SWOT from Accreditation 2007 Self-Study Report

Mission and Integrity

Strengths

1. Faculty and staff understand the University’s mission; the University provides significant opportunities for University members to extend the mission and mission awareness through the actions of their daily lives.

2. The University is increasingly successful at attracting, supporting, enrolling, and retaining a diverse student body.

3. Each of the University’s colleges, schools, and divisions has its own mission statement that captures its unique attributes and also connects with the University mission.

4. The University’s policies are relevant to the University’s operations, widely available, and easy to access via the web.

Challenges

1. Within the College of Arts and Sciences, discussions about the College’s mission and identity have been a constant since the last accreditation site visit. The debate is fueled by some unresolved tension among faculty who hold different perspectives about the teacher-scholar model and the impact of mission on hiring and scholarship. Though there is unity about the need for discussion, the results are not uniform throughout the college.

2. The University as a whole, and the undergraduate colleges and schools in particular, are in a period of transition in their desire to fully integrate the teacher-scholar model. This transition results in some mission-specific tension, significantly increased demands for resources as scholars seek support, and increased need for an integrated approach to faculty and staff development across all aspects of the teaching, scholarship, and learning enterprises.

3. The extent to which our students understand or engage the mission of the university is not always apparent across the full breadth of our professional and graduate programs. Though a significant number of undergraduate and professional students participate in mission-related service and engagement activities, it is not apparent that mission-related learning and service opportunities attract and retain our professional students beyond Creighton’s reputation for academic excellence.

4. An overwhelming majority of Creighton’s staff choose to work at
the University because of its mission. Yet many staff members feel disconnected from the University outside of their immediate areas. They indicate a lack of understanding about what occurs in other areas of the University. Faculty and staff both point to a lack of internal communication about the goals of the University, how their work accommodates those goals, and the strategic decision-making process. Staff point out that information flows through a funnel in many areas, with less information available to workers the lower they are in the University’s hierarchy.

Self-Recommendations

1. The University will continue its focus on diversity. The University will increase the analysis of its diversity initiatives so it has a better understanding of what works well, why it works well, and what does not work well.

2. Continued discussion of the teacher-scholar model and the relevant impact of mission within the College of Arts and Sciences will be made a priority, with the assurance of collaborative input from faculty within the College.

3. The University will develop and implement an integrated approach to faculty and staff development. While some schools in the University have unique faculty and staff development needs, the majority of development programming is relevant across the University. This integrated approach will support persons across the entire continuum of the teacher-scholar model without privileging persons at one end of the continuum over persons at the other end.

Preparing for the Future

Strengths

1. The University and its academic and non-academic units regularly engage in strategic planning, modifying their planning paradigms and processes to adapt to changes in their internal and external environments.

2. The strategic use of enrollment management over the past five years has resulted in an enhanced undergraduate academic profile, more stable enrollments, and an increased recruiting presence beyond our traditional markets.

3. The University’s mission is the basis for our current Willing to Lead capital campaign. The campaign has been quite successful, exceeding revenue projections to date.
4. The University’s budgeting process affords sufficient flexibility within the colleges, schools, and divisions to adopt budgetary principles that meet the needs of those units. This process also is sufficiently flexible to allow timely responses to unanticipated challenges within the University’s units.

5. The University’s Campus Master Plan is robust, regularly updated, and integrated with the plans of the city, adjacent neighborhoods, and the communities we serve.

6. The Campus continues to expand its footprint to support student and faculty needs in the long-term.

7. The growth in endowed chairs and professorships, as well as the overall growth in endowment funds, presage increasing success for Creighton’s future.

Challenges

1. While the University has made significant progress in linking strategic planning, institutional research, and budgeting since 1997, more improvement is possible. Long-term planning beyond the Campus Master Plan will be used in conjunction with strategic planning. The use of institutional research data and evidence of student learning will be used more often in making strategic decisions, to the extent that such data and evidence are available. Further, the current process that links strategic planning and budgeting will be communicated more fully to all levels of the University’s hierarchy.

2. There exist differences in perspective on the efficacy of the current operating budget incentive plan. All areas on campus see the plan as an improvement from past policies. Some areas see the plan as workable and robust, as long as allocated budget amounts are sufficient for ongoing operations. Other areas see a disincentive embedded in the plan, whereby it makes more sense to spend an entire budget allocation rather than retaining only 25% of unspent allocations.

3. The 2% reduction in operating budgets (2003-2004) was not returned to academic nor administrative areas in subsequent years of fiscal stability. Instead, new monies were returned to the operating budgets of individual units in the form of allocations for new budget requests. (These held the potential to become permanent or annual budget enhancements, depending upon the request). With respect to the colleges and schools, this has worked only insofar as sufficient revenue surplus was available to accommodate the requests. Since monies are not sufficient for all requests, however, this practice has sometimes acted to curtail flexibility within operating budgets. The University is working on a new financial model that will accommodate growing enrollments and program strengths in the individual colleges and schools.
4. While institutional research support is sufficient in some units of the University, the University’s institutional research function must be enhanced to provide the analytical support needed to fashion a data-driven paradigm.

