creighton students, and the opportunity for Creighton to build connections with these national laboratories in the process of doing our work.”

Fitzgibbons Elected Fellow to Royal College

Robert J. Fitzgibbons Jr., MD’74, professor of surgery at Creighton University Medical Center, has been elected as an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. He was among four other distinguished surgeons from around the world to receive the award this past November at the annual Glasgow surgical forum in Glasgow, Scotland. He received this award for his pioneering work in minimally invasive surgery and abdominal wall hernia surgery.

Fitzgibbons received his medical degree from Creighton University School of Medicine and is the Harry E. Stuckenhoff Endowed Professor of Surgery. In the late 1980s, he was instrumental in developing specific techniques for laparoscopic inguinal herniorrhaphy (LIH) in the average general surgeon’s practice. His work has led to two important trials dealing with hernia repair. The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow was founded in 1599 by Peter Lowe under the auspices of King George VI.

Wilson Elected to World Psychiatric Association Committee

Daniel R. Wilson, M.D., Ph.D., was named chairman of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) Psychotherapy Committee at the WPA Congress held in November in Florence, Italy. Wilson is professor and chair of psychiatry and professor of anthropology in the School of Medicine at Creighton University Medical Center.

As chairman, Wilson will lead WPA efforts to promote best practices in psychotherapy clinical care, education and research, working with constituent national associations and medical schools worldwide.

“I am gratified to have been chosen by international colleagues to help with such important work in an increasingly complicated world,” Wilson said. “Since its founding in 1961, the WPA has brought together psychiatrists of different national and cultural origins, different schools of thought and various areas of interest and of diverging ideological proclivities united in the pursuit of increased knowledge in the field and of greater capacity for the care of mental patients.”
Executive Business Symposium ‘Absolutely Perfect’

Jamie Wewel surveyed a ballroom filled with well-dressed business leaders and confidently declared Creighton University’s First Annual Executive Business Symposium a success.

It was a fair claim. About 300 Creighton students had spent the morning of Nov. 12 absorbing advice from almost 30 business luminaries — advice dealing with ethics, personal integrity, leadership, overcoming mistakes and raising others to leadership roles.

Wewel, a marketing senior in Creighton’s College of Business Administration, had reason to be pleased. The inaugural symposium was the fruit of 10 months of effort on the part of herself and a team of students who, in February of 2003, were asked by Creighton’s Robert Moorman, Ph.D., to convene a business symposium similar to one sponsored by the University of North Carolina.

Moorman, who is director of Creighton’s Anna Tyler Waite Center for Leadership as well as holder of the Robert B. Daugherty Endowed Chair in Management, had given his students a huge task, and they knew it.

Josh Coury, a junior who was part of this year’s organizing team and who will chair the symposium next year, said students sacrificed a lot of sleep planning the event. They were greatly encouraged, he said, by the willingness of business leaders to help make it a success.

“This year was absolutely perfect. It’s going to be hard to top it,” he said.

Coury said the students envisioned something much smaller when they began the planning process, but they soon found that some big Omaha business names — almost all Creighton graduates themselves — were eager to help. He said their support bodes well for future symposia. Sponsorship support was successful with $32,000 raised.

When the participants finally convened Nov. 12, they found themselves in August company. The speakers included such luminaries as keynote speaker David Sokol, chairman and chief executive officer of Mid-American Energy; Ronald E. Gartlan, BSBA’69, president of Godfather’s Pizza; and Susan M. Jacques, president of Borsheim’s. Some other participants included Jayme Martin, BSBA’92, Nike’s general manager for Global Active Life Footwear; Greg Johnson, BSBA’89, a co-founder of Coldwater Financial; and Lisa Roskens, chief executive officer for America First Companies.

Convening the long and impressive list of participants was perhaps the biggest challenge Wewel and her team of student volunteers faced.

“These are all very busy people,” Wewel said. “To get them together at the same time in the same place for a whole morning and a lunch was a big challenge.”

But there they were, presiding over breakout sessions titled “The Ethical Dilemma: Being a Person of Principle,” “Leadership for Success,” “Breaking that Glass Ceiling: Women in Business” and “Corporate Lessons You Don’t Learn From the Books.”

Wewel, who chaired the symposium, said discussion topics were set after surveying students and faculty about real-world situations and dilemmas likely to arise after they leave the classroom.

Among the participants delivering answers was Shawn Ilg, JD’94, an Omaha businessman and real estate agent, who urged the students to gain real-world experience, especially in the years between earning a bachelor’s and a master’s degree.

“Today, an undergraduate degree is seen by many employers as advanced high school,” he said. “One of the most important points we can make today is the need for real-world experience.”

Other participants discussed the meaning of leadership and how to deal with failure, which they said is bound to intrude on even the most brilliant career.

“No one is evaluated on making a mistake,” said Gartlan. “No one’s perfect. You must ask, ‘How do I learn from this mistake? How do I fix it?’”

Terry McClain, senior vice president and chief financial officer of Valmont Industries, said ignorance is forgivable, stupidity less so.

“There is a difference,” he said. “You
start not knowing but are willing to learn. Stupidity is knowing but not doing. You will not last long in business like that.”

From the discussion about failure emerged a discussion about success, and the meaning of success.

Nike’s Jayme Martin said he measures success by how often he can raise a subordinate to a higher level of achievement.

“What watching my team succeed, seeing them step up as individuals, to foster that energy and success, nothing feels better than watching that,” he said.

Gartlan, who took the helm at Godfather’s Pizza in 1997, said success stems from leadership, and that leadership involves listening, honesty, fairness and firmness.

“What I try to do — and I evaluate myself on a constant basis — is listen,” Gartlan said. “Am I listening to my employer, my customers? If you won’t listen, you won’t grow.

“And you have to be honest, with yourself and with others. Be firm. Make a decision. Stick with it. Be fair. Let people know what’s expected and hold them to it.”

The special challenges facing women were addressed in a session involving Jacques; Connie Ryan, ARTS’75, president of Streck Laboratories; Gail Werner-Robertson, BA’84, JD’88, president and founder of GWR Companies; and Diane Duren, BSBA’81, vice president and general manager of agricultural products for Union Pacific.

The importance of balancing family life with business pursuits was quickly raised by students, and the panelists were unanimous in insisting that it is possible to do both.

“I don’t miss a family or school event,” said Jacques, who began her Borsheim’s career in 1982 as a sales associate and appraiser. “You cannot confuse your career with your life. If there is a Halloween party at school, I’m leaving work for an hour.”

It is out of concern for family life, Jacques said, that Borsheim’s maintains an unusual policy of remaining open only two nights a week and closing on Sundays.

Duren said it is easier for women to merge career and family today than in past decades. The difference, she said, is that men in positions of power now have daughters seeking to enter the professions who want to balance family and career. That brings the dilemma close to home, she said, and has made the corporate world more sympathetic to women’s needs.

“What pleases me the most was that so many students attended and that connections were able to be made between our students and the business community.”

— Robert Moorman, Ph.D.
Director, Anna Tyler Waite Center for Leadership, and Robert B. Daugherty Endowed Chair in Management

Werner-Robertson urged the approximately 100 women who attended the session to learn a lesson from their male counterparts when it comes to taking a risk.

“In general, women do not take risks, and men do,” she said. “That’s a huge disadvantage. Go where you are not comfortable and take some risk.”

Reflecting on the symposium after its completion, Gartlan said the students had “hit a home run” by securing so many “heavy hitter” business leaders.

“It gives the students a chance to ask about concepts and questions concerning the day-to-day business world that they are not likely to encounter in the classroom,” he said. “I am a graduate of Creighton’s business college, and I know it would have been extremely helpful to me to have had an event like this. It helps them understand reality.”

“Some schools place too little emphasis on real-world experience,” Ilg said. “So I commend Creighton for putting on a fantastic symposium that specifically gave real-world guidance that will help those students in the years ahead.

“They will find they will get a lot more out of their graduate studies when they have actual work experience.”

Moorman said the success of the symposium pleased him but came as no surprise given the students who volunteered to organize it.

“Five years from now I expect that our participant panels will be filled with former students who helped organize earlier symposiums and will be happy to take part,” Moorman said. “At that point it will become self-sustaining. I think this is the start of a tradition.”

The event culminated with a keynote address from Sokol in which the Mid-American Energy chief gave practical advice on building a business plan but also launched a spirited defense of integrity, ethics and personal responsibility in business dealings.

“Never compromise your integrity, who you are,” Sokol told the luncheon audience of several hundred. “Never allow your excitement or your desire to get somewhere to take a back seat to ethics. Once people start sliding down, it’s a tough climb back up.”

Though we live in an age of lawyers and contracts, the old fashioned standard should still apply, Sokol said.

“When you shake hands and give your word, that should go to the bank.”
CU Students Cash In on Threepenny Opportunity

In 2003, Denise Saylor took that “major step” — leaving her small community of Sabetha, Kan., to follow her theatrical dreams.

“I’ve always loved pretending to be other people, and I just kept moving in the direction that my high school acting took me,” Saylor said.

Attracted by Creighton University’s academic excellence, and the friendly, open atmosphere of the University’s Fine & Performing Arts Department, Saylor saw Omaha as a supportive arts community with a lot of theatrical opportunity.

“For a small-town girl like me with big dreams, I thought Omaha would be a great place to get experience in community theater,” Saylor said.

Now a Creighton sophomore with a major in theater, music and dance, she recently had the experience of her lifetime — working side by side with professional actors in Opera Omaha’s production of The Threepenny Opera last fall.

Part of a new and different affiliation between Opera Omaha and Creighton University’s Fine & Performing Arts Department, the show was staged at Creighton’s Lied Education Center for the Arts. The arrangement also offered Creighton students a chance to perform with and understudy seasoned professional performers. In addition to Saylor, Cari Wells, a sophomore journalism/public relations major, and Jackie Upthagrove, a sophomore music major, also auditioned for the production.

“I was the understudy for one of the principal characters, Polly Peachum,” Wells said. “For this part, I attended all of her rehearsals to learn the stage movements for her part. I also was in the chorus and performed in two smaller roles in the production.”

All three students were encouraged to try out by Lauren Pickle, Ph.D., adjunct instructor in voice at Creighton University.

