

CREIGHTON

SPRING 2026 • Volume 42 Issue 1

A RECIPE FOR INNOVATION

The new Greisch Center for Enterprise Value gives students the ingredients they need to turn bold ideas into businesses.





**“Culture is what’s won.
Culture is going to
continue to be what wins
for us at Creighton.”**

ALAN HUSS, BSBA'02

Greg McDermott, the winningest head coach in Creighton men’s basketball history, retired from that position following the 2025-2026 season. McDermott compiled a record of 366-189 in 16 seasons at Creighton. Alan Huss, BSBA'02, a former player who served as associate head coach and head coach in waiting this past season, was promoted to be the program’s 17th head coach.

READ MORE

McDermott Announces Retirement



Huss Introduced as Head Coach



ILLUSTRATION BY CREIGHTON ATHLETICS

Resilience and Finding Our Purpose

One of the most unique and enduring qualities of what it means to be human can be found in our perseverance. Whether it is navigating a path forward in the face of adversity or approaching the challenges of the present as opportunities to shape the future, we find meaning in our commitment to a better world. Within this edition of *Creighton* magazine, I cannot help but reflect on the enduring power of resilience.

Notably, 2026 marks America’s 250th birthday, as well as the 25th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks. As we celebrate our nation’s founding, we are also called to reflect on the importance of resolve in times of tragedy. The memories of those who experienced that day, including my own, remind us of how we can find strength in extending compassion and understanding to those in need.

An enduring focus on one’s purpose, both personally and in service to others, has shaped nearly 150 years of our University’s history. Just like brothers Edward and John Creighton became pioneers of telecommunications and banking following their arrival in Omaha after the Civil War, our students embrace their own ideas and innovations to positively affect the future.

Through the efforts of our faculty, staff, and alumni, young women and men from across our schools and colleges address the needs they see in their communities. With support from programs like the new Greisch Center for Enterprise Value and new opportunities to harness artificial intelligence, students learn to transform ideas into action and use their tenacity to create positive, transformative change.

We also find resilience in the Jesuit values of seeking a universal good and taking actions for the greater glory of God. This is where we can turn the unexpected into invitations for personal reflection, pursue new passions, and respond to the world’s invitation to serve.

I am excited for you to read more about how we are expanding our Magis Catholic Teacher Corps into Phoenix; reflect on meaningful insights from our faculty, staff, and Jesuits; and see the many ways Creighton continues to cultivate perseverance in mind, body, and spirit.

And, lastly, I hope you will join me in recognizing the accomplishments of the Class of 2026, who celebrated their commencement this month and now join our exceptional Creighton alumni network. As they begin their own journeys as alumni, I encourage you to welcome them into our community and to continue sharing your own stories of how your Creighton education has shaped your path.

In building these connections across generations and geographies, we remain united in our mission to be for and with others. May we each continue to reflect on the challenges we have overcome as well as the opportunities we have seized — and how they have brought us to where we are today as members of one shared University and global community.

As we look ahead to a summer filled with opportunities to form new relationships and continue expanding our presence in Omaha, Phoenix, and beyond, I am confident the best is yet to come. I cannot wait for you to see what lies ahead for Creighton.

Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD

President



Follow me:

@Preshendrickson

PresidentHendrickson

@presidenthendrickson

Contents



on the cover
A RECIPE FOR INNOVATION

Creighton students are bringing entrepreneurial ideas to life. Supporting that momentum are Mary Margaret Mellen, co-founder of the Entrepreneurship Club, and Nathan Preheim, BA'96, director of the Greisch Center for Enterprise Value, where students can take their ideas to the next level and turn them into real-world ventures.



'HOW TO ...'

At Creighton, faculty influence extends far beyond graduation. In that spirit, three faculty members and a Jesuit offer reflections alumni can carry forward.

4 Creighton Connections

12 History Lesson

Creighton's fight song turns 100 — or does it? A closer look at archives reveals *The White and the Blue* is older than believed, correcting a decades-old musical mix-up.

32 Impact

A \$3 million gift establishes Creighton's Fritz Family Office of Cura Personalis Services, expanding campuswide support for student mental health, resilience and holistic well-being rooted in Jesuit values.

33 Alumni Notes

40 Creighton Conversations

Juliane Strauss-Soukup, PhD, BSChm'93, associate vice provost for Research and Scholarship, reflects on Creighton's research philosophy, student involvement and what lies ahead.



24

MISSION IN ACTION

Creighton's Magis Catholic Teacher Corps has expanded to Phoenix, forming faith-driven educators who serve schools while earning graduate degrees, and extending a 25-year legacy of shaping teachers grounded in Jesuit values and service.



28

9/11: 25 YEARS LATER

For those at Creighton on Sept. 11, 2001, the day unfolded in confusion, fear and shared resolve — a defining moment whose memories and meaning continue to shape how we remember, and why it matters.

In sorrow and gratitude: *Creighton* magazine fondly remembers Robert U. Guthrie, founding editor of *Window* magazine, the forerunner to this publication. Guthrie, who served Creighton for 21 years before retiring, died Jan. 2, 2026, two days after his 93rd birthday.

PUBLISHER
Creighton magazine is published in the spring and fall by Creighton University, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178-0001.

PRESIDENT
 Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS
 Heidi Grunkemeyer

EDITOR
 Rick Davis

MANAGING EDITOR/DESIGN
 Sheila Swanson

WRITERS
 Amanda Biggs
 Sarah Dunker
 Molly Garriott
 Kate Malott
 Micah Mertes
 Jon Nyatawa
 Rachel Stanko
 Cathy Tibbels

ILLUSTRATION
 Matt Chinworth
 Nathalie Dion

CONTACT
 Address all mail to University Marketing Communications, Attn: *Creighton* Magazine, 780480 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178-0480. Postmaster: Send change of address to *Creighton* Magazine, P.O. Box 3266, Omaha, NE 68103-0078.

Send alumni news (births, weddings, promotions, etc.) to alumninews@creighton.edu.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA
 X — @Creighton
 Facebook — Creighton University
 Instagram — @Creighton1878

CREIGHTON MAGAZINE'S PURPOSE
Creighton magazine, like the University itself, is committed to excellence and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in all its forms. The magazine will be comprehensive in nature. It will support the University's mission of education through thoughtful and compelling feature articles on a variety of topics. It will feature the brightest, the most stimulating, the most inspirational thinking that Creighton offers. The magazine also will promote Creighton, and its Jesuit, Catholic identity, to a broad public and serve as a vital link between the University and its constituents. The magazine will be guided by the core values of Creighton: the inalienable worth of each individual, respect for all of God's creation, a special concern for the poor and the promotion of justice.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT
 Creighton University is committed to providing a safe and nondiscriminatory educational and employment environment. To view the University's nondiscrimination statement, please visit creighton.edu/nds.

Copyright © 2026 by Creighton University
creighton.edu

Building an AI Classroom

BY AMANDA BIGGS, MBA'25



Most people meet generative artificial intelligence the same way: through a screen, a prompt and an answer. It feels like magic. It also feels like something you will never fully understand.

At Creighton, Steven Fernandes, PhD, and Alison Kleffner, PhD, are inviting students behind the curtain.

Fernandes, assistant professor of computer science, and Kleffner, assistant professor of mathematics, are helping build a new kind of AI learning environment, one in which students aren't just using generative AI, they're learning how to build and deploy applications using it. Thanks to a National Science Foundation research award supporting the project, they can train and deploy advanced AI models without the financial barrier that usually comes with it.

"Building AI models requires Graphics Processing Units (GPUs). These GPUs analyze large datasets quickly but can cost tens of thousands of dollars," Fernandes says. "The Jetstream2 platform research credits provided to us through the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource (NAIRR) classroom pilot allows students to build AI models without having to worry about the GPU compute needed."

It may sound technical, but the result is simple: access.