5. There is an unbalanced perception about the seamless operation of the University. The lower the level at which people are situated within the University’s hierarchy, the more likely they are to perceive significant silos within the University. This perception does exist somewhat among faculty and staff at higher levels of the University but is not shared at the highest levels. Whether this perception is an internal communication problem, a structural problem, a work process problem, or some combination of those factors is unknown.

6. The University’s long-term plan for distance education and other forms of technology-mediated learning are not clear to faculty and staff.

7. The University must remain focused on the issue of deferred maintenance, including its attention to the replacement and renewal of technological infrastructure.

Self-Recommendations

1. The University will increase the extent to which it is data-driven, specifically in its efforts to use evidence of student learning to drive the planning and budgeting processes. The strategic plan and the budgeting process will be more fully integrated. To be successful, this integration is dependent on increasing support for the institutional research function in terms of its ability to analyze existing data.

2. The University will continue its efforts to attract and retain talented faculty and staff. Efforts to provide adequate workplace training, improve the staff performance evaluation system, and increase the number of undergraduate faculty to maintain our faculty-student ratio will continue. An important part of the University’s retention efforts will involve the dedicated allocation of internal funding for on-going faculty scholarship across all units on campus.

3. Internal communication practices, structures, and processes will be modified as warranted to address the unbalanced perception of silos within the University.

4. The University will determine a long-term plan for its distance education and technology-mediated learning programs.

Student Learning and Effective Teaching
Strengths

1. Faculty and staff understanding of the practice of assessment has increased substantially since 1997. Student learning goals or outcomes exist for all majors and accredited programs. Faculty are seeking ways to use evidence of student learning in support of resource requests.

2. The School of Pharmacy and Health Professions is a leader on campus in its work toward assessing Ignatian values and professional dispositions. Assessment leaders within this School are working to share their practices and successes with the rest of the University through the University Assessment Committee and the Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment.

3. The creation of the dual position Dean of the Graduate School/Associate Vice President for Faculty Development is a significant step toward supporting the teacher-scholar model within the Division of Academic Affairs.

4. The teacher evaluation systems that exist in each college and school are tailored to the types of teaching and learning that occur in each unit.

5. The availability of and support for technology in learning spaces has increased significantly over the past decade.

Challenges

1. Assessment of student learning within the College of Arts and Sciences has shown steady improvement over the past several years. However, the assessment plans promulgated by the College must be implemented, resulting in a practice of embedded assessment for all programs, the College’s learning outcomes, and ultimately, the Core Curriculum.

2. Programs, colleges, and schools must remain vigilant about their assessment practices to ensure that direct measures of student learning are used whenever possible (rather than relying on indirect measures).

3. At present, no robust method exists for integrating evidence of student learning into the strategic planning and budgeting processes.

Self-Recommendations

1. The University will continue participating in the Higher Learning Commission-supported Academy of Assessment. The University’s three foci in this initiative should continue to be:
   • building an assessment process for university-level learning
outcomes, with particular focus on assessing student values and professional dispositions;
• bridging the assessment of curricular and co-curricular learning; and
• building a collaborative and supportive assessment peer-review process across the University.

2. Attention will focus on programmatic needs for teaching and learning technology, with continuing emphasis on the need to acquire evidence of student learning in the design of technology-rich learning environments. Assessment of learning in technology-oriented faculty development also will be enacted.

3. Methods for gathering and using evidence of student learning in the strategic planning and budgeting processes will be developed and implemented.

**Acquisition, Discovery & Application of Knowledge**

**Strengths**

1. Creighton University is recognized as one of several schools leading the development and support of the scholarship of teaching and learning among its faculty. The University’s selection by the Carnegie Foundation to participate in two separate Carnegie Academies for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) demonstrates external validation of the University’s efforts, the SOTL expertise among our faculty and staff, and the University’s financial commitment to this form of scholarship.

2. The level of collaboration among a) the Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment, b) the School of Pharmacy and Health Profession’s Office of Faculty Development and Assessment, c) the Office of Medical Education, and d) the Office of the Associate Vice President for Faculty Development in designing and delivering faculty development programming embedded with assessment training has sharply increased over the past four years.

3. A significant number of continuing education opportunities are available to our faculty and staff through University College, the School of Medicine’s Continuing Medical Education Division, the Division of Information Technology, and the School of Dentistry’s continuing education courses.

4. Information regarding the quantity and quality of our incoming students is at an unprecedented high level. The use of the Higher Education Research Institute’s (HERI) surveys at matriculation, the end of freshman year, and the end of senior year allows us to track undergraduate
students’ attitudinal and behavioral changes during their time at Creighton. The use of a subset of HERI-survey questions in our alumni survey allows us to continue tracking those students’ attitudes and behaviors seven and seventeen years after graduation.

5. The construction of junior-senior town homes on our east campus has begun to create a living-learning environment that will culminate with the construction of the new Student Living-Learning Center. The presence of juniors and seniors who have committed to living on campus has increased student interaction and leadership between juniors-seniors and freshmen-sophomores.