“I am so proud of my students all the time, whether it is in a professional production or a professional quality community or school production. I am always delighted to see them grasp a new opportunity,” Pickle said. “I think the experience of auditioning is an amazing teacher, and the more experience you can get, the better prepared you are for a professional (or any) audition or show. The Threepenny Opera offered these students the chance to work with a talented and energetic stage director, Dorothy Danner, and with Hal France, the conductor for Opera Omaha.”

As both a chorus member and understudy, Saylor did double duty by attending both ensemble and character practices.

“Being coached in singing by a professional like Danielle Hermon (who played Lucy Brown) was fantastic! Opera Omaha’s leading performers are such credentialed professionals,” Saylor said. “Being a part of The Threepenny Opera was a much more serious endeavor artistically than anything I had ever been involved with.”

Creighton Celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Creighton University celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Jan. 17 in the Lied Education Center for the Arts.

The keynote speaker was Joseph L. White, Ph.D. White is professor emeritus of psychology and psychiatry at the University of California, Irvine, where he spent most of his career. A pioneer in the field of black psychology, White was instrumental in beginning the modern era of African-American and ethnic psychology.

Several awards were presented during the celebration, including the President’s Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Awards to John Langan, Ed.D., and the student founders of Creighton University’s Magis Medical Clinic. The legacy awards are presented to those who have demonstrated a commitment to the ideals of social justice and civil rights as espoused by King.

Langan is the past president of the Omaha Public Schools Board of Education and dean of the College of Education at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Creighton students Angie Adams, Ann Allie, Ajay Balaram, Katie Banker, Zulma Barrios, Rick Patch, Mary Rogers and Dave Rust planned for more than a year to create Creighton’s student-run Magis Medical Clinic that opened last fall. The clinic provides vital care to Omaha’s homeless.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Student Leadership Awards are given yearly to students who put the ideals of King into practice. This year, December graduates Sean Burke and Becky Chabot received the award — Burke for his work with the Creighton Center for Service and Justice and Chabot for her involvement with the Ignatian Family Teach-In at the School of the Americas Protest in Georgia.

In addition, the University sponsored an elementary school and Creighton University poster and essay contest. Winners of the contests were recognized during the ceremony.
Creighton Student to Compete for Miss USA

Creighton physical therapy student Jana Murrell will be among the 51 contestants competing in the Miss USA pageant April 11 in Baltimore. The show will be broadcast live on NBC.

Murrell, 23, was crowned Miss Nebraska USA 2005 this past October to earn the right to move on to the Miss USA pageant.

Murrell is a relative newcomer to pageants. Her first pageant was the 2002 Miss Nebraska USA pageant (held in 2001). She finished as the first runner-up. She entered the pageant again the next year, and was once more the first runner-up.

She took a year off before coming back this past year and again making it to the final pair.

“It was nerve-wracking when it got down to the final two,” Murrell admitted.

The third time proved a charm, however. Murrell is now taking a year off from her doctor of physical therapy studies to prepare for Miss USA and to fulfill her goodwill obligations as Miss Nebraska USA.

As Miss Nebraska USA, Murrell has already talked at local elementary schools and made appearances at community and charity events.

“I try to promote the crown and the pageant and everything they stand for — helping others, giving of your time to benefit others, improving society in some way, doing your part to make the world a better place and giving something of yourself,” Murrell said.

It’s a hectic schedule. But that’s nothing new for Murrell. This past semester, Murrell was busy in the classroom and completed a three-week clinical rotation at Lincoln Orthopedic Physical Therapy. She also held several part-time jobs — an aerobics instructor at Gold’s Gym and Creighton’s Kiewit Fitness Center and an alarm technician for the Omaha Housing Authority. She also has served as a community health advocate at Creighton’s Cardiac Center, attending health fairs and giving talks on healthy lifestyles.

Murrell, a graduate of Omaha North High School, came to Creighton in 2000 as an undergraduate on a presidential diversity scholarship. After three years in Creighton’s exercise science program, Murrell began work on her doctorate in physical therapy. She hopes to use her degree to assist with the rehabilitation of patients who have suffered brain injuries, strokes or other neurological disorders.

“I really like that hands-on, one-on-one with a patient,” Murrell said. “To see the progress, to see someone walk or move again, is very rewarding.”

At school, Murrell kept quiet about her pageant experience. “I didn’t tell my classmates,” she said. Several of her friends learned she had won the title after reading it in the newspaper.

Murrell has thoroughly enjoyed her pageant experiences — from preparing for the events to meeting with the other contestants to participating in the traditional swimsuit, evening gown and interview competitions.

“I like that it gives me a goal, something to shoot for,” Murrell said. “I take care of myself a lot more. I always feel a lot better when I’m preparing for a pageant, because I’m really paying attention to myself, trying to make myself the best that I can be. And I like the challenge.”

Medical School Appoints Two Associate Deans

Creighton University Medical Center’s School of Medicine recently appointed Roberta E. Sonnino, M.D., and Barbara J. McLaughlin, Ph.D., to associate dean positions.

Sonnino was named associate dean for Academic Faculty Affairs and professor of surgery and pediatrics. In this position, she is responsible for leadership and coordination of academic affairs, faculty affairs and faculty development.

Cam E. Enarson, M.D., School of Medicine dean and vice president for Health Sciences at Creighton University Medical Center said, “Dr. Sonnino’s experience as a surgeon, in faculty and student affairs, and her leadership roles in academic medicine will greatly benefit Creighton’s School of Medicine.”

McLaughlin has been appointed associate dean for research. She will be responsible for providing academic and administrative leadership in research and enhancing the quality of research and research training.

“We are pleased to have Dr. McLaughlin join the Creighton University School of Medicine,” Enarson said. “She brings to Creighton her broad experience in all aspects of research … as a scientist, a policymaker, a teacher and a leader.”

Purcell Named Chairman of National Tax Committee

Creighton University Accounting and Law Professor Thomas J. Purcell III, BSBA’72, JD’77, has been named chairman of the Tax Executive Committee of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). He is the first educator to lead the committee.

The AICPA is the national, professional organization of CPAs, with more than 340,000 members in business and industry, public practice, government and education.

The Tax Executive Committee is the tax policy and standards setting body of the AICPA and represents AICPA members on tax matters being considered by Congress, the IRS, the Department of Treasury and other public groups.
A $50 million gift to Creighton University from an anonymous donor is reshaping the campus. The Rev. John P. Schlegel, S.J., Creighton president, has announced that part of the gift will be used to construct a “living-learning” center for students that will serve as the “front door” and “living room” of the campus.

The center will creatively integrate traditional student services with academic support services and leisure, classroom/seminar and meeting space. It will be located at the current Epsen-Hillmer site at 20th and California streets. Demolition is to start this year, with an opening planned for 2007.

The center will be entirely funded by outside contributions, including $25 million from the anonymous gift. Additional gifts will be solicited to address operating costs.

Fr. Schlegel praised the generosity of the anonymous donor — a Creighton graduate and a loyal supporter of the University. At the donor’s request, the gift is to be used for capital improvements.

“The University community is deeply grateful for the generosity and loyalty of our alumnus, and the confidence in Creighton’s future which this gift represents,” Schlegel said.

“Creighton is committed to being a national leader among faith-based universities,” he added. “In the Jesuit tradition, we are values-centered and student-focused, rooted in service and dedicated to preparing women and men for responsible leadership, professional distinction and outstanding citizenship.”

William A. Fitzgerald, BSBA’59, chairman of Creighton’s Board of Directors, chairman and chief executive officer of Commercial Federal Bank, praised Fr. Schlegel for leadership that inspired the largest gift in the University’s history. Within the last year, there were only a handful of U.S. institutions of higher learning that received gifts greater than $50 million from living individuals.

“People are excited by what is being achieved at Creighton,” Fitzgerald said. “Thanks to the University’s leadership team, the campus has expanded, innovative teaching and learning opportunities have been developed, internationally recognized research has been fostered and the University has earned national recognition for its academic quality. People realize how important this emergence is for the University and for Omaha, and they want to be part of it.”

Fr. Schlegel said he believes this gift will spur other gifts to the University.

“At any institution that gets a significant gift like this, it does not go
unnoticed by the rest of the alumni community or the philanthropic community, local board members, local corporations, local foundations,” Fr. Schlegel said. “Consequently, I think this is seed money. The bar will be raised.”

Bruce C. Rohde, BSBA’71, JD’73, vice chairman of the Creighton Board and chairman and chief executive officer of ConAgra Foods, Inc., a Fortune 500 company, said the gift is a defining moment in Creighton’s history. “This gift is unprecedented for Creighton and certainly places it on the national philanthropic map,” he said.

“Creighton is proud it has grown up with Omaha,” Rohde continued. He pointed to an Omaha World-Herald editorial that praised Creighton’s campus development and long-term vision — a vision, the editorial states, that “should help lift Creighton, as well as Omaha, to new heights.”

Fr. Schlegel said the gift complements Creighton’s emerging national leadership among faith-based universities. The University has a record enrollment. The fall 2004 freshman class was one of the largest and brightest ever. In addition, Creighton’s strong reputation for academic excellence in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs has helped it rank at or near the top of U.S. News & World Report’s ratings of Midwestern comprehensive universities for the past 18 years. This past year, Creighton was listed among just 46 universities by U.S. News for its outstanding undergraduate research opportunities.

“I am very proud of that,” Fr. Schlegel said. “The fact that our undergraduate students get to perform research with their professors provides those students with excellent firsthand experience.”

Fr. Schlegel, who assumed the presidency in 2000, unveiled a master strategic plan last year as the University celebrated its 125th anniversary. The plan calls for strengthening Creighton’s national identity, focusing its dedication to mission and enhancing academic excellence, as well as providing a diverse human community, a dynamic living and learning environment for students and a solid financial foundation.

“We are the most complex institution of our size in the country — public or private — with just under 7,000 students, nine colleges and the entire complement of health science education,” Fr. Schlegel said. “You can’t find that combination in a university of this size.”

Since coming to the helm, Schlegel has overseen more than $100 million in campus improvements, adding 15 additional acres in eastward expansion, three new buildings and major renovations to the science center. New buildings include the Hixson-Lied Science Building, the Davis Square town homes for juniors and seniors and the nationally acclaimed Michael G. Morrison, S.J. Stadium. In addition, the California Mall running through the heart of the campus has been completely re-landscaped to make it more accessible, more attractive and a more usable space for students.

Creighton plans to break ground on its next set of town homes sometime around June near the current Davis Square complex.

“I think part of the genesis of this gift is that the donor is very pleased with the direction in which the institution is going,” Fr. Schlegel said. He added, “Creighton has a focused, planned and willed future.”