For many programs across the country, the price of serious generative AI work is steep. Training large models often requires expensive computing resources, subscription tools or hardware that students simply don't have. With NAIRR support, Creighton students can do the work that matters most in the AI economy: experiment, build, test and deploy.

They learn by building projects that prove it.

The NAIRR-awarded project, called "Building Generative AI Applications," began with a simple question: What would it look like if students could learn generative AI from the inside out?

"With recent advances in AI, we wanted our computer science and data science students to learn how to build and deploy generative AI applications," Fernandes says. "This motivated us to create a course on this topic."

That course, CSC 590: Building Generative AI Applications, is a class where students complete hands-on coding. Students build three different generative AI applications — not simulations, but actual applications they build and deploy.

“Students across disciplines who understand how these AI tools work, their capabilities and their limitations will be better equipped to apply AI responsibly in their own fields.”

STEVEN FERNANDES, PHD

One project focuses on generating synthetic medical images using Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), a type of AI model used to create new images based on patterns learned from data. Fernandes says synthetic imaging has real potential in medicine, including applications related to early disease diagnosis, because obtaining medical images for training these models can be challenging.

Retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) is being used in another project to build chatbots that respond only using a trained knowledge base, meaning they

don't "hallucinate" information outside what they've been trained on. "You can think of it like a virtual tutor that knows your course material and can help you study," Fernandes says.

Students are also building AI agents, including an AI-powered health coach that can provide personalized guidance for wellness. "In this project, we are not just using existing AI," Fernandes says. "Instead, we are building AI applications that can assist individuals from medical professionals to college students."

That distinction matters. In a world flooded with AI tools, Creighton students are learning to build them responsibly. "The goal is to empower students to create AI tools that solve real problems rather than simply consuming AI products built by others," Fernandes says.

A project this ambitious doesn't happen in a silo, and Fernandes is quick to emphasize his collaboration with Kleffner.

Kleffner's role highlights an important truth about AI: Breakthroughs don't come from coding alone. Strong AI models depend on statistics, modeling and mathematical reasoning; the foundation Kleffner helps students build before they write machine-learning code. "Building AI models requires in-depth statistics knowledge," Fernandes says, pointing to how Kleffner's course, MTH 362: Statistical Modeling, strengthens preparation for generative AI work.

One exciting part of the project, Fernandes says, has been watching students go beyond the assignment and into real-world projects.

For instance, student teams created a RAG-based chatbot trained on class material, a practical tool that helps students review content and prepare for finals. Another team developed a local chatbot designed to help new students navigate majors, minors, courses and faculty. These aren't flashy demos. They are thoughtful applications built by students who are learning to connect AI power to human needs.

Fernandes believes Creighton's



**LIGHT RAIL HONORS
CREIGHTON'S PHOENIX
CAMPUS**

Civic, education and transit leaders unveiled a light rail station designation honoring Creighton University's Health Sciences Campus in Midtown Phoenix in February. The recognition highlights Creighton's growing role in the Phoenix Medical Quarter and its impact on workforce development, community health and economic growth.



SPORTING BILLY

Creighton Athletics has introduced a new line of retro Billy Bluejay mascot designs representing its Division I varsity sports. The "Sporting Billy" illustrations depict the mascot competing in baseball/softball, basketball, volleyball, soccer, golf, tennis, rowing and track and field/cross-country events. Some items are available for purchase in the online Creighton Bookstore at creighton.bncollege.com.

approach extends beyond computer science.

"Students across disciplines who understand how these AI tools work, their capabilities and their limitations will be better equipped to apply AI responsibly," he says. "Additionally, students who can build and deploy generative AI applications will have a significant edge over those who are just using them."

In other words, the project prepares students not just for the next job market but for the leadership decisions AI will demand across industries, from healthcare and education to business and science.

The Bill: A New Home for Creighton Student-Athletes

Creighton's future athletic facility will be named "The Bill" in honor of the late Bill Scott, longtime Creighton donor and friend.

The family of Bill and Ruth Scott has made the lead gift to build The Bill, a 50,000-square-foot athletics facility for Creighton's 300-plus student-athletes. Construction of the \$65 million building, formerly referred to as the Sports Performance Center, began in the summer of 2025 and is expected to be completed in 2027.

Located at 20th and Burt streets, The Bill will be immediately west of The Ruth (The Ruth Scott Training Center), the practice space for Creighton volleyball and women's basketball. Opened in 2019, The Ruth was named in honor of Ruth Scott, Bill Scott's wife of 73 years before his passing in 2024.

The Bill is part of Fly Together, a \$300 million, donor-funded initiative to reshape Creighton's 12-block athletic and recreational corridor with 11 new or upgraded facilities and outdoor spaces.

Through prior personal gifts and their family foundation, Bill and Ruth Scott contributed significantly to the entirety of Creighton's east-campus athletic corridor — The McDermott Center, the Wayne and Eileen Ryan



Athletic Center and D.J. Sokol Arena, The Ruth and the Rasmussen Center (named after the Scotts' close friend, former McCormick Endowed Athletic Director Bruce Rasmussen).

"It hasn't been a custom to put our names on things," says Ruth Scott, "and when the volleyball team chose to name the practice facility 'The Ruth,' I felt awkward about it at first, but I grew to love it. When it became evident there would be another athletics building next to The Ruth, I knew that we had to support it and that it had to be named The Bill. I felt that, after 73 years of marriage, I still wanted to be close to Bill."

Bill Scott, a lifelong Nebraskan, started as one of Warren Buffett's first employees, joining Buffett Partnership in 1959 and Berkshire Hathaway in 1970, where he remained until the early 1990s. Bill then started his second career — as a full-time philanthropist.

The Bill will feature approximately 10,000 square feet of new strength and conditioning space, an outdoor training area, a dining hall catering to the specific

nutritional needs of student-athletes, areas for academic advising, sports medicine and psychology services, and gathering spaces that reflect the University's commitment to formation through community.

Last fall, the University announced the Fly Together initiative with the largest gift in Creighton's history: \$100 million from the Heider Family Foundation. Including the Heider Family Foundation and Ruth Scott, lead donors Don C. Scott, John Scott, Linda and Larry Pearson, and Rachel and CL Werner have supported Fly Together.

Another Fly Together project, the baseball practice field, will be completed this summer, in time to serve as the practice site for visiting College World Series teams.

Other projects under construction are the 250,000-square-foot Creighton Quad and the sophomore residence hall, now named Magis Hall, both to be completed this fall. Meanwhile, renovations continue at Creighton Hall, the University's original building.

© An architectural rendering of The Bill, named in honor of the late Bill Scott, longtime Creighton donor and friend. Construction began in the summer of 2025 on the 50,000-square-foot athletics facility for Creighton's 300-plus student-athletes.

Creighton Awarded \$2.38M to Expand Rural Surgical Cancer Care

For many rural patients, access to timely cancer surgery depends on distance, workforce shortages and limited local resources. A new \$2.38 million award through Nebraska's LB595 program will support a six-year Creighton University School of Medicine initiative to improve access, outcomes and innovation in rural surgical cancer care.

The program — Developing a Research Agenda in Rural Surgical Cancer Care: Advancing Access and Quality — is led by Waddah Al-Refaie, MD, the Dr. and Mrs. Arnold W. Lempka Endowed Chair in Surgery and chair of surgery at Creighton University School of Medicine and CHI Health. The initiative will unite national partners to study challenges facing rural patients and develop solutions to strengthen care in Nebraska and nationwide.

The effort will focus on three priorities: building a research framework

to better understand barriers to rural surgical cancer care and developing a national curriculum to prepare surgeons for rural practice; strengthening the rural surgical workforce by studying surgical care deserts and identifying strategies to recruit and retain surgeons; and creating artificial intelligence tools that allow surgical teams to monitor recovery remotely and detect complications earlier.

A defining feature of the initiative is its national scope. Collaborators include the American College of Surgeons, the American Board of Surgery and several leading universities, helping ensure the research reflects rural experiences across the country.