6. The Division of Student Services has made significant progress towards partnership in the assessment of student learning. While this Division’s efforts are not fully integrated into curricular assessment efforts, they are working as a full partner in the University Assessment Committee and with the Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment. The inclusion of the Division of Information Technology and the Division of University Ministry on the University Assessment Committee signals the potential for including these Divisions in co-curricular assessment as well.

7. The number and quality of service opportunities available for students throughout the University is quite high. Faculty and administrators in each college and school work with students to create and lead service work and trips off campus. The Center for Service and Justice is an exemplar of how a small staff with limited funding can make an exceptionally significant difference in the service lives of students.

Challenges

1. A significant portion of staff development programming and faculty technology training ignores the assessment of learning. This deficiency prevents us from knowing how well or how much the participants have learned or the effect of the programming on student learning in curricular and co-curricular learning environments.

2. The University’s student retention system, while generally effective, would benefit from an ability to gather and analyze data regarding student success and difficulty in order to better serve our students and increase student retention.

3. A significant amount of external funding has been expended in support of service-learning over the past six years. However, the number of service-learning courses offered for students is less than what would be expected from that level of funding. Such funding likely would provide the impetus to expand and focus our incipient efforts.
4. An increasing proportion of our staff members are not native speakers of English; many of those workers use Spanish as their first language. A variety of programs are available for those staff members to increase their English language skills (such as the IELI program in the Office of International Programs). However, the University would benefit from a program that allows its workers to learn Spanish as well.

5. No technology competency standards or global training exists for faculty, staff, or students. This results in over-teaching and under-teaching to students, and the potential under-use of the significant technology resources available to all members of the Creighton community.

Self-Recommendations

1. All faculty and staff development programming will integrate the assessment of learning into that programming. This effort will recognize the University as a learning organization in which faculty, staff, and students learn. The resulting evidence of student learning will be made available for use in strategic planning, budgeting, and institutional research functions.

2. The Office of Enrollment Management, the Office of Institutional Research, and the Division of Student Services will contribute their expertise and resources to assist the Director of Student Retention in implementing a student retention system that is also data-driven.

3. The University will create and implement a “Spanish as a second language” program for all faculty and staff who wish to participate. This program will be designed specifically to facilitate interaction among all faculty and staff on campus.

Engagement and Service

Strengths

1. Creighton understands that engagement and service are critical to a Jesuit education and its mission to mentor and form students who will be “men and women for and with others.”

2. The level of outreach by Creighton’s faith-based initiatives is very high. In particular, the world-wide reach of Creighton’s Online Ministries is exemplary.

3. The high quantity and quality of student, faculty, and staff engagement in healthcare-related service at the local, regional, and international levels fills a significant need among our constituents.
4. Our service to and engagement with Native American populations has been successfully embedded into several academic programs across our colleges and schools.

5. The University has established a robust system for tracking University-sponsored faculty, staff, and programmatic service activities. The Center for Service and Justice also has a robust system in place for tracking student service activity facilitated through that office. The Center is in the early stages of seeking evidence of student learning in that service activity.

6. Creighton’s behavior as a good neighbor was recognized in 2006 by the New England Board of Higher Education. Creighton was one of twenty-five institutions acknowledged as “exemplary examples of community revitalization and cultural renewal, economic drivers of the local economy, advocates of community service and urban developers, both commercially as well as in housing.”

Challenges

1. The University regularly meets with its local community partners. Due in large part to the recent physical expansion of the University, many of those meetings are informational in nature. The nature of community feedback and opportunities for discussion with those community partners is less than it could be and should be enhanced to become more interactive.

2. Creighton receives no funds from state appropriations to support our service and outreach programs. At present, half of the University’s service and community outreach programs are funded by Federal grants, donors, and friends of the University. As with all externally funded programs with a finite lifecycle, the University’s continual challenge to fund mission-critical service and outreach places pressure on its operating budget.

4. Creighton’s engagement and service with Latino high school students is weak. This situation presents a gap in our student recruiting strategy, made more significant by the projected demographics of college-bound teens over the next twenty years.

Self-Recommendations

1. The University will develop more ways to engage with high-school-aged Latino communities, first in the Omaha metropolitan area and then beyond.

2. Creighton has made information about its service and community outreach and engagement activities and resources more accessible
to internal and external communities. The sharing of this information will be combined with greater opportunities for interactive dialogue with those communities about their respective needs.

3. The University will make the financial stability of its service and community outreach and engagement programs a strategic priority, especially in the professional schools, since those activities represent a strong component of our mission.

4. Service and engagement activity data that is gathered will be integrated into the institutional research function so that it can inform strategic planning, budgeting, and curricular development processes.

5. Given the proven success of the Center for Service and Justice’s initiatives, the scope and funding of this office will be increased to accommodate as much of the domain of community-based learning and service as possible.

6. The scholarship of Creighton’s faculty and students will become more integrated with community planning when requested and needed.