In addition to the U.S. News ranking, Creighton has been cited as outstanding by other national publications, including Money Magazine, The Princeton Review, Kiplinger’s Personal Finance and Peterson’s Best Colleges. Creighton also has earned national accolades for technological enhancements and for outstanding community service and faculty achievements.

“People are responding to the plan, our vision and our role in the community,” Fr. Schlegel said. “We have some historic opportunities before us, and we are excited and humbled by the extraordinary generosity and genuine commitment donors are making to Creighton’s future.”

Dramatic changes to the Creighton campus in recent years have included, pictured from top, the Michael G. Morrison, S.J. Stadium, the new Hixson-Lied Science Building, the Davis Square town homes, and the redesigned campus mall. The $50 million anonymous gift will fund additional capital improvements.
Between celebrating the Eucharist, hearing confessions, visiting the sick and counseling members of his parish, a diocesan priest may have a hard time penciling in time for his own personal prayer. Spirituality seems as elemental to the priesthood as lumber is to carpentry — the very medium of the trade. But, for the diocesan priest, the spiritual life sometimes can get lost within the hectic daily round.

The Institute for Priestly Formation was founded in 1995 to address this critical issue. Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, the program assists in the spiritual formation of diocesan seminarians and priests in the Roman Catholic Church. Designed to complement existing seminary programs, the institute responds to the need for a more concentrated and integrated spiritual formation. Rooted in the biblical-evangelical spirituality of Ignatius Loyola — the founder of the Jesuit order — the institute’s programs present a spirituality that can inspire, motivate and thus, sustain the busy daily lives of contemporary diocesan priests.

It is not surprising that the institute’s enrollment in its summer program for diocesan seminarians has burgeoned from six seminarians in 1995 to 105 this past summer. Participants came from 51 dioceses in 24 states and Canada.

“As their confidence in the program has grown, bishops have been inclined to send larger numbers, some sending all of their seminarians in a given year of study,” said the institute’s director and co-founder the Rev. Richard Gabuzda, S.T.D. A priest of the Diocese of Scranton, Pa., Gabuzda specializes in liturgical and priestly spirituality.

The institute’s other co-founders include assistant directors the Rev. John Horn, S.J., and Kathleen Kanavy, both of whom received their master’s in Christian spirituality at Creighton; and the Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J., S.T.L., who currently serves as rector of the Jesuit Community at the University of Scranton.

The institute, in collaboration with Creighton University, conducts a residential summer program for diocesan seminarians from across the nation and beyond. According to Gabuzda, the program begins with an eight-day silent directed retreat and includes individual spiritual direction, communal morning and evening prayer, Mass, apostolic work at local nursing homes and hospitals and a commitment to a daily hour of contemplative prayer. The course instructors include more than a dozen religious and lay faculty from across the country, who specialize in a variety of areas from priestly spirituality to pastoral diagnostics.

“We also offer four intensive classes which encompass classroom learning and personal prayer,” Gabuzda said. “Seminarians explore such topics as personal prayer and public liturgy; spirituality and sexuality; and the identity and spirituality of the diocesan priest.”

“This instruction helps equip seminarians with the practical tools for building spirituality into their daily lives,” Gabuzda explained. “It furnishes a cornerstone or fundamental awareness for a life as a diocesan priest.”

The Rev. Mark Beran, associate pastor at Cathedral of St. Cecelia in Omaha, undertook the program as a seminarian four years ago.

“The experience deepened my sense of how prayer can feed the priesthood. I continue to integrate the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius into my daily life,” Beran said. “One of the most amazing aspects (of the institute) was...
the chance to meet seminarians from all over the country."

The program encourages seminarians to openly discuss issues once considered taboo — sexuality and celibacy. Gabuzda pointed out that the institute stresses the importance of “receiving the call to a celibate life not as a demand to give up something, but as a call to a life of generativity, of fruitfulness. Celibacy received in this way helps the priest to enliven parishes and individuals with whom he is called to work.”

According to Gabuzda, the new generation of seminarians is characterized by a distinct resilience.

“Today’s seminarian is more prepared and emotionally mature, sober but not dispirited,” he said.

Seminary teachers themselves may be undergoing a similar re-direction toward increased spirituality in priestly formation. The institute offers a three-week program for seminary spiritual directors to enrich their understanding and experience of the spiritual director’s art in a way that highlights the particularities of the seminary setting.

The Rev. Gerald McCarren, the seminary spiritual director at Immaculate Conception Seminary in South Orange, N.J., said, “The opportunity to spend time with others engaged in this ministry will enrich what I do as a seminary teacher and spiritual director. I must add that the time has been transformative for me personally.”

The institute, like a gym for the soul, sponsors the full Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola in a 30-day retreat for seminarians, diocesan priests and bishops. In Ignatian thought, just as jogging benefits the body, so spiritual exercises strengthen, tone and invigorate the connection with God. The retreat inspires participants to become “contemplatives in action,” to love God in all things. As the principal methodology of the institute, Ignatian spirituality helps priests discern between those inclinations that deepen the relationship with God and those that result in alienation.

An institute graduate and diocesan priest in Des Moines, Iowa, the Rev. David Fleming said, “As a priest ordained 10 years, I found the retreat to be truly life-changing. Amidst the consuming functionalism of ministry, my interior life of prayer and my relationship with the Lord were being lost. The retreat revealed a depth of God’s profound love for me and affirmed my life … my being a priest.”

This past November, in celebration of the institute’s 10th anniversary, 25 institute staff members and friends from Omaha and across the country undertook a pilgrimage to Rome.

During a general audience with the pope, the group had the privilege of being called up around the Holy Father.

“As we gathered there, I was able to present to him a bound copy of the proceedings from our three symposia on the spirituality and identity of the diocesan priest,” Gabuzda said.

With the decline of U.S. diocesan priests — from 35,052 in 1985 to 28,967 in 2004 — the institute is serving a papal mandate by helping to revitalize the identity and spirituality of the parish priest. Pope John Paul II, in a recent address to prelates of Dubuque, Kansas City, Omaha and St. Louis, said, “Concern for the future also demands particular attention to seminary training, which needs to instill in students for the priesthood not only an integrated theological vision, but also a commitment to holiness and spiritual wisdom, as well as formation in prudent leadership and selfless dedication to the flock.”

About the author: Vaughn-Weiner is a freelance writer in Omaha.
Last winter there was extensive public media coverage of a study reporting an association between antibiotic usage and breast cancer risk.

Among other responses, it stimulated a local newspaper columnist to ponder the tradeoff between clear skin and breast cancer.

Heaney ... “more often than not” associations found in observational studies “turn out to be spurious.”
The columnist had received tetracycline antibiotics for a skin disorder and, when put in those terms, it didn’t sound like a good bargain.

Clearly, her reaction was based on the assumption that the connection between antibiotic usage and breast cancer had been securely established, or was at least reasonably likely. That, unfortunately, is probably the wrong conclusion, but one that might be hard to avoid if one doesn’t know how to interpret the results of such studies.

Studies of the sort reporting this association between antibiotics and cancer are called “observational studies.” Typically they accumulate a large number of measurements (observations) in individuals and then they look for associations between the measured factors and a variety of disease outcomes. “Association” means noting that people developing a given disease had greater than average exposure to a particular factor.

That approach would seem to be a reasonable way to search for the causes of disease. And often it is, so long as the results are correctly interpreted and the rules followed. But more often than not, the associations found turn out to be spurious. Follow-up studies failing to find a connection almost never make it into the lay press. Often they don’t even make it into the professional literature. The issue just drops off the radar screen.

Here is why a study of the sort described probably does not really mean what its findings seem to say.

Let’s say we make 100 measurements in each member of a group of individuals we call our sample: blood pressure, height and weight, hair color, what the participants typically eat for breakfast, cola beverage intake, whether their mothers had a high school education, how often they eat carrots, whether they charcoal-grill their steaks, their blood cholesterol concentrations, etc., etc. When the data are assembled, we record what kinds of illness episodes may have occurred in the individuals of our sample during the period of study. There are, of course, many hundreds of different diseases to which people succumb, but let’s say that we concentrate on only the 100 most common.

If, in actual reality, there were absolutely no causal connections between any of the variables or disease outcomes we choose to study, nevertheless, the way conclusions are drawn from these projects makes it inevitable that roughly 500 of the tested associations between a measured attribute and a disease outcome would appear to be statistically significant. And 100 of those would be what is called “highly significant.” In this case, none of these “connections” is real; each of the 500 “significant” findings is just chance association, and most would disappear if we were to repeat the study (to be replaced, of course, by 500 other, equally spurious associations). In this case the seeming connections indicate absolutely nothing about disease causation. Now, if in addition there are some real, causal connections, they would likely show up as well, but they would be buried in this welter of red herrings. The procedures by which inferences are drawn from such data make such an outcome inevitable.

Why such a large number of false leads? Think for a moment: you have 100 attributes measured in each of your study participants. And you have 100 diseases that each member of your sample either did or did not get. Each of the 100 diseases can be tested against each of the 100 attributes. That’s 100 X 100, or 10,000 possible comparisons! 10,000 chances to get a false connection.

So, finding an association in a given study is only the first step in identifying the cause of disease. It is not reason for us to stop taking tetracycline for acne or to change our favorite breakfast cereal. Such investigations cast a broad net and catch a variety of “fish,” some of which turn out to be not just red herrings, but old rubber boots or automobile tires. We have to sort out what we catch before we start to digest it.

Investigators have established rules for dealing with these matters. First, and perhaps most obvious and important: Is the observation repeatable? If other investigators perform similar studies, preferably in a different group of people, gathered in a different way, and they find the same association between factor
A Reporter’s Perspective
By Carol Zuegner, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication

Health and medical news bombards us daily. The chronicle of a local hospital’s success with a new kind of treatment for a knee injury is sandwiched between the weather and the sports on the local television news. Two or three short sentences about cholesterol crawl along the bottom of the screen on the all-news television network. A nine-paragraph story on Alzheimer’s research nestles between the latest stories of Middle East tension and Washington debate in the local paper. A five-sentence blurb on the benefits of lutein perchs in the corner of a busy page in a women’s magazine, alongside a beauty tip for younger skin and instructions on how to decorate a lampshade.