"These collaborations bring together diverse expertise and perspectives, ensuring our findings reflect rural experiences nationwide," Al-Refaie says. "They will help make our results actionable, guiding future policy and education to improve surgical care in rural communities while positioning Creighton as a leader in this space."

Meeting the Need for Nurse Anesthesia Care

To address a nationwide shortage of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), the College of Nursing has established a new Doctor of Nursing Practice–Nurse Anesthesia (DNP-NA) program. The need is especially urgent in rural areas, where CRNAs often serve as the sole providers of anesthesia care.

"The CRNA program comes at a time when the healthcare system faces a shortage of anesthesia providers — one that directly impacts surgical access and patient outcomes," says Holly Chandler, EdD, founding program director and professor of nursing.

According to the Nebraska Nurses Association, 100% of Nebraska's critical access hospitals rely exclusively on CRNAs for anesthesia care. These small rural facilities — designated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid

Sculpting a Legend

A Creighton professor brings actor James Earl Jones' legendary voice and presence to life in bronze for a new national honor

Creighton fine arts professor Littleton Alston, MFA, earned national recognition when he was commissioned to create the inaugural James Earl Jones Prize, presented to award-winning actor Laurence Fishburne at the 12th Annual Voice Arts Awards in Beverly Hills, California, in January.

Working on the bronze bust of Jones was both exciting and daunting, Alston says. "How do you capture an American actor who is larger than life? This is the voice of Darth Vader! This is the voice of Mufasa! How do I portray this man who had such a generosity of spirit? Then, I thought to myself, 'Listen to the voice; watch the voice.'"

Alston studied photographs of Jones and rewatched his films, including *Star Wars*, *The Lion King*, *Field of Dreams* and *Claudine*, looking to not only capture Jones' likeness but his powerful presence in the roughly foot-high sculpture. Alston focused on a subtle expression — the moment just before Jones' famous smile fully appears — to evoke the actor's spirit.

Attending the ceremony, walking the red carpet with his wife and meeting Jones' family and fellow actors was a humbling experience, Alston says. A Creighton faculty member since 1990, Alston's work spans Omaha and beyond and includes his 2023 bronze statue of Willa Cather in the U.S. Capitol's National Statuary Hall. Alston says his work is driven by dedication, creativity and a passion for teaching.



Actor Laurence Fishburne, left, and Littleton Alston, MFA, at the 12th Annual Voice Arts Awards in January.

Services — serve patients who may live more than 35 miles from another hospital and often operate with limited resources. In these settings, CRNAs provide anesthesia care for surgeries, labor and delivery, trauma and emergency procedures. Without them, many patients would face significant barriers to care.

The challenge extends beyond Nebraska. Nationwide, an aging workforce, growing rural populations and rising surgical demand are widening anesthesia gaps.

With a launch date of August 2027, Creighton’s DNP-NA program aims to meet this need by preparing graduates who are clinically excellent and committed to service.

Child Safety Center Opens in Partnership with Children’s Nebraska

Over years of caring for children, pediatrician Scott Shipman, MD, MPH, noticed a troubling pattern. Many of the

injuries bringing young patients into clinics and emergency rooms — falls, poisonings, unsafe sleep or improperly installed car seats — were preventable.

That reality has shaped Shipman’s work ever since. Now executive director of Creighton University’s Institute for Population Health (IPH) and the CyncHealth Endowed Chair in Population Health, he has made child injury prevention a priority. When Shipman joined Creighton in 2023, he envisioned a signature program focused on parent education, community awareness and access to safety resources that help families create safer environments for children.

That vision became reality in November 2025 when the Creighton Child Safety Center (CCSC) opened in the University’s space at the Highlander Accelerator in North Omaha. Funded through the generosity of the Lozier Foundation and established in partnership with Children’s Nebraska, the CCSC provides safety education, demonstrations, training, tools and resources.



BROWER ADVANCES SCREENING

Amy Brower, PhD, helped secure nationwide newborn screening for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy after decades of research and advocacy. Her work led to the condition’s addition to the federal screening panel in 2025, enabling earlier diagnosis and treatment. Brower is the assistant dean of research for the School of Medicine.

“The center will play an important role in promoting child safety and well-being in a historically underserved community, directly addressing health disparities that often intersect with housing insecurity and environmental risks,” says April Dixon, BS’16, MPH’19, Creighton’s director of North Omaha community engagement.

At the center, staff demonstrate common household hazards and the proper use of safety essentials such as bicycle helmets, car seats and stairway gates. Through partnerships with distributors, the center also offers safety supplies at low cost, helping remove financial barriers for families.

“It’s not the goal of the Child Safety Center to bubble wrap kids,” Shipman says. “We want to let kids be kids. But as a community, we can reduce risks through simple steps — installing car seats correctly, wearing helmets when biking, skating or scooting, moving medications and poisons out of reach and storing guns safely so children can’t access them. The center will be a hub of education, service and a convenient

place to obtain supplies like car seats, bike helmets and gun lock boxes.”

The IPH worked closely with Children’s Nebraska injury prevention and community benefits teams to develop programming and training materials. The center is staffed by a safety educator and a community health navigator.

At the center’s November opening, Children’s Nebraska President and CEO Chanda Chacón highlighted the impact of collaboration. “The Child Safety Center is a meaningful example of how collaboration can make a lasting difference, bringing together educators, health professionals and community members around a shared goal: keeping children and families safe and healthy.”

Training Future Orthopaedic Surgeons

The School of Medicine will soon help train the next generation of orthopaedic surgeons through a new Orthopaedic Surgery Residency Program, expanding opportunities for advanced surgical training while helping address a growing need for orthopaedic care across Nebraska and the surrounding region.

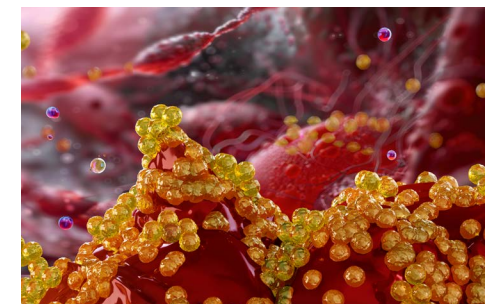
The five-year residency will welcome its inaugural class this summer and begin recruiting through the National Resident Matching Program during the 2026-2027 match cycle. As only the second orthopaedic surgery residency in Nebraska, the program aims to strengthen the region’s physician workforce while advancing clinical care, education and research.

Demand for orthopaedic services continues to rise as the population ages and musculoskeletal conditions become more prevalent. Creighton’s new residency is designed to help meet that growing need by preparing surgeons to serve communities throughout Nebraska and beyond.

“The launch of the orthopaedic surgery residency is a foundational step

WAIT...WHAT?

At Creighton, hands-on research empowers undergraduate students to help move big ideas forward. Here’s a closer look at one student’s project.



TITLE OF RESEARCH

“Identification of potential antibiotic compounds for Gram-positive bacteria via optimization of a high-throughput FRET assay”

STUDENT RESEARCHER

Steven Nguyen, junior majoring in public health and hospital administration and policy with a minor in biology, Chino Hills, California; National Institutes of Health-INBRE Scholar; College of Arts and Sciences Student Senate president; Dean’s Fellows Program executive; CURAS ambassador

FACULTY MENTOR

Juliane Strauss-Soukup, PhD, BSChm’93, associate vice provost for research and scholarship and professor of chemistry and biochemistry

WHAT IT MEANS Antibiotic resistance is making bacterial infections harder to treat and posing a growing global health threat. Nguyen’s research explores new ways to stop harmful bacteria by targeting RNA rather than traditional antibiotics that many bacteria have become resistant to. He studies a riboswitch — a small RNA element that bacteria use to build their cell walls. When activated, the riboswitch shuts down bacterial growth. Nguyen is developing a fluorescence-based screening system to identify molecules that trigger this switch, potentially leading to a new class of antibiotics. This approach could help combat dangerous bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, including MRSA, by targeting biological mechanisms they are less likely to resist.

toward building a national orthopaedic center of excellence in Nebraska,” says Ranjan Gupta, MD, professor and chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the School of Medicine and medical director of CommonSpirit Health Orthopedics. “It reflects our long-term commitment to educating the next generation of surgeons while advancing clinical excellence.” Gupta is the inaugural holder of the Anne L. and Michael H. McGuire Endowed Chair in Orthopaedic Surgery.

