

Message from the University President

Striving for a More Diverse Community

This third column on Creighton's objectives as outlined in our Project 125 strategic plan focuses on diversity. I said in my inaugural address four years ago that we will seek to create an inclusive, diverse community at the University. I believe that there is in the Jesuit world view an implicit acceptance and appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity.

Project 125, our strategic plan, challenges us to create a diverse human community of students, faculty and staff at Creighton. We intend to meet the following goals:

- Faculty, staff and students will exhibit cultural competence/proficiency and awareness of the significance of global diversity.
- At a minimum, underrepresented minority students, faculty and staff will constitute a percentage of the Creighton population consistent with the demographics of Omaha and the surrounding region.
- The retention rate of underrepresented minorities — students, staff and faculty — will equal or surpass that of their majority counterparts.
- Creighton will exhibit gender and ethnic balance when recruiting and retaining faculty, staff and students.
- Creighton will exhibit zero-tolerance with respect to discrimination or harassment.
- Creighton will develop strong relationships with local and regional minority communities.

We seek an inclusive community because it is the right thing to do, and the commitment is deeply rooted in our history.

The Jesuits in Omaha have historically been trailblazers in the area of racial harmony and racial integration. The Rev. John P. Markoe, S.J., of Creighton was well ahead of his time. He was in the advance guard of the civil rights movement in the 1930s and 1940s, long before the cause gained popular support and visibility. He worked actively with a group of Creighton students and helped organize the DePorres Club for the purpose of promoting civil rights for blacks. They pioneered the sit-in technique later used throughout the country in the 1960s.

Some observations on diversity as a strategic objective:

Diversity is a leadership issue. Responsibility for so important an issue cannot be delegated. This is one issue where you must lead from the top. Walk the talk and work the work. Building a diverse and inclusive work force should be a strategic priority for every business and organization, if for no other reason than the nation's

shifting demographics will dictate it!

Fostering diversity in the work force pays huge dividends with minimal effort. I have found over the years that a more diverse and inclusive workplace is more creative and, in business and industry, even more profitable.

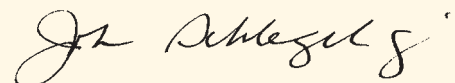
It has been noted that "in a functionally multicultural society, people believe it is in their best interest to value the diversity that exists. By valuing people for their unique identity and enabling them to contribute, we can strengthen our resources, problem solving, decision making, and vitality as an institution, a corporation, a business, and as a nation." (*Katz and Torres, 1985, p. 33*).

Being multicultural is fundamentally connected to Creighton's Jesuit mission, values and purpose. We strive for diversity not because the administration or the front office thinks it is a good idea, but rather "because we recognize having diverse ideas, opinions, and styles of operations" is beneficial (*Katz/Torres, p. 12*). Diversity is a strength; it yields more creative, synergistic and effective outcomes. A diverse university is also more interesting and energizing.

Diversity is good business. An organization that makes it known that it desires an inclusive work force or office amalgam, enhances both its recruitment efforts and the retention of good people. This effort contributes to the overall success of the organization.

That is what Project 125, our strategic plan, is all about — ensuring the continued success of Creighton and our students!

Please enjoy this issue of *Creighton University Magazine*, and may God bless you and yours.



John P. Schlegel, S.J.