The news media present health and medical news in a dizzying array of formats and styles. The journalists who write, edit, produce and illustrate those stories work under deadline, space and audience constraints. Those constraints can be troublesome when writing, editing and presenting the simplest types of stories. Given the nuances and qualifiers of a medical story, especially a story about medical research, those constraints can lead to the kind of confusion and frustration that many media consumers experience.

Dr. Heaney is right. Journalists should ask those four important questions when reporting a story about associations in a medical research study. The best reporters do. Their editors and producers understand the need for qualifiers and nuances and ensure the finished story, whether in a newspaper, a magazine or on a television news program, contains those qualifiers. Major news organizations have medical and science reporters who know the questions to ask, who know to check with other scientists as to where the new piece of research fits into the overall picture. These reporters include the limitations and the cautions.

But that doesn’t always happen. Smaller news organizations don’t have scientific and medical specialists so the person who usually writes stories about education might be pressed into service. Journalists are always pushing deadlines. Their stories are only as good as their sources and their sources don’t call back. They only have 90 seconds to tell the story. They have to sum up a story in a six-word headline. Their stories have to compete for space and time with hundreds of other stories. Their 15-inch story that caught the nuances and the qualifiers of this study is cut to seven inches. Bye, bye context.

Journalists are taught to ask so what, to ask why their readers/viewers/listeners should care. Their editors and their journalistic training compel them to press for specifics. None of this excuses sloppy or inaccurate reporting. Much has been written in medical journals and in journalism reviews about the differences between the way science works and the way journalism works. Scientists most often communicate with other scientists in their disciplines, with people who are familiar with scientific terms and rules. If the articles scientists wrote for scientific journals could be understood by everyone, there would not be a need for journalists to mediate, to translate. The process of simplifying and of creating metaphors that allow the general public to understand often means that the newspaper, television, Internet and magazine story will lose some detail and complexity.

Even with this journalistic mediating, a good story can inform the public and illuminate medical research, both the process and the results. Reporters, editors and producers should provide an accurate account of what the researcher was trying to do, how the researcher did it, what the researcher found and what it means, all in context. It does happen. But in the vast array of mass media, it might not happen all the time. It’s not, as Dr. Heaney points out, necessarily because the journalism is irresponsible.

I understand the frustration that Dr. Heaney and other scientists must feel at seeing what they consider less than the full story in the mass media. Is the solution to NOT publish or air stories about preliminary research? I don’t think so. I believe more information is better. Should the reporters, editors, producers and the researchers be more careful? Yes. It is discussions like this that can help journalists do a better job at placing stories in context, that can help scientists do a better job in translating their work for the public and that can help consumers demand the best from both.
results have begun to be published, not only were the observational studies wrong, but they had gotten the association exactly backward. Instead of protecting against heart disease, hormone replacement therapy actually increased heart disease risk.

In such circumstances one almost never can know with certainty why the relationship observed was the opposite of what was really happening, but in this case most scientists believe it was because women who adhered to an estrogen regimen for several years tended to be more health conscious and to be more zealous in their choice of health-promoting lifestyles and behaviors. The protection seemingly conferred by estrogen, scientists speculate, was actually due to their other health-promoting behaviors, and the taking of estrogen was simply a marker for women who exhibited those practices. The behaviors concerned were seldom if ever measured in the studies that led to the wrong conclusion about estrogen, in large part because they often couldn’t even be named, let alone measured. (We rarely know exactly what to look for.) Whether this explanation is correct is not known, but it is a good illustration of how two things can be connected without one causing the other.

So, while repeatability is crucial, it alone is not enough. Some of the other rules include: Does the association exhibit the expected relationship to exposure — i.e., more exposure produces more disease and less exposure, less? (As is recognized, for example, with smoking and lung cancer)

Another is: Does the association exhibit the correct temporal relationship, i.e., does the exposure precede the disease? That one seems pretty obvious, but in many studies, particularly those that are cross-sectional in character, the investigators may have no information about that sequence. For example, if you had looked at a sample of older women today, some of whom had osteoporosis and some had not, and evaluated their use of calcium supplements, you would have found that the women with osteoporosis were using more calcium supplements than the women without. It surely would not be appropriate to draw the conclusion that the calcium supplements were the cause of osteoporosis. As it turns out in this example, the women started taking calcium because they had osteoporosis, not the other way around.

Yet another rule: Is the relationship biologically plausible? Are there animal studies or cell biologic studies that show that the factor concerned produces harmful or similar effects in various laboratory investigations? (For example, it had been known for years that cigarette smoke contained chemicals, called carcinogens, that were potent cancer producers in laboratory animals.) Only when all these conditions are met is it permissible to begin to suspect that there may be the presumed causal connection underlying the observed association.

So, what was the score for the study connecting breast cancer with antibiotic usage? 1) The findings have not been replicated. 2) The exposure relationship is partly correct: risk did increase with exposure (but, oddly, even brief antibiotic use was associated with a large relative increase in risk). 3) The temporal sequence is also correct. But 4) the biology is not very plausible. More likely, the usage of antibiotics signals a defective immune system, which is what may predispose to cancer (not the agents we use to treat those infections). Supporting this interpretation is the finding that the type of antibiotic used did not make any difference, and also the finding — good news for our local columnist — that users of tetracycline for acne did not exhibit any increase in cancer risk after all.

So, given these rules, why aren’t they regularly followed before going public? If you talk to the investigators individually, or if you listen carefully to their interviews on television, you will notice they are pretty cautious, as well they should be. Many of them are simply swept up in a system that battens on publicity. Scientists rarely get much recognition or public adulation from one another, and perhaps they are seduced by the public spotlight.

Moreover, the major medical journals have become big businesses. They depend heavily upon advertising revenue, and media coverage of their articles is a major factor in maintaining their position in the spotlight. Most of the major journals have press offices and most put out press releases for one or more of the articles in each issue. I am called virtually every week by reporters wanting my reaction to an article that is to be published tomorrow or the next day, asking first if I have seen it. And, of course, I haven’t — because the reporters get their issues of the journal a day or two before the subscribers or the libraries!

What can be done? For starters, the wire services and major dailies that have actual journalists covering these stories should use reporters who understand the rules of scientific inference, who know the four questions I have already listed, and who ask them of the scientists concerned. One hopes that this would produce both a more complete and a less sensationalized account of what was found. It might also dampen the ardor of the investigators for the media limelight if they are asked each of these questions on camera, with the microphone open.

But those who read the evening paper or listen to the evening news don’t have personal access to that information if the reporter hasn’t gathered it. At the very least, readers need to understand how easily random chance can produce spurious associations in research and to maintain a healthy skepticism until all the evidence is in. And if the topic concerned is of importance to them personally, perhaps they can take steps to find answers to the questions themselves on the Internet.

In the final analysis, it is not that the science is unreliable, nor even that the media reporting is irresponsible (though I suppose in some cases both may be true). Rather it is that the issues are complex and, if the public is to make intelligent decisions, it will have to get better at dealing with such complexities. Everyone is familiar in a general way with the Hippocratic oath taken by many new physicians. Few are aware of an important adage expressed by Hippocrates nearly 2,500 years ago: “Experience is deceiving and judgment difficult.” New research capabilities have expanded our experience and with it, our chances of being misled. Judgment remains difficult.
When in the 19th century scholars began studying religion as a human phenomenon, they first occupied themselves with the question of religion’s origins. Was religion a product of a primitive, pre-scientific attempt to explain the way the world works? Was it the result of a given society’s propensity to project onto a supposed cosmic lawmaker its own laws for the purpose of keeping social order? Could religion’s origins be discovered in the oedipal complex of sons forced to usurp their fathers’ places in the world?

After countless attempts to explain religion by way of some other explanatory system, such as sociology, anthropology or psychology, it was finally concluded that human religious behavior is sui generis.

To be human is to have the propensity to act and to be religious. To put it more formally: All religions share the goal of tying people back to something beyond the surface of life — a greater reality, which lies beyond or invisibly infuses the world that we can perceive with our five senses.

Attempts to connect with this greater reality take many forms and may involve sacred stories or texts, beliefs, rituals, ethics, designated leadership, spiritual practices, cultural components and historical traditions.

All religions respond to the fundamental human questions: Where do we come from? Why are we here? How do we live authentically? How do we account for evil and suffering? In addition, there are certain patterns of

By Wendy M. Wright, Ph.D.
Professor of Theology and John C. Kenefick Chair in the Humanities
Lenten Patterns

Editor’s note: The following article is edited and excerpted from the “Praying Lent” website established by Creighton University’s Collaborative Ministry Office. This website offers a wealth of resources for those looking to more fully experience the season of Lent. It can be found online at www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent.

“Insanity is defined as doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results.” This saying, commonly used in 12-step programs, reveals a real wisdom. It can be a good reflection as we examine the choices we will make during this holy Lenten season. It is very simple. Our Lord is calling us to a “change of heart.” And we know from experience that nothing will change unless we change our patterns. So, what needs changing? We start to come to know that by asking for help. “Lord, help me know what needs changing.” Then, we have to listen. Maybe I need to take more time in my relationship with God. Perhaps I rarely, if ever, hear the cry of the poor. Maybe I engage in any number of self-indulgent habits.

Beginning New Patterns

Lent is a time to commit ourselves to being more reflective — more observant or more aware of our “automatic” behavior. We should pay particular attention to our desires: Which ones need to be purified? Which ones may need to be abandoned? And which ones need to be acted upon?

Naming our deepest desires will guide the choices we make to establish new patterns for Lent. Lent is a wonderful time to establish new patterns of praying, eating, practicing generosity and practicing penance. Let’s take a brief look at each.

Praying. This is a great time to begin daily prayer, but realistically. I can start by simply pausing when I wake up, taking a slow, deep breath and asking for God’s grace as I take on the day. Or I might want to visit Creighton’s Online Ministries website (www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online) and spend time with the readings for the day, the Daily Reflections or the Praying Lent site.

Eating. This is not about losing weight. This is about being more alert. Monks centuries ago discovered that fasting — simply not eating — caused a tremendous boost in their consciousness. The whole purpose of fasting was to aid prayer — to make it easier to listen to God more openly, especially in times of need. Among Catholics, fasting means eating no more than one full meal a day and two smaller meals. Fasting can be a powerful way to join in greater solidarity with the poor of the earth.

Practicing Generosity.

Almsgiving has always been an important part of Lent. Generosity is an attitude. It is a sense that all that I have is a gift — a gift to be shared. It means that sharing with others in need is a personal priority. That’s quite different from assessing my needs first, and then giving away what is left over. Selfless giving joins us with Jesus, who gave Himself completely for us, and brings true joy to Lent.