New Global High-Tech Classroom at ILAC

At the Institute for Latin American Concern (ILAC) in the Dominican Republic, Creighton has opened a new high-tech classroom and gathering space. The two-story, 3,000-square-foot facility — funded entirely by private donors and known locally as el Salón Global — will support Creighton programs focused on learning, research and service in Dominican communities.

“For more than 50 years, ILAC has offered life-changing experiences for our students, faculty and staff,” says the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD, Creighton president. “This global classroom ensures that tradition continues by providing a state-of-the-art space that supports the immersive learning and personal transformation that define the ILAC experience.”

The lower level is designed as a flexible, technology-rich learning environment for collaboration and connectivity. Upstairs, the atmosphere shifts to a space for reflection, conversation and community building. The roof includes a 48-panel solar array that contributes to the campus’ sustainability efforts.

The project is part of broader improvements across the ILAC campus. Two adjacent classrooms are being renovated by ILAC, and the Encuentro Dominicano library, offices and student housing were refreshed in 2022.

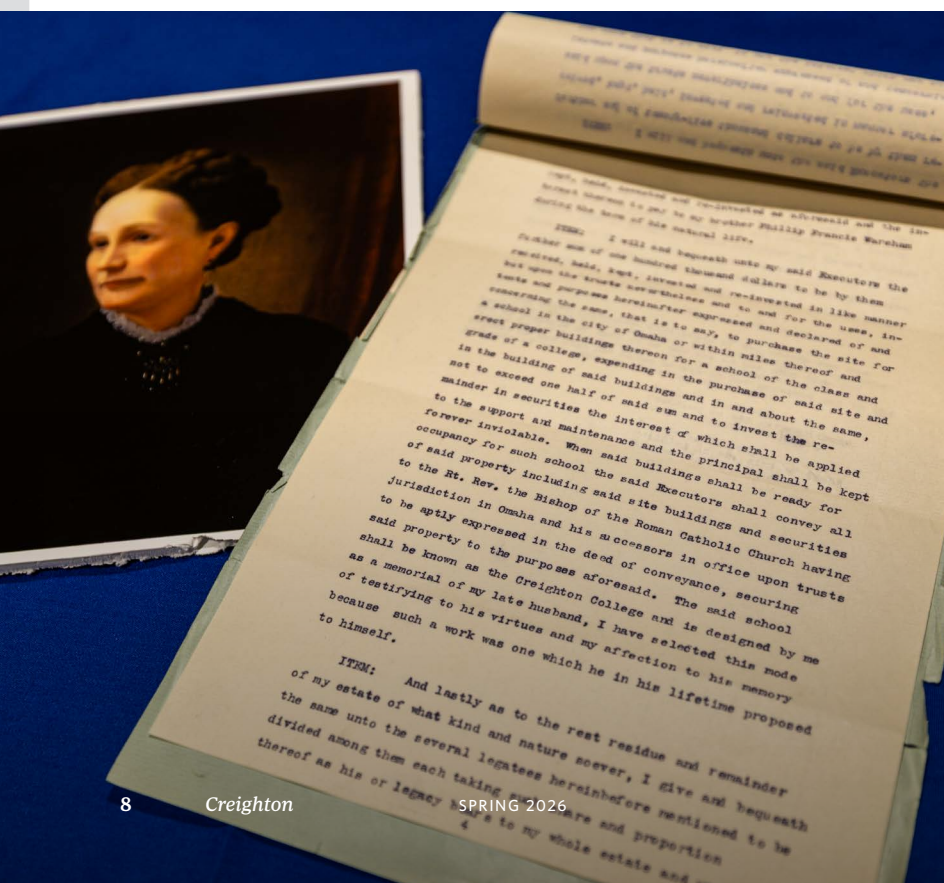
The new space will help expand

The Will that Started Creighton

When Mary Lucretia Creighton died at the age of 41 on Jan. 23, 1876, Omaha lost a beloved philanthropist. But her vision lives on today in Creighton University. It was her will — which turned 150 years old this year — that included a \$100,000 bequest to establish a Catholic university in Omaha in honor of her late husband, Edward Creighton.

The will reads, in part: “The said school shall be known as the Creighton College and is designed by me as a memorial of my late husband. I have selected this mode of testifying to his virtues and my affection to his memory because such a work was one which he in his lifetime proposed to himself.”

Creighton University, then Creighton College, opened its doors two years later in 1878.



opportunities for student engagement in research, economic development and environmental sustainability in Dominican communities where Creighton has longstanding health partnerships.

Since 1973, Creighton has offered service, medical and cultural immersion programs in the Dominican Republic through its partner Centro de Educación para la Salud Integral (CESI), also known as Misión ILAC. Each year, students from the School of Medicine, the School of Dentistry, the College of Nursing and the School of Pharmacy and Health Professions travel to serve communities with limited access to healthcare.

Through the Encuentro Dominicano program, Creighton undergraduates study the history, sociology, politics, economics, religion and sustainable development of the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean before completing a service-learning experience at the ILAC campus.

The campus also hosts the Arrupe Global Scholars and Partnerships Program, which, since 2022, has paired Creighton medical students with local healthcare teams in the Dominican Republic and other countries to address global health needs.

Aflac

AFLAC GRANT ADVANCES HEALTH EQUITY

A \$100,000 Aflac Community Care Grant will support Creighton University's Center for Promoting Health and Health Equity in addressing health disparities in Omaha.

The funding will deploy six community health navigators to provide chronic disease education, screenings and care connections to about 200 high-risk residents, focusing on underserved communities. The initiative aims to improve outcomes, reduce medical debt and strengthen community-driven health leadership.

Improving Community Health Through CDC-Funded Grant

Across Nebraska, obesity remains a major public health challenge. New Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data show that about 37% of the state's adults — roughly 718,000 people — are living with obesity, increasing their risk for chronic disease and other health concerns.

Creighton's Center for Promoting Health and Health Equity (CPHHE) is working to address the issue through the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, a five-year, nearly \$3 million cooperative agreement with the CDC. Now in its third year, the initiative supports community-based efforts to promote healthy nutrition, physical activity and breastfeeding support for more than 143,000 residents in Douglas County.

"Our program focuses on strategies that help reduce health disparities and strengthen community health," says Sade Kosoko-Lasaki, MD, MBA'05, principal investigator and professor in the School of Medicine.

CPHHE collaborates with the Douglas County Health Department and partners including Charles Drew Health Center, OneWorld Community Health Centers, the Omaha Housing Authority, Urban League and City Sprouts to expand access to healthier living across the community.

Creighton Opens Innovation and Entrepreneurship Legal Clinic

The Creighton School of Law has launched the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Legal Clinic, in which Creighton law students and faculty provide practical legal support for local entrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations in North and South Omaha, advancing Creighton's mission of service, access and community partnership.

The clinic's co-directors — clinical assistant professors Shaun Ilahi, JD'08, and Bruce Wray, SMJ'02, BSBA'02, JD'14 — hope the clinic will help students see that innovation in law is not only about technology but also about creativity, ethics and reimagining how the law can serve people.

Working under supervising attorneys, Creighton law students gain hands-on experience in business law while supporting real clients in entity formation, contracts and compliance matters that help organizations grow responsibly.

The clinic has received support from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, through the North and South Omaha Recovery Grant Program, which aims to build resilient and innovative communities.

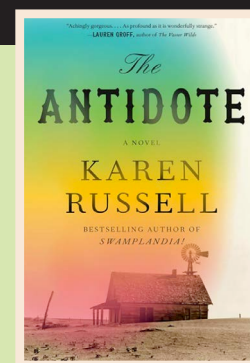
© The new high-tech classroom and gathering space at ILAC features a flexible, tech-rich lower level for collaboration and an upper level designed for reflection and community. A 48-panel solar array supports campus sustainability.



Summer Reads

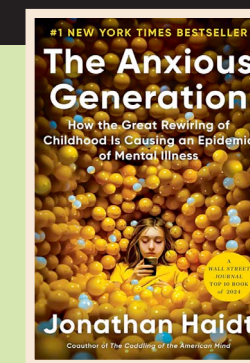
"Summer afternoon – summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language."

Henry James (*The Portrait of the Lady*) had it right. And, for many, summer afternoons call for another perfect pairing: summer reading. When considering what to toss into your beach bag, suitcase or backpack, our faculty have you covered.



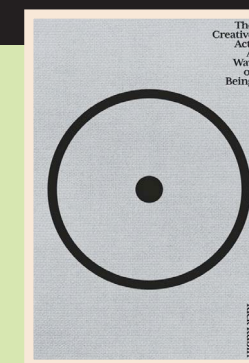
Taylor Keen
Senior Instructor, Strategy and Entrepreneurship,
Heider College of Business

The Antidote by Karen Russell
"Russell's *The Antidote* is a dense, imaginative Dust Bowl novel that fuses historical fiction with magical realism to explore memory, injustice and American amnesia. Set in 1930s Nebraska, the book centers on the town of Uz, where a 'prairie witch,' Antonina Rossi, works as a human vault, storing people's unwanted memories during the ecological and economic devastation of the Dust Bowl. Russell binds this local catastrophe to broader histories of Native dispossession, state violence and environmental collapse, making the landscape itself feel like an archive of buried harms."



Nicole White, PharmD'10
Professor, Pharmacy Practice, School of Pharmacy
and Health Professions

The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt
"The book explores the tie between the rise in mental health disorders in adolescents and the shift from a 'play-based childhood' to a 'phone-based childhood' that began in the late 1980s. The author proposes various mechanisms by which this 'phone-based childhood' interferes with children's social and neurological development and provides practical advice on how, collectively (tech companies, government, school and parents), we can correct course. I was blown away by the evidence linking technology with mental illness. And as a mom to three young kids, I am grateful to have this data to inform some of my parenting decisions."



Jason Bartz, PhD
Professor and Chair, Medical Microbiology and
Immunology, School of Medicine

The Creative Act: A Way of Being by Rick Rubin
"This is a great read on how to recognize and harness your creativity and to pursue your creative interests. The book is well written, and while many of the examples relate to music, the principles apply to any field where creativity is needed. The audiobook is fantastic as the author's voice and speaking style enhance an already great book."



100+ Years of *The White and the Blue*

BY JON NYATAWA

Creighton celebrated the 50th birthday of its fight song during a special homecoming weekend in 1976, highlighted by a halftime ceremony at a men's basketball game to honor the anthem's composer, Gordon Richmond, a 1926 Creighton graduate.

"50th Birthday of C.U. Song," read the headline in the *Alumnews*, the monthly alumni newsletter. Richmond received a plaque. He conducted the pep band as it played *The White and the Blue*. Fans stood and clapped along, and the Bluejays picked up a victory over Montana. What a weekend it was.

But wait! There's just one teeny, tiny technicality that wasn't discovered until a recent, thorough exploration of Creighton records, newspaper archives and photo vaults (as 2026 was presumed to be the song's 100th birthday, a milestone anniversary worth celebrating this year).

The White and the Blue was NOT 50 years old in 1976.

The song's 50th birthday party took place in 1976, yes. But it should have happened two years earlier. Richmond wrote the song in 1924.

Oops.

Our research efforts, assisted by the University Archives and Special Collections, have confirmed this, and revealed a timeline:

Early 1924: The *Omaha Bee* newspaper announced the results of a poll to determine Creighton's official mascot and nickname. Creighton adopted its "Bluejays" moniker.

Also in 1924: Students and alumni did have Creighton-themed songs to sing, but they were written to known tunes. *On Old Creighton* was a version of Wisconsin's fight song, *On Wisconsin*. And *Dear Creighton 'tis of thee* matched the melody of *America*.

One particular day in 1924: Richmond had an idea. He would later say in interviews that he and fellow students thought Creighton needed more than a mascot and a few chants to rally behind. Lots of schools had an authentic song to belt out together at events. But not Creighton.

Oct. 25, 1924: It's now believed to be the first publication of *The White and the Blue*. It occurred on Page 5 of the *Creightonian*, the campus student newspaper. Musical notes and lyrics were printed above a photo of Richmond, along with a report that stated the Union Board and Musical Organizations of the University voted to adopt *The White and the Blue* as the official school song.

Late 1920s: A few alumni petitioned to change the song or at least add a few stanzas. They claimed *The White and the Blue* was too combative to recite at alumni events. Richmond obliged, actually, and wrote new verses.

1960s: Concerns arose that *The White and the Blue* was not peppy and fiery enough. Too tame, apparently. A Creighton student submitted a new option to consider for the University's fight song.

Ultimately, *The White and the Blue* endured. And today, Creighton's fight song is 100 102 years old. And counting.

The White and the Blue gets played for Creighton students, alumni, fans and friends to stand up and clap along (and sing along!) while attending sporting events and celebratory gatherings. It's the ultimate melodic expression of school spirit and Bluejay pride.

The lyrics and melody, remarkably, remain mostly unchanged from the version that Richmond composed overnight in 1924 (NOT 1926!).

The archived publications and records do have a few details about that night, what was arguably the most important solo jam session in University history.

Richmond was a member of Creighton's glee club. He had started his own five-piece orchestra, and he'd earned accolades for being a skilled orator and writer. So, he had talent. One all-nighter was all he needed.

Richmond jotted the notes and chords on a sheet of music paper, with the lyrics written beneath it.

"I picked it out on my banjo," Richmond later told the *Omaha World-Herald*.

The *World-Herald* reported years later that Richmond then took his composition to Henry Cox, director of Creighton Musical Organizations. One finger at a time, Richmond played the melody on the piano — and Cox built a comprehensive musical score for the band to play.

Cox said to the *Creightonian* that *The White and the Blue* was "the most spirited and inspiring college song I have ever listened to."

Richmond went on to work for the *World-Herald*, and he helped cement "Bluejays" as Creighton's nickname. Richmond, who died in 1979, spent much of his professional career practicing law in California.

Richmond wrote in the alumni newspaper in 1930 that he was grateful his "humble efforts" could create something new and produce an anthem that remains "Creighton's own song."



How well do you know Creighton's fight song?

Scan to see alumni attempting to sing *The White and the Blue*. And then sing it yourself.



Are you true blue?

Check out the lyrics on Page 34.

A RECIPE FOR INNOVATION

BY MICAH MERTES

Making cakes to support charitable causes, developing a food app, restoring sneakers and designing eco-friendly fishing bobbers. The entrepreneurial spirit is alive in Creighton students. Through the Greisch Center for Enterprise Value, budding entrepreneurs can take their bold ideas to a new level.

A few years ago, a group of students in the Heider College of Business launched the Entrepreneurship Club, where like-minded innovators could bring their ideas to life.

Like any successful startup, it not only grew quickly — to more than 150 members and counting — but in ways its founders didn't anticipate. Weekly meetings led to 10-hour startup challenges, then to the annual JayTank competition, where students pitch their ideas for thousands of dollars in donor-funded awards.

Building on the Entrepreneurship Club's momentum, the Heider College of Business has launched the Greisch Center for Enterprise Value, which the center's director, Nathan Preheim, BA'96, calls a new model for entrepreneurship education.

"We wanted to build something that doesn't exist at any other college in the country, and I think we're doing just that," Preheim says. "The goal is to put Creighton on the map as the entrepreneurship hub of higher education, a nationally renowned program that attracts the most out-of-the-box thinkers and doers."