Practicing Penance.

Penance is a remedy, a medicine, a spiritual therapy. The Lord always forgives us. We are forgiven without condition. But complete healing takes time and a plan of action. Lent is a wonderful time to name the sinful, unhealthy, self-centered patterns that need changing — as well as the circumstances, attitudes and other behaviors that contribute to these habits — and develop a strategy of action. Lasting healing needs the practice of penance.

Putting It All Together

Lent is indeed how God draws us home as individuals. But it is also a very communal journey. We never journey alone, no matter how lonely we may feel. Let us share with each other, support each other and pray for each other on this journey … on this pilgrimage to Easter joy.
Seasons of Reorientation and Transformation

As a teacher and scholar of the Christian spiritual traditions, I am familiar with the oft-heard proclamation, “I am spiritual but not religious.”

The perception, rampant among students in the United States and not unusual among adults, is that religion is all about dogmas, rules and regulations and “going to church,” while spirituality has to do with sensing the intrinsic sacred quality of reality or with achieving personal serenity.

The reasons for the spirituality versus religion divide, much discussed in scholarly circles today, are too complex to explore in any depth here. Suffice it to say that there is an enormous hunger among us today to live more deeply and intentionally. We have a collective yearning for some sort of spiritual transformation.

Without denying that too often we find scant spiritual nourishment in our religious communities, let me suggest that built into the very structure of traditional religions is a transformative pattern that generations of hungry soul-seekers have found nourishing. I’m speaking here of the observance of seasonal patterns of reorientation and transformation. These seasons generally have a sacrificial character; they involve preparatory fasting before feasting, giving up and letting go. They are times when transformation is consciously cultivated.

Take only the three great Abrahamic traditions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam — each of these traditions prescribes seasonal processes of preparation before its great feasts. The processes have at their core the inherent longing for transformation; they aim to deepen the individual’s and community’s relationship with the greater reality.

Islam celebrates an entire season of fasting during the month of Ramadan. The fast commemorates the revelations of the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad. Ramadan is not simply a time for physical fasting, although it is most known for the month-long sunup to sundown abstinence undertaken by all Muslims beyond puberty from food, drink, sexual intercourse and smoking. The Ramadan fast encourages self-discipline. It creates a sense of solidarity with Muslims the world over who make the same devout sacrifice. It also provides an opportunity for moral and spiritual purification. Enmities should be healed. Thoughts should be cleansed. Study and prayer are intensified. Almsgiving is increased. The physical fast is the external counterpart to a deeper reorientation guided by the principles of the Qur’an and Islamic law. The long fast culminates in the joyous feast of Eid. Spiritual transformation is at the heart of Ramadan.

Judaism too observes an intense season of reorientation that occurs during the seventh month of the Jewish religious calendar. Fall is the time when the Jewish community marks the beginning of the New Year with the celebration of Rosh Hashanah. Following this are the 10 “Days of Awe” that culminate in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a solemn day of fasting and religious observance. During these 10 days each person is encouraged to look carefully at him- or herself, to reorient toward G-d and neighbor. Tsuvah, or turning, repentance and inner renewal is the spiritual tone of the season. Individuals must ask pardon from everyone they may have wronged during the previous year and, if necessary, make restitution for damages. Congregations also confess communally, ask for forgiveness and pray for reconciliation, asking G-d for blessings in the coming year. A deepened sense of identity as a son or daughter of the covenant is the result of these solemn Days of Awe. Spiritual transformation is at the heart of the Days of Awe.

Christian Patterns of Seasonal Transformation

So too in the Christian community. Christians, alongside their Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters, observe seasonal patterns of reorientation. They too have a sacrificial season, a time of preparatory fasting before feasting, when spiritual transformation is consciously cultivated.

We have evidence from as early as the 4th century that Christians observed a 40-day period of fast and prayer in preparation for the great feast of Easter, the celebration which proclaims the central mystery of the faith: that Christ was raised from the dead and thus...
triumphed over sin and death itself.

This season, woven into the fabric of Christian consciousness for nearly two millennia, is known in the English-speaking world as Lent. The word, from the Anglo-Saxon, simply means “spring” for spring is the season, at least in the Northern Hemisphere, in which the 40 days occur. In Latin, the liturgical language of Roman Catholicism for centuries, the season was known by the term quadragesima. In French, Italian and Spanish the Latin term became carême, quaresima and cuaresma. All mean the “forty days,” or more literally the “fortieth day.”

No matter the language, the season of Lent has been, for the greatest part of the history of the Christian church, the sacred season in which spiritual preparation is undertaken earnestly. Traditionally, its most distinctive practice is fasting or, analogously, giving things up.

A Season of Giving Things Up

When my children were in Catholic grade school, they would come home with ideas for what they were going to give up for Lent. Chocolate was a favorite choice, and the cost of its elimination was well known to them because their seventh-grade teacher was infamous for her growing grouchy mood in the classroom as she held out against chocolate each year for the duration of the 40 days. The chocolate deprivation story may in fact be apocryphal but it does illustrate what most people think of when they think of Lent: giving something up.

The practice of giving something up, of course, has a deeper meaning. It is for something not simply against. It is not best understood in the same way as, say, going on a diet. We tend to diet in our culture to slim down and become more attractive or because we have been ordered by our doctor to lower our cholesterol count. These are not unworthy goals, but they are not primarily about spiritual reorientation or making room for God. They are not about spiritual freedom. If we diet in order to gain control over compulsive eating habits that keep us enslaved, we are closer to the spirit of Lent than if we do so in order to fit into last year’s suit.

All spiritual transformation involves radical change. It does not take place without some serious restructuring of the way things are. The patterns of behavior and perception to which we are habituated do not just fade away by themselves as we wish them to. They must be de-stabilized so that we can replace them with new, fresher, more intentionally other and God-directed behaviors and perceptions. Thus forgoing alcohol or dessert or those expensive Mocha Frappacinos for several weeks is only a hint at what Lent might look like, and has looked like, for Christians over the millennia.

Eastern Orthodox Christians still seriously observe the ancient Lenten dietary prohibitions against eating meat by shifting into an entire different culinary mode: chick pea, lentil and vegetable dishes dominate the Orthodox Lenten table. They mark the season as one of fast and abstinence. And as the last of the 40 days merge into Holy Week — the week in which Jesus’ last meal with his disciples, his arrest, crucifixion, burial and resurrection are liturgically celebrated — Orthodox Christians deepen the fast, then break it with the great Easter feast.

Some Protestant congregations may honor the season with simple suppers and programs directed to draw attention to the world’s imbalance of rich and poor. Sharing of wealth and living simply so that others might simply live thus becomes the focus of the season. The reorientation urged here is toward a social moral vision of the Christian life, love of God and neighbor...
expressed in the redistribution of goods.

In some regions of the country, especially those with large Hispanic populations, Lenten observance is dramatic and performative. Especially as the season deepens and its nadir on the Good Friday crucifixion approaches, processions of penitents carrying heavy crosses may make their way through city streets or up the roads to pilgrimage sites. The fulfillment of a vow, a promise, a debt of gratitude, these are some of the motivations behind the processions.

Similarly, but less dramatically perhaps, Roman Catholics of all ethnic backgrounds may engage in devotional practices such as the Stations of the Cross. Following Jesus on his via crucis, the way of the cross, through song and prayer, usually in the church, devotees are brought back to the events of Jesus’ last days and become incorporated more deeply into the ancient narrative of redemption. It occurs once again, for them. Stations of the Cross may also be done with a contemporary twist. Seeing the suffering and crucified Jesus in the poor, the oppressed, the battered, the hungry and the marginalized, modern Catholics may play out the ancient via crucis by processing to and praying at homeless shelters, food pantries, prisons and battered women’s refuges.

What is pointed to in all these practices is the process of reorientation that is the soul of the season. Giving things up, sacrificial actions; these lead to seeing anew, to spiritual reorientation and transformation.

**Jesus: The Model for Spiritual Transformation**

The scriptural precedent for this long Christian season of preparation is the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness as described in the three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Preparatory to his public ministry, after he had been baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan and, so the narrative goes, his divine Son-ship affirmed by the descent of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was “driven” out into the wilderness. There he was troubled by Satan who attempted to deflect him from the purposes that had brought him to the banks of the Jordan by luring him with visions of power, privilege and wealth. The scripture recounts that, ministered to by angels, he emerged from the wilderness freed from those lures and free to proclaim the coming of God’s kingdom, the work to which he felt called.

When Christians, whether in 4th century Syria or 21st century North America, enter the season of Lent, they do so in the presence of and in union with Jesus the Christ. They enter into the realities that he too underwent. Like him, they are expected to grapple with the habits, dispositions and lures that prevent them from freely responding to the call of God and neighbor. They need to be made more open, more attentive and more generous so that they can genuinely do so.

The season of Lent then is one in which they are made ready for what is to come. What is to come is both the next phase of their lives and the final mystery of life after this life.

The point of any sacrifice, whether it is giving up something to which we are attached, giving up our shortsightedness and narcissism, sharing our goods or devotionally re-enacting the drama of redemption is precisely to prepare us to receive what is greater than our little present selves.

What is it specifically, this year, in my own life, that needs transformation?

In what ways am I alienated from God?

Christians prepare and in the process, entered year after year, are gradually transformed. We become ready for the mission, ready finally for the mystery that is revealed at Easter time. It is as though, without the preparation, the
feast would be too glorious, too bright to be seen clearly. If we came with our dull, unclean sensibilities, if we came filled to the brim with our narrow preoccupations, our petty complaints, our self-absorbed views, we could not see it, could not grasp what the feast augurs.

One final point about the Lenten season of spiritual transformation, especially for those who are celebrating it this year. The season itself is prepared for individual Christians by the larger community of faith. Christian denominations decorate their worship spaces, choose music, hold up appropriate Scripture passages and designate communal practices to which all are invited. This provides a rich context for our personal Lenten observance.

But it is essential that we each ask ourselves: What is it specifically, this year, in my own life, that needs transformation? In what ways am I alienated from God? What are the enmities that need to be healed in my own family or with my co-workers? How attentive am I to the needs of those around me, especially the poor, the stranger, the marginalized? What habits and addictions keep me from being free? By what lures of power, privilege and possession am I tempted? What is it that I need to let go of to genuinely re-orient myself to the deep longing that I know is there: to live fully and freely and more intimately with my God?