Mary Margaret Mellen, a junior who co-founded the Entrepreneurship Club, is equally excited about the possibilities.

"Through the Greisch Center, we'll have even more resources for entrepreneurship, all based in a school of thought that drew me to Creighton in the first place: innovation and creative thinking that looks to solve problems in ways that truly matter," she says.



© Creighton student Mary Margaret Mellen, left, co-founder of the Entrepreneurship Club, and Nathan Preheim, BA'96, director of the Greisch Center for Enterprise Value.

The Diabetes Care Foundation recently committed \$4 million to support the Greisch Center for Enterprise Value, named in honor of foundation board member Jim Greisch, BSBA'80.

"As a Jesuit university," Greisch says, "Creighton is particularly good at translating mission into real-world application and creating value for the communities it serves. The center is a perfect way for the University to capture not only monetary value, but every variety of intrinsic value that makes communities, employers and individuals prosper."

Dozens of Creighton entrepreneurs have already launched (or developed) their ventures with support from the Greisch Center for Enterprise Value. A few of Creighton's entrepreneurial students are featured in the following pages.



REBECCA GRATZ

MARY MARGARET MELLEN

Startup: *Cakes for a Cure*

A junior from Minneapolis, Mellen is double-majoring in finance and marketing and double-minoring in Spanish and entrepreneurship. She is a Scott Scholar; co-founder and head of operations for the Entrepreneurship Club; and works with the nonprofits CIRA and the Northstar Foundation. With Carson Holt, BSBA'25, Mellen is writing the investment memorandum to guide the deployment of hundreds of thousands of dollars into Creighton-affiliated startups.

MELLEN STARTED HER NONPROFIT when she was 11, after two of her cousins had been diagnosed with neurofibromatosis, a genetic disorder in which tumors grow on nerve tissue throughout the body. Their experience drove her to act.

Thanks to her grandmother, Mellen was becoming a proficient baker. She went online, honed her skills further and started her own cake-making nonprofit. Over the next decade, she took Cakes for a Cure statewide. Mellen

"The goal is to put Creighton on the map as the entrepreneurship hub of higher education, a nationally renowned program that attracts the most out-of-the-box thinkers and doers."

NATHAN PREHEIM, BA'96

would make a cake from scratch for anyone, anywhere in Minnesota, and hand-deliver it. Instead of charging a fee, she asked her customers to donate an amount of their choice, through her and Cakes for a Cure, to one of the charities she supported.

She raised more than \$40,000 to fund more than 45,000 meals for children around the world, 10 life-changing reconstructive surgeries for children born with cleft palates, and medical research on neurofibromatosis and Parkinson's disease.

Mellen ended Cakes for a Cure when she came to Creighton. But her efforts could take a new form after graduation. Thanks to her hands-on education in entrepreneurship, she'll have a few more ingredients at her disposal.

"Cakes for a Cure shaped my entrepreneurial journey," Mellen says. "Everything that's followed in my life is an outpouring of lessons learned from that experience: action creates change; faith makes that change steadfast; and passion, not age, drives it all forward."

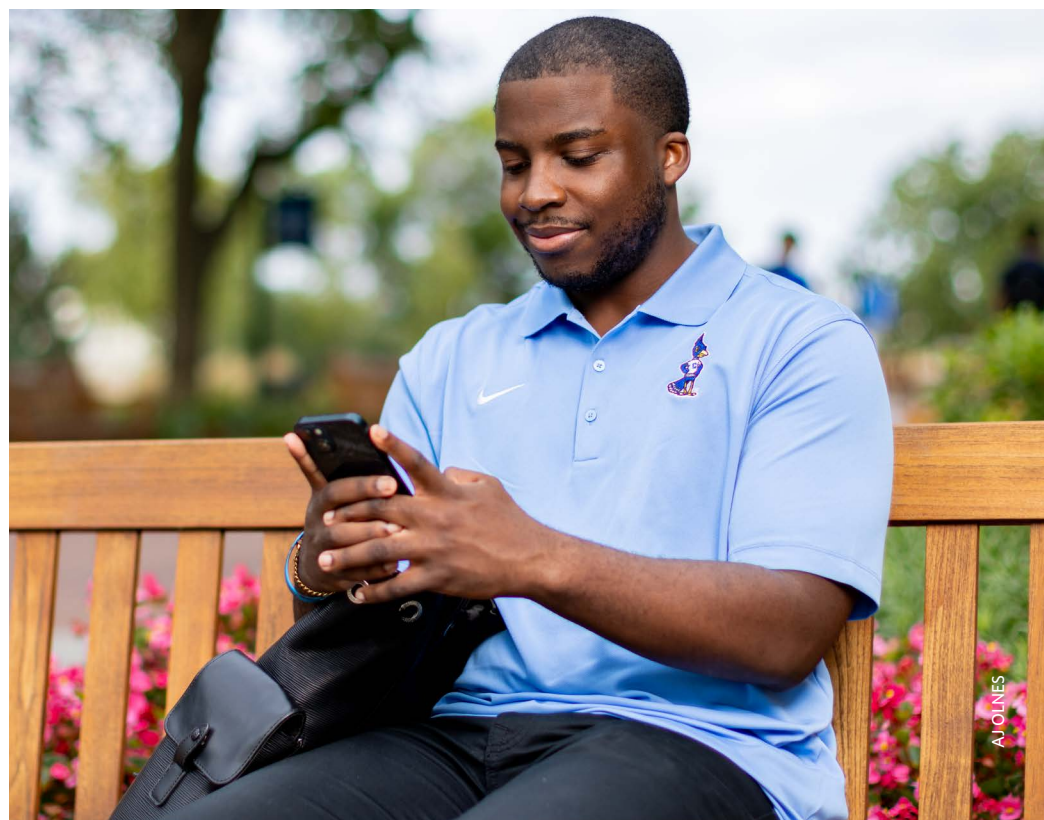


HEATHER MCCAIN

© Will Smalley with part of his personal sneaker collection. Smalley is co-founder of the Entrepreneurship Club.

In addition to those featured in this story, student startups include a mobile barbershop, a service that provides animal therapy in hospitals, and businesses that make smoothie bowls, college preparation packets, indestructible dog beds and more.

© Valery-Elvis Shafack, BSBA'25, is the founder of NIYOU.



AJOLINES

WILL SMALLEY

Startup: TNKR, LLC

A senior from Blue Springs, Missouri, Smalley is majoring in management and marketing, and minoring in entrepreneurship. He is a Scott Scholar and co-founder and president of Creighton's Entrepreneurship Club.

DRAWING FROM HIS longtime passion for sneakers from the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s (and his knowledge of the rarefied subculture), Smalley kickstarted a business connecting sneakerheads with professionals who clean, restore and customize shoes. In 2025, Smalley launched the TNKR mobile app but soon pivoted to a business-to-business model that provides sneaker restorations to dozens of clients nationwide, building and managing a sneaker services supply chain.

"It's the classic founders' dilemma," Smalley says. "You always have this vision for your business, but you will usually need to step back and just listen to the market and respond accordingly. It's been so rewarding to navigate TNKR's changes and gain so much hands-on experience in the process."

Learn more at tnkrsneakers.com.

VALERY-ELVIS SHAFACK, BSBA'25

Startup: NIYOU

A 2025 Heider College of Business graduate from Omaha, Shafack majored in marketing and was a member of the Entrepreneurship Club. NIYOU helps student-athletes navigate Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) partnerships and secure sponsorships.

SHAFACK HAS ALWAYS BEEN entrepreneurially inclined. At 10, he started his own juice stand; at 13, his own sneaker restoration business; in high school, his own production company. At Creighton, Shafack started NIYOU.

Shafack's idea grew out of his work as a marketing intern in Creighton Athletics, where he got to know many of the University's student-athletes. He saw that most of them didn't have time to explore their NIL options and were missing out on opportunities. NIYOU could help fill the gap.

Shafack says he owes much of NIYOU's success to the alumni and donor network that supports students.

Learn more at ni-you.com.

THE GREISCH CENTER FOR ENTERPRISE VALUE HAS FOUR PILLARS

ACADEMIC

The center is enhancing the entrepreneurship minor, open to students of any major, and will include specialized minor tracks based on students' interests. It is also developing courses on intrapreneurship — entrepreneurial thinking applied to innovating within your organization.

APPLIED

The center offers practical application of what students are learning, giving burgeoning entrepreneurs access to seed funding and helping them launch their ideas to market, including **Flight School**, a 12-month, postgraduate accelerator for venture creation and bringing research to market. The donor-supported **First Flight Fund** will bolster student and faculty ventures.

RESEARCH

The center will support research University-wide, helping to secure publishing and commercialization opportunities while enabling faculty members and the University to reap the benefits of intellectual property being created across campus.

The center will also explore the factors that drive startup success, tracking students' experiences over time for internal insights and external scholarship. A proprietary assessment tool will measure the potential of founders and teams.

ACTIVITIES

The student-led Entrepreneurship Club will continue to host events for all students — regardless of major or experience — to explore innovation and connect with creators. These include a weekly speaker series with entrepreneurs, investors and innovators; a 10-hour team competition to develop a startup; team problem-solving sprints; and JayTank, an annual pitch competition.



HEATHER MCCAIN



HEATHER MCCAIN



HEATHER MCCAIN

© From left, Kirtan Patel, Rian Jacobs and Anush Samiev have received support from Heider College of Business faculty and the Entrepreneurship Club to pursue their business ventures.

KIRTAN PATEL

Startup: *FreshPlate*

A senior from Toronto, Canada, Patel is majoring in computer science and graphic design.

PATEL'S "LIGHT-BULB" MOMENT came standing at the fridge, looking dejectedly at wilted produce and random food items. "It was my first time buying groceries, and I tended to buy too much," Patel says. Yet, nothing seemed to add up to a meal.

Having moved off campus and away from student meal plans, he was struggling to manage his food purchases and meal planning. He thought, "There's got to be a better way." The wheels of entrepreneurship began turning. "I wondered how I could solve the problem," he says.

The idea for FreshPlate was born. The app is intended to help users reduce food waste

and save money by tracking pantry inventory, monitoring ingredient expiration dates and generating meal ideas based on available items.

Patel, a member of the Creighton tennis team, says juggling school, practices, matches and his startup has been a lot of work. But, he adds, he has received support from so many, including classmates, teammates, faculty members, the Athletic Department and Creighton's Entrepreneurship Club.

"I had no idea how to build an app when I came to Creighton," Patel says. He did all the coding for FreshPlate, which is in beta testing as of this writing. He originally thought users would be college students moving off campus and, like him, having to buy groceries for the first time. But FreshPlate has found wider appeal.

"Some faculty members have told me they could use this," he says. "It's given me a sense of confidence. Owning a business has been a dream for me."

RIAN JACOBS

Startup: *BioBobbers*

A sophomore from Olathe, Kansas, Jacobs is majoring in general marketing, sports business marketing and management, and minoring in Spanish and Hispanic studies. Jacobs' winning presentation at JayTank had the judges hook, line and bobber.

FOR JACOBS, FISHING IS MORE than a hobby; it's a way of life. Her earliest memories include spending afternoons with her dad at the pond in their backyard. She also has an entrepreneurial spirit. "I love creating new things and positively contributing to the world," she says.

The two came together when Jacobs noticed plastic bobbers, often used by children, washing ashore. It's common for bobbers to detach from fishing lines, but traditional bobbers rarely biodegrade. So, with the help of the

Entrepreneurship Club, she created BioBobbers — an eco-friendly alternative.

"BioBobbers are designed to break down over time if they get lost in the water," says Jacobs, who designed her bobbers on a 3D printer in the Creighton library. "They offer a sustainable solution that doesn't leave plastic or harmful residues behind."

Learn more at biobobbers.com.

ANUSH SAMIEV

Startup: *Automation Rabbit*

A senior from Omaha majoring in finance and business intelligence and analytics, Samiev is a Scott Scholar, and a co-founder, and runner-up at the 2025 JayTank pitch competition.

SAMIEV STARTED AUTOMATION RABBIT with his older brother, who, while working in the trucking industry, noticed opportunities

to use artificial intelligence to eliminate inefficiencies and fraud. Soon after, they launched their own software consulting and development firm, which now has several clients in Omaha and Texas.

"When it started, our focus was trying to automate the repetitive parts of work so people could focus on making more creative, impactful decisions," Samiev says. "That mindset later expanded into building end-to-end digital solutions, including websites and platforms that help businesses think, act and grow more intelligently."

Samiev says the Entrepreneurship Club has given his business a huge boost. "It's a great opportunity to work with motivated, like-minded students who are launching their own startups. We learn from each other's experiences, which is making us more successful, collectively and as individuals."

Learn more at automationrabbit.com.

‘How to ...’

BY RACHEL BUTTNER STANKO, BA'03

Creighton has always been shaped by the people who teach here. Faculty members bring a wealth of real-world experience and care into every classroom, lab and conversation. They are accomplished scholars and mentors who believe learning happens best when ideas meet practice.

That approach does not end at graduation. A Creighton education is meant to stay with you. In that spirit, three faculty members and a Jesuit share practical insights and thoughtful guidance on a range of topics, offering alumni a little wisdom to carry forward.

Help Adult Children Transition to Financial Independence

Brad Klontz, PsyD

*Associate Professor of Practice, Economics and Finance
Heider College of Business*

PARENTS OFTEN STEP IN TO HELP their children navigate the bumpy transition to adulthood. It may start with covering rent after a job loss or welcoming a graduate back home or taking on student loan payments. But even well-meaning support can slide into dependency, creating expectations that erode parents' long-term financial security.

This pattern is not a moral failing, Klontz says. "Behavioral reinforcement creates it. Money is one of the most powerful reinforcers of behavior." However, he emphasizes, repeated giving can reward stagnation rather than motivate change, stalling a young adult's growth.

Klontz, a certified financial planner, offers these tips for shifting from support to self-sufficiency:

Hold firm with clarity. Saying you will turn off the money tap is one thing. Following through is another. Parents should prepare for pushback, especially when support has been significant. Rehearsing a response ahead of time can help.