The answers to these questions can only be answered by each individual. To risk transformation, each of us must enter the season courageously, like Jesus venturing into the wilderness, willing to struggle with all that tempts and enslaves us. It is comforting to remember that angels accompanied him. We too are not alone in our spiritual journey. Although we each must struggle in our unique way, we do so together in this Lent season of transformation.

About the Author

Wendy M. Wright, Ph.D., is a theology professor at Creighton and holds the John C. Kenefick Faculty Chair in the Humanities.

She also teaches regularly in several graduate ministerial programs, including Creighton’s Christian spirituality master’s program and the National Methodist Academy for Spiritual Formation.

Her expertise falls in the areas of history of spirituality, family spirituality, spiritual direction and women and spirituality. Her academic work has focused on the Salesian spiritual tradition founded by St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) and St. Jane de Chantal (1572-1641).

She is the author of several books, including Heart Speaks to Heart: The Salesian Spiritual Tradition (Orbis/Darton, Longman, Todd, 2003) and Seasons of a Family’s Life: Cultivating the Contemplative Spirit at Home (Jossey Bass, 2003).

Wright is currently editing the essential works of English Catholic writer Caryll Houselander (1901-1954) for an Orbis Books series on modern spiritual masters.

Wright, in St. John’s Church on campus, explains that through Lent, Christians become “ready … for the mystery that is revealed at Easter time.”
End of the Silver Filling?

By Mark A. Latta, D.M.D., M.S.
Associate Dean for Dental Research and Professor of General Dentistry

A new array of dental materials — many of them tested at Creighton’s internationally acclaimed Center for Oral Health Research — is offering patients more options than ever.

Will this new crop of materials spell the end for the old, reliable silver filling?

If you’ve visited your dentist recently and were told you needed a filling, you probably know that you have many options that weren’t available just a few years ago.

No longer is the silver amalgam the only option in the dentist’s armamentarium for filling cavities. While this silver-gray mixture of metals has served for decades as a standard for replacing diseased tooth structure, advances in polymers (plastics) have made possible filling materials nearly as strong as silver and formulated to match the color of teeth.

Placement of silver fillings requires the dentist to shape the cavity of the tooth to mechanically “hold” or retain the filling. Sometimes this includes placing grooves or undercuts into otherwise healthy tooth structure.

Tooth-colored fillings, termed “composite resin,” are placed using a special dental adhesive and literally “bonded” to the tooth, often minimizing the amount of tooth that needs to be removed. These more conservative cavity preparations can lead to lengthening the life of the filling and the tooth itself.

While tooth-colored filling materials have been available for more than 20 years, the early composite resins lacked strength, leading to fracture. They also wore away at a high rate, leading to the frequent replacement of the fillings.

In addition, the adhesive materials did not consistently bond or seal the fillings and the fillings weren’t retained securely.

The Decline of Silver

A nationwide survey of dentists by the American Dental Association showed that the number of amalgam restorations (or silver fillings) placed dropped 28 percent from 1990 to 1999, while the number of composite restorations (or tooth-colored fillings) placed jumped nearly 80 percent in that same time frame.

The use of silver amalgam has been steadily decreasing since the 1970s, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as the quality of composite resins has improved and the demand by patients for more aesthetic materials has increased.

At left, Dr. Latta treats a patient at the Creighton School of Dentistry. He is using a newly developed LED dental curing device, which emits a special light to harden (or polymerize) resin-based, tooth-colored filling materials.

A silver filling ... its use by dentists has declined significantly.
The Anatomy of a Silver Filling

For more than 150 years, dental fillings made from a mixture of silver, mercury and other metals have been widely used to treat tooth decay. In fact, silver amalgam is one of the oldest materials used in oral health care — predated only by the use of gold.

The steps include: (1) identifying the tooth decay, (2) removing the decay and preparing the tooth, and (3) placing the silver filling or amalgam and polishing it.

Amalgam’s benefits include:

• It can be used in individuals of all ages;
• It is normally less expensive than using composite resins;
• It is durable and performs well in stress-bearing areas and in small to moderate sized cavities in the posterior teeth; and,
• It serves as a good foundation for cast-metal, metal-ceramic and ceramic restorations.

or new decay formed between the filling and the tooth. However, 20 years of developments of dental adhesives and metal-free, resin-based composite fillings have borne fruit, producing materials that can now rival the long life of metal fillings.

Creighton a Research Leader

The research program at Creighton’s School of Dentistry has been focused on evaluating dental materials used in daily dental practice for 20 years. It has featured an emphasis on translating the results of research into improved teaching and clinical practice and, ultimately, better patient care.

The Center for Oral Health Research in the School of Dentistry enjoys a national and international reputation as a leading research institution in dental materials, especially dental adhesives and composite resin fillings. As a result, many large dental corporations seek Creighton faculty input for product development and sponsor-funded research at the school. (See box on Page 32.) The research activities in the center closely parallel the clinical orientation of the school, and the center focuses on several key areas.

First, the center is used for coordinating laboratory and clinical trials of new dental materials and devices and innovative treatment techniques. Over the last decade, more than 30 clinical studies and more than 100 laboratory investigations have been performed — including evaluations of new dental adhesives, metal-free filling materials, dental prosthetic materials, dental lasers and dental polymerization devices.

Creighton has been a leading academic center in providing the clinical evidence that tooth-colored fillings are suitable alternatives to silver amalgam and in helping to guide dental amalgam manufacturers in improving materials and techniques. The School of Dentistry was among the first centers to show that in certain clinical conditions the wear of composite resin was equal to silver fillings. Creighton research also has documented the effectiveness of the latest generation of dental adhesives. However, this does not mean that silver amalgam is outdated, nor should it be retired from service. Silver amalgam may still be a material of choice in very large fillings where amalgam can resist biting forces better than composite resin. Also the materials for placing a composite resin are more expensive and take more time to place successfully.

Silver is Still Safe

While in many clinical situations composite resin materials are an equally effective filling material, no one should avoid a silver filling because of fear regarding its safety.

Dental amalgam, in widespread use for over 150 years, is one of the oldest materials used in oral health care. Its use extends beyond that of most drugs, and is predated in dentistry only by the use of gold.

It is the end result of mixing approximately equal parts of elemental liquid mercury (43 to 54 percent) and an alloy powder (57 to 46 percent) composed of silver, tin, copper and sometimes smaller amounts of zinc, palladium or indium.

While there have been many reports in the press of the potential harmful effects of dental amalgam, there is no scientific basis for any disease or illness that has been ascribed to this filling material.

While it does contain mercury, this
The End of the Silver Filling?

A Natural Look

At left, these front teeth had older fillings that fractured, and new decay had formed. A composite restoration was placed to give the teeth a natural look.
Creighton’s Global Reach

The list of companies sponsoring funded research at Creighton’s School of Dentistry includes the largest dental companies in North America, Asia and Europe. They include:

- Dentsply International (several divisions in U.S. and Europe)
- Ultradent (U.S.)
- Ivoclar/Vivadent (Liechtenstein)
- 3M/ESPE Dental (U.S. and Germany)
- Hereaus Kulzer (Germany)
- Kuraray (Japan)
- Den-Mat (U.S.)
- Premier Dental (U.S.)
- BJM Dental (Israel)
- Shofu (Japan)
- Discus Dental (U.S.)

Recent graduate Andrea (Baalman) Taylor, BA’99, DDS’04, uses a special machine to test the strength of dental materials. Dental students have an opportunity to assist in research at the school.

Decay is Still Pandemic

One of the best preventive care success stories in all of health care is the remarkable reduction in dental decay because of dental treatment practices and the use of fluoride.

In 2003, Americans made about 500 million visits to dentists, and an estimated $74 billion was spent on dental services. Yet many children and adults still go without measures that have been proven effective in preventing oral diseases and reducing costs.

For example, more than 100 million Americans still do not have access to water that contains enough fluoride to protect their teeth, even though the per capita cost of water fluoridation over a person’s lifetime is less than the cost of one dental filling. Dental decay is still a widespread finding in children and adults and is considered pandemic in children. For children, cavities are a common problem that begins at an early age.
Tooth decay affects nearly a fifth of 2- to 4-year-olds, more than half of 8-year-olds, and more than three-fourths of 17-year-olds. Tooth decay, in fact, is five times more prevalent than asthma in children. Hardest hit are low-income children. About half of all cavities among low-income children go untreated. Untreated cavities may cause pain, dysfunction, absence from school, loss of weight and poor appearance — problems that can greatly reduce a child’s capacity to succeed in life. Diet is a major factor in the rise of dental decay. Acidic carbonated beverages with high sugar content significantly increase the risk of dental decay. Given the growing need for dental care, especially among economically disadvantaged children and families, the loss of silver amalgam as a cost-effective option could adversely affect the health of millions of Americans. Particularly in young children, where moisture control might prevent using composite resin, silver amalgam may represent the best way of treating a decayed tooth and helping to maintain the oral health of the child.

At Creighton’s School of Dentistry, we continually work to research the best and most cost-effective ways of treating dental disease, and we educate our students to be aware of traditional and modern approaches to dental care so as to meet the needs of a wide variety of patients they will see in their professional lives.

About the author: Mark Latta coordinates all facets of research at Creighton’s School of Dentistry. His personal research interests include prosthetic dental restorative materials, adhesives and bonding and dental material clinical trials. Prior to coming to Creighton, he was director of research and development for the Trubyte Division of Dentsply International, where he contributed to or was responsible for more than 20 new dental product introductions. He has been awarded numerous research grants for evaluating the laboratory and clinical performance of dental materials; has given more than 80 lectures in North and Central America, Europe, the Middle East and Australia; and has published more than 30 manuscripts and 100 abstracts.

**Dental School Celebrates 100 Years of Education, Service**

The Creighton University School of Dentistry is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2005.

The first class was held Oct. 2, 1905, at the Creighton Institute in downtown Omaha. The Institute — which also housed the School of Law — was funded by a $140,000 gift from Creighton benefactor John A. Creighton.

A 1905 publication described the facility as one of the finest available, “having all modern equipment, including facilities for instruction unsurpassed by any college in the west.”

In 1921, the School of Dentistry moved into its own building on Creighton’s main campus, at 26th and California, and remained there for more than 50 years. That structure now serves as the Humanities Building.

In 1973, the current 150,000-square-foot facility opened at 29th and Webster streets. The $10.3 million structure was named for generous Creighton benefactors Harry N. Boyne, DDS’13, MD’32, a Council Bluffs, Iowa, dentist, and his wife, Maude Boyne. The Boynes created a major endowment in the school for the purchase of state-of-the-art equipment. The endowment continues to be used today.

Over the past 100 years, the School of Dentistry has graduated 4,433 dentists, who have gone on to serve their communities and their profession with distinction.

The school’s clinic, as it appeared in the early 1900s, was described as one of the finest available. Creighton’s faculty members are innovators, committed to service and dedicated to their students and their profession. Creighton’s Lawrence Donahoe, DDS’16, for example, performed the first televised dental operation in the United States in the summer of 1948. About 450 educators from 12 states watched the televised demonstration of treatment for periodontal disease. The late Raymond Shaddy, DDS’53, a former dean, established dental outreach efforts at home and abroad. And two current faculty members — Dr. Kenneth Knowles and Frank Dowd, DDS’69 — received a prestigious national award for teaching excellence from the Omicron Kappa Upsilon dental honor society.

Today, the school continues to provide quality, affordable care to the community and to reach out to the poor and the marginalized through its clinics and service efforts. In 2003-2004, about 20,000 patients, both children and adults, received care at one of the nearly 150 dental chairs in the school’s clinics — with patient visits totaling nearly 50,000. The school is one of the largest Medicaid providers in Nebraska; no one needing immediate care is ever turned away.
Considered one of the greatest theologians of Western Christianity, St. Augustine of Hippo (inset) attended secondary school in the Roman city of Madaura in North Africa (present-day M'Daourouch, Algeria; see map on opposite page). Fr. Flecky's photographs of the ruins of this ancient city (background) and others in North Africa provide a unique, stunning window on the world of St. Augustine.
It all started out in 1980 as a journey to photograph along America’s historic Appalachian Trail. But it ended quite differently — in fact, halfway around the globe and among the ruins of the ancient world!

Lucky for us … and for scholars, particularly those in the Western Hemisphere. For what Creighton fine arts professor the Rev. Michael Flecky, S.J., brought home in the 1980s was a glimpse of a treasure trove behind doors that were closing on the West. His camera took in what scholars’ eyes today cannot: what remains of the 5th century world of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) — and all the ghostly layers of antiquity that share that tableau in stone.

Fr. Flecky had packed all of his gear to begin his MFA thesis in the eastern U.S. But a call from a Jesuit scholar of church history, the Rev. L. Don Davis, changed all that.

The Augustinian scholar had made a meticulous itinerary of quite a different kind of trail — one that wound its way from sites in Italy to those in Tunisia and Algeria. To his volume of essays, that would present St. Augustine’s historical texts and commentary, were to be added photographs of what remained of Augustine’s world — and, back in 1980, Fr. Davis needed a photographer — and a driver. Fortunately, Fr. Flecky was more than adept at both.

Fr. Flecky’s photos open up that world — and take us back some 1,500 years. We join Augustine, Bishop of North Africa, as he crisscrossed this outpost of Roman authority — the fertile “breadbasket” of ancient Rome. Here, 4th century Roman legions were only the latest in a series of civilizations that had long swept the wide valleys of this fertile land; before them had come the great kingdoms of Phoenicia and Carthage — and after them, as Augustine lay dying in the besieged city of Hippo, the Vandals.

Conquerors had long been covetous of the region, with its fertile soil and climate much like that of Northern California, a climate that easily yielded grapes for wine, grain and olives for its often distant ruling states. “If (ancient) Rome had missed either of its two annual shipments of grain” from the region, says Creighton theologian the Rev. William Harmless, S.J., “it would have starved.”

Luckily for scholars, too, the climate has been easy on antiquities, Fr. Flecky says, without the freezing and thawing...
Fr. Flecky's camera reveals all that remains of the Christian Basilica of Hippo, the episcopal see of Augustine from 395-430. Not far from present-day Annaba in Algeria, Hippo was probably first settled by Carthaginians in the 4th century B.C.E.

A temple still stands against the skyline in the ancient city of Dougga (see map on Page 35) in the mountains above the Mejerda River in northern Tunisia. Augustine frequently traveled near Dougga on his way to Carthage.

Fr. Flecky’s camera reveals all that remains of the Christian Basilica of Hippo, the episcopal see of Augustine from 395-430. Not far from present-day Annaba in Algeria, Hippo was probably first settled by Carthaginians in the 4th century B.C.E.
This theater in Dougga might have come under verbal attack from Augustine, who, Fr. Flecky says, would have railed against the licentiousness of contemporary theatrics.

that can tumble even great temples.

Born in what is present-day Algeria, St. Augustine was familiar with this outpost of Rome. He preached the Gospel across his native North Africa, supervised the building of its churches, and would become perhaps the single most important theologian in Western Christianity. Before his conversion, Augustine served as orator for Milan — then the emperor’s residence. There, he met Milan’s learned bishop, St. Ambrose, whose sermons sparked Augustine’s dramatic conversion. His writings, among them, *Confessions*, *City of God*, and the *Trinity*, and his sermons are extensively studied today. And, according to Fr. Harmless, whose research centers on St. Augustine, one of the greatest achievements of 20th century church scholarship has been to place this giant of the church — “arguably the greatest theologian of Western Christianity — back into his world, in North Africa.”

Fr. Flecky’s photographs help to do just this, Fr. Harmless says. Walking with Fr. Flecky in Augustine’s footsteps, we see where the great thinker helped shape the early church, its sacraments and literature.

The photos shown here represent only some of the photographic gems from Fr. Flecky’s journey. More are set to go on exhibit this spring, from March 16 through April 10, at Creighton’s Lied Education Center for the Arts.

For the Creighton fine arts professor, the journey to make the photos was almost as interesting as the photos themselves.

Fr. Flecky exposed the original 75 rolls in 1980 in black and white, plus an additional 14 rolls in color. He returned to the project in 1983 to expose 29 more color rolls.

Back then Fr. Flecky’s chief worry was to guard the exposed film. “I didn’t dare risk it,” he remembers, to the vagaries of airport X-rays, “so I developed the black and white film in my hotel rooms, mixing the chemicals in the bathtub.” He even carried around the chemicals with his luggage, in plastic milk jugs.
The color slide film was another matter, which Fr. Flecky sent off to Paris.

But Fr. Flecky’s work in the ’80s among the St. Augustine ruins was played out against a backdrop of political turmoil; soon access to Algeria closed, and the Jesuit photographer came home.

“I tried to finish the project three years later, and the situation had become very, very precarious. Westerners had to be very low-key. I identified myself on my passport application as a professor, not as a priest.”

Years of war and neglect have also made the area a dangerous place for the ruins. Great temples, theatres and garrisons of ancient Rome dot the landscape, but are not as carefully kept up as in the past, Fr. Flecky said. Gone is the day when European scholars had easy access to excavate and restore the ruins — a luxury that no longer exists.

But there’s a fortuitous twist here. Because Fr. Davis’ book remained unpublished, Fr. Flecky’s photos endured the same fate. Until now.

Represented are “sites which every Augustinian scholar now knows only as names because they cannot be visited.”

The photographs, he adds, help us to understand the world in which Augustine and his colleagues lived.
Top right, a view of the Roman baths of Carthage, fronting on the sea. This center of ancient Punic and Phoenician cultures and fortified Roman seaport, lies today near contemporary Tunis.

Middle right, the sanctuary of the Christian Basilica of Hippo, episcopal see of Augustine, shows the seat at the center where Bishop Augustine would have presided.

Right, this mosaic-tiled baptistry in the basilica of ancient Thamugadi is outstanding in its clear detail. “The rite of baptism,” writes Peter Brown in *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, “was thought of as a drastic purification: with the bishop’s ‘spell’, Christ, the ‘Great Fish’, slipped into the water of the baptismal pond,” an image one can still see deep in the tiles today.
Heiders’ $2 Million Gift Establishes Endowed Chair in Cancer Research

Recognizing that cancer touches the lives of all Americans, and that supporting research offers hope for a cure, Charles, BSC’49, and Mary Heider have made a $2 million gift to establish the Charles F. and Mary C. Heider Endowed Chair in Cancer Research in the School of Medicine.

“Creighton University owes a profound debt of gratitude to two of its most loyal and generous supporters, Charles and Mary Heider,” said the Rev. John P. Schlegel, S.J., president of Creighton University. “We are committed to making Creighton University a national leader among faith-based universities by fostering a highly distinguished, flourishing community of teacher-scholars and students actively engaged in learning, research, patient care and service. Endowed chairs are one way of fulfilling this mission. We thank the Heiders for their leadership, their generosity and most of all their faith and their willingness to join with us in our mission.”

The Charles F. and Mary C. Heider Endowed Chair in Cancer Research is the 24th endowed chair for Creighton University and the second endowed chair established by the Heiders. The first, the Charles and Mary Heider Endowed Jesuit Faculty Chair, was inaugurated in 1994 and supports the work of renowned photojournalist the Rev. Don A. Doll, S.J.

Dr. Henry Lynch delivers his address at the Heider Chair inaugural on Nov. 10.

“Mary and I have a strong belief in Jesuit education. That belief has grown even stronger over the years,” Charles Heider said. “We believe the world needs people who have the attributes a Jesuit education fosters. What Mary and I have found is that helping this University enables us to change the world in many ways we could not do alone.”

Henry T. Lynch, M.D., pioneer researcher and world-recognized expert in hereditary cancer, was installed as the first holder of the Charles F. and Mary C. Heider Endowed Chair in Cancer Research on Nov. 10. An oncologist and professor of preventive medicine, he previously held the Dr. Harold J. Bonnycastle Endowed Chair in Preventive Medicine in the School of Medicine.

Lynch’s research in hereditary cancer has earned worldwide recognition, respect and numerous awards. He joined the Creighton University School of Medicine faculty in 1967, was named professor of medicine in 1970 and has chaired the Department of Preventive Medicine since 1968. In 1995, he established Creighton’s Hereditary Cancer Prevention Clinic, an interdisciplinary clinic that assists families to find information and services related to all hereditary cancers. Through his efforts, numerous genetic cancer centers have been established around the world.