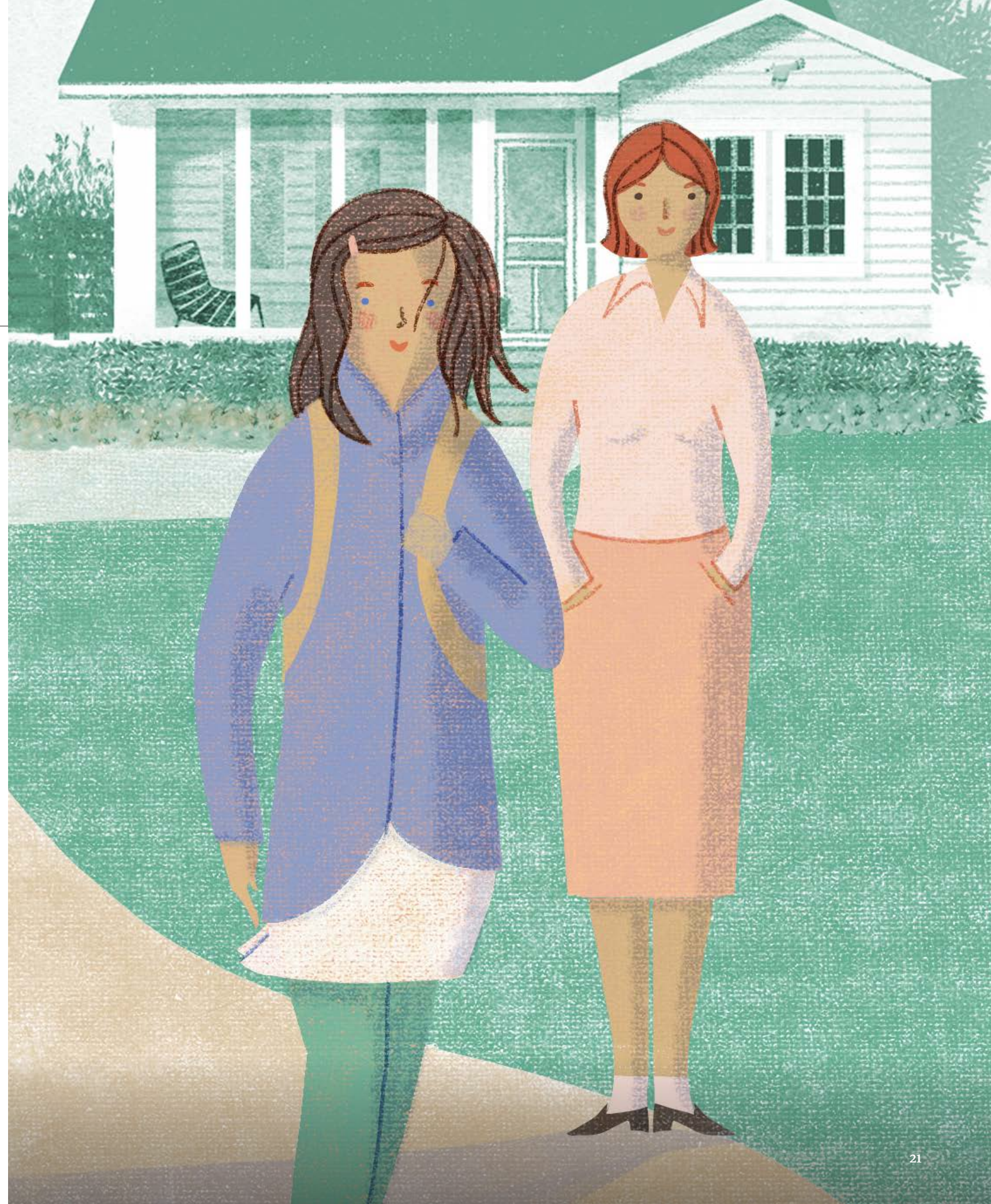
"When you actually cut them off, you get what we call in psychology an extinction burst," Klontz says. "It's like an adult tantrum." Standing firm matters.

Step down gradually. Most parents hesitate to cut off support all at once. One option is to reduce assistance incrementally over time. Another option is to reframe future help as loans, with clear expectations, reinforcing accountability.

Use specific language. Avoid vague statements such as, "We'll need to cut back," which can create anxiety without clarity. Be explicit about how much support you will provide and for how long.

Get it in writing. The agreement does not need to be legally binding. Writing down a plan to phase out financial support helps clarify expectations and signals commitment.

Enlist professional help. In some cases, involving a financial planner or attorney can help deliver the message. Hearing it from a third party can underscore how ongoing expenses are affecting parents' financial security.



Maintain Balance and Strength as You Age

Rashelle Hoffman, DPT, PhD

Director of the MoveCog Research Lab and Assistant Professor of Physical Therapy
School of Pharmacy and Health Professions

AS WE AGE, CHANGES ACROSS MULTIPLE BODY SYSTEMS can affect strength and balance. Muscle loss, reduced neuron communication, decreased sensation in the legs and changes in vision and vestibular function, even certain medications, may increase fall risk.

Still, Hoffman emphasizes, it is never too late to improve your long-term health and mobility.

"Your body responds to everyday activities," she says. "If you do not challenge your balance and strength, you will see declines in both regardless of age."

Research shows the benefits of exercise at every stage of life. For older adults, fear of falling can lead to reduced activity and, in turn, greater mobility loss. Appropriate strength and aerobic training, Hoffman notes, has been shown to improve balance, reduce fall risk and lower the likelihood of conditions such as osteoporosis.

Here are Hoffman's tips for proactive care:

Focus on functional exercises. For the biggest impact, focus on major muscle groups and exercises that translate to everyday activities. Repeated sit-to-stand movements can make it easier to get up from low chairs or vehicles, while upper-body exercises such as rows or overhead presses support tasks like opening doors or lowering items from high shelves.

Reexamine your routines. Small daily choices also build strength over time. Look for moments when convenience has replaced movement. Choosing stairs, parking farther from entrances, walking around the grocery store and standing up during commercial breaks all add up.

Include stretching. Flexibility is another key component, especially for the arms and legs. Hold stretches for 60 seconds. Overall, aim for at least 30 minutes of combined aerobic and strength activity each day.



Turn Interruptions into Invitations

The Rev. Larry Gillick, SJ

Director, Deglman Center for Ignatian Spirituality

A FEW YEARS AGO, AT THE OMAHA AIRPORT, a woman bumped into Fr. Gillick. She apologized. Without much thought, he replied, "It was not an interruption, because all interruptions are invitations." Thinking on his feet, he tried to explain. She walked him to his gate and asked if he really believed that and if he lived that way. He told her he tried. He said she shared, with a smiling voice, "I hope so. They just announced your flight is delayed for 90 minutes."

That delay became the invitation. A man in line who had overheard them asked if Fr. Gillick was a salesman. "Kind of," he said. The man then asked if he was a priest. For the next 90 minutes, they spoke about something that needed a priest. That conversation would not have happened without the interruption, Fr. Gillick says.

How to prepare, if possible, for the unexpected, as explained by Fr. Gillick:

Things, unplanned by us or others, do occur and we either react or respond. The real surprise is finding out what follows, what is given, what will be created. This is where interruptions become the invitations.

It takes humility to be surprised. Those who are "surprised" must be in control always.

God is not in control, nor are we in most of life's drama. We have plans for what will happen, must happen, should happen, but God is creating us always. Our lives are the adventure of being created, using our God-given gifts: senses, intellect, imagination and a power to decide.

We can profit from a sense that we are not in charge of everything.

A suggestion: With one darkened eye, hold regret, disappointment, anger, resentment. With the other eye, remain open and patiently wait for the next life-event in creation.

Interruptions are the results of allowing the ever-creating God to be God. Who are we? Loved, constantly being-created creations. Stay available.

"Things, unplanned by us or others, do occur and we either react or respond. The real surprise is finding out what follows, what is given, what will be created."

THE REV. LARRY GILLICK, SJ

Lead with Moral Courage

Jennifer Moss Breen Kuzelka, PhD

Associate Professor, Interdisciplinary EdD Program in Leadership

MAKING DECISIONS GUIDED BY OUR VALUES is a common goal in both personal and professional life. Yet, in shared workplaces, those values are not always universally held. At times, organizations may take actions that feel misaligned with what we believe, creating internal tension and making it harder to engage fully. Still, organizations — and you — must make difficult decisions every day.

Here are Kuzelka's tips to embracing shared values:

Name your values openly. Speaking up requires vulnerability, especially when we know our values may not align with the situation or with those around us. But, Kuzelka emphasizes, "the simple act of speaking our values, or our 'truth', not only introduces new ideas to others but frees us from the anger and anxiety that arise when decisions feel misaligned."

This willingness to speak, despite discomfort, is moral courage in action.

Listen actively and ask questions. Before voicing our perspective, we must seek to understand the intent and desired outcomes of others. Asking thoughtful, open-ended questions can "unearth unseen challenges or outcomes of our and others' actions," Kuzelka says.

Simple prompts like "Tell me more about that" or "What could go right or wrong if we take this approach?" invite reflection rather than defensiveness.

Lead with integrity. Integrity means doing what we say we will do and standing fully behind that belief. It is the foundation of trust, and without trust, meaningful progress is difficult. Leading with integrity means choosing what aligns with your values, even when it's hard.



Mission in Action

BY EUGENE CURTIN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY NADER ABUSHHAB