In 1967, cancer was thought to be triggered almost solely by environmental causes. Lynch, however, began following a different lead — the possible genetic link to certain cancer types. His painstaking recordkeeping and compilations of family medical history data led him to identify cancer syndromes and their patterns of inheritance through generations of extended families. His identification of the Lynch Syndrome in colon cancer now makes it possible to predict with nearly 90 percent accuracy the risk of the disease in patients with direct germ-line mutations. With early detection, Lynch Syndrome and other colon cancers are curable in 90 percent of patients.

“Dr. Lynch’s research is of particular interest to us, because, like most people, our family has had to deal with this disease,” Charles Heider said. “We believe that if cancer in its many complexities is ever to be conquered, it will be by dedicated researchers who, as the Jesuits demand, ‘ask the right questions.’”

The Heiders are hopeful that their support will enable Lynch and his team to continue research that will help the entire medical field to better diagnose and treat cancer in its many forms.

Charles and Mary Heider and Mary Claire McBride Heider

Charles and Mary Heider are dedicated supporters of the over 450-year-old Jesuit tradition of quality education that prepares men and women to be competent, caring and conscientious citizens of the world.

A 1949 graduate of the College of Business Administration, Charles served on Creighton’s Board of Directors for 17 years. He volunteered in four major campaigns and helped guide the Health Future Foundation. Charles is a former president of Chiles, Heider & Company and now is a general partner of Heider-Weitz Partnership and president of the Charles Heider Company, a private investment firm.

Mary attended Duchesne College in Omaha. Their belief in the Jesuit tradition of service to the community is reflected in the couple’s service on the boards of directors of numerous Omaha educational, youth, civic and health care organizations. Their philanthropic leadership has helped raise millions of dollars for projects benefiting Nebraska citizens.

In 1994, the Heiders established the Charles and Mary Heider Endowed Jesuit Faculty Chair at Creighton University. They have funded scholarships, supported Creighton’s athletic programs and helped renovate residence halls, one of which is named after them. In 2002, the couple received the first Ignatian Leadership Award from the Jesuit Council of Omaha.
Richard Heider Family also Committed to Jesuit Higher Education

Richard “Dick” Heider, BSC’47, JD’48, loved life. He loved skiing, biking, hiking, fishing and playing tennis. But most of all he loved his family and enjoyed partaking in these activities with them. After battling with a recurrence of non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma in the fall of 2003, Dick Heider succumbed to the disease on April 28, 2004.

Dick was born July 7, 1924, in Carroll, Iowa. After graduating from Creighton University, Dick moved to the Rocky Mountain region where he worked in the petroleum industry from 1948 to 1983. In the 1970s, he spent much of his time traveling overseas and negotiating drilling deals and joint ventures. He and his late wife, Marguerite Wallace, married in 1950. They lived and raised three children in the Denver area: Anne (deceased), Susan Coleman and Beth Scannell.

According to the Summit Daily News, Dick’s friends and family gathered on Dec. 5 in Breckenridge, Colo., to celebrate his life the way he would have most wanted: by telling stories and skiing.

“He would just effortlessly float down the mountain,” Susan Coleman said in the article. “I think nothing made him happier than skiing with his children and grandchildren.”

Because the Heiders believed that young men and women deserve the opportunity to benefit from a Creighton education, they established the Richard J. and Marguerite Heider Endowed Scholarship Fund with a $50,000 gift in 1996 as part of the Creighton 2000 Campaign.

In 1995, the Heiders established a charitable remainder trust with Creighton University as the beneficiary. Part of the $350,000 gift recently funded the Richard J. & Marguerite W. Heider Lecture Hall in the Hixson-Lied Science Building.

“The Heiders were strongly committed to Jesuit education,” said Creighton President the Rev. John P. Schlegel, S.J. “We are pleased to have their names remembered on campus in the new Hixson-Lied Science Building. We now thank their family for all that Dick and Marguerite have done for Creighton University and its students.”

The remainder of the gift was added to the Richard J. and Marguerite Heider Endowed Scholarship Fund. Initially, the scholarship provided funds for students from Carroll County, Iowa. However, to broaden the reach of the scholarship, students from Colorado are now included, as well.

“My parents’ family foundation annually supports the Boys Hope Girls Hope home in Denver,” Coleman said. “Some of these kids have shown an interest in attending Creighton. So we decided to broaden the scope of the scholarship fund to help students from Colorado as well as Carroll County, Iowa. My father enjoyed hearing from the Creighton students who had received the scholarship. He often commented on his admiration for the Jesuits and the education he received from Creighton.”

Thanks to the generosity of the Dick Heider family, undergraduate students with financial need from Iowa and Colorado will be eligible to receive financial support during their Creighton education.

What is Your Legacy?
By Steve Scholer, JD’79
Director of Estate & Trust Services

While the story has been told many times and is even inscribed on the walls of the University’s oldest building, Creighton University would not exist were it not for the estate plans of Edward and Mary Lucretia Creighton. Though Edward died without a will, Mary Lucretia provided the bequest in her estate that created and endowed the family’s namesake University.

Realistically speaking, few of us will ever be able to establish a new university, but through careful estate planning we still can create a lasting legacy for our heirs and for the future of Creighton University.

Bequests continue to be the most common method for providing for one’s heirs and favorite charitable organizations. However, statistics indicate that, like Edward Creighton, less than 45 percent of Americans have a will. If you die without a will, the state in which you reside at your death will enforce its own plan for the distribution of your estate. An investment of time to carefully evaluate your current needs and financial situation, along with your future goals, is the first step to prevent this and to ensure your legacy is fulfilled as you wish.

Even if you already have a will, it should be regularly evaluated and, if necessary, updated. Tax laws change and so may your wishes and the needs of others. Experts recommend reviewing your estate plan at least every five years.

Increasingly, so-called “will substitutes” such as beneficiary designations for IRAs or qualified retirement plans also are being used to carry out one’s wishes for the distribution of his or her estate. Advisers are now recommending the use of these heavily tax-burdened assets to fulfill charitable intentions. Since Creighton will receive these assets free of income tax, and your estate will receive an estate tax deduction, the full value of your gift can be used to create a perpetual endowment for scholarships, programs or faculty support.

I invite you to consider the question, “What is your legacy?” and join those who have provided for the future of Creighton University by including a charitable bequest in your will or trust or by including the University as a beneficiary of your qualified retirement plans. If you decide to leave a legacy to Creighton, you will be eligible for membership in the Creighton University Heritage Society — our recognition group for those who have made provisions in their estate plans for Creighton.

If you would like to receive further information on estate planning, learn how to include a bequest to Creighton in your estate plan or if you are interested in becoming a member of the Heritage Society, please call (402) 280-1143 or (800) 334-8794. Please accept my thanks if you have already included Creighton in your estate plans.
Most law school deans don’t grade papers written by first-year students. But then most law school deans don’t get to hear Justice Clarence Thomas fill their corridors with his booming laugh every other February, either. Nor are many asked to develop a program for the community at large aimed at resolving disputes outside the courtroom.

But such fills the busy life of Pat Borchers, dean of Creighton University’s School of Law.

Borchers took an hour during a mild December day last year to discuss Creighton law school’s growing reputation, the blessing of having a Supreme Court justice serve as a visiting lecturer every other year, and to outline plans to offer Omaha residents a course in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), a concept that encourages and empowers contending parties to settle disputes out of court.

Borchers said he hopes to make ADR a signature program, one that will bind the law school even closer to the community it has served for the past 100 years. In addition, he said, if drawn up properly, it will make Creighton one of the few law schools nationally to develop an ADR program that reaches beyond the classroom and has a practical impact on the larger community.

A $4 million pledge from C.L. Werner, chairman and CEO of Omaha’s Werner Enterprises, and his daughter Gail Werner-Robertson, BA’84, JD’88, president and founder of GWR Wealth Management, LLC, has made it possible to create the Werner Institute in Alternative Dispute Resolution and will enable Creighton to join just 14 other universities across the country that have established such centers. In one respect, however, Creighton’s institute will be unique.

“This one will be the only one to focus on resolution of business disputes,” Borchers said. “Our mission will be to educate non-legal professionals in the techniques of resolving disputes without having to go to court.”

Borchers outlined the ambitious plan at the end of a stellar year for the law school, certainly in terms of donations. A $1 million pledge from the Omaha-based law firm of McGrath North Mullin & Kratz’s Foundation will fund a new endowed chair in business law, and a $1 million pledged gift from George, JD’62, and Susan Ventiecher will be used to provide scholarships. Such donations are key to the school’s future, Borchers said, since they enable Creighton to attract prominent professors and also to offer scholarships to highly promising students.

“We’ve been working really hard to generate the resources to support our faculty, and to give our students more scholarships,” Borchers said.

And when it comes to quality faculty, it is hard to beat the presence of a Supreme Court justice in the classroom, even if it is just every other February. Drawn by Omaha family ties and a respect for Creighton’s academic standards, Justice Clarence Thomas has become a familiar presence on campus in recent years. Borchers said Thomas’ presence brightens dreary February.

“When you get to the middle of February, the holidays long gone, winter dragging on and then I hear that deep belly laugh of his coming down the hall, man do I feel better,” Borchers said.

“He likes us, and we like him. He gets a chance to teach our students, which is a way to refresh himself. We think highly of him. I told him that if the Supreme Court thing didn’t work out, he should come here and teach constitutional law.”

If he ever did, Thomas could certainly expect to spend time grading papers, just like the dean. Borchers said his involvement with incoming students is a reflection both of his own interest in newcomers and Creighton’s overall determination that the school’s resources should be used as much as possible to promote education.

“This has always been a place that has cared so much about educating its students,” Borchers said. “I meet with every prospective law student personally, a couple hundred a year. I tell them that the only thing that matters here is education.

“Most law school deans don’t grade papers, but I really like working with first-year students. If we’re going to be serious about educating our students, then it has to start at the top.”

About the author: Curtin is a freelance writer in Omaha.
Often I am asked if being a priest affects my photography. My answer is always, “Yes, it has everything to do with it.” For me it’s hard to separate the creative process of seeing from prayer. Both can be contemplative acts.

Both involve an openness to the Spirit — a willingness to let go of one’s presuppositions and go with the hunches and intuitions that arise deep within one’s heart where I believe the Spirit speaks within each of us.

The Jesuits have a mission — “Faith doing Justice.” I photograph to tell the stories of people who have no voice. Hopefully I can help others understand and work to change unjust social structures.

— Don Doll, S.J.
Professor of Journalism,
Charles and Mary Heider Endowed Jesuit Faculty Chair
http://magis.creighton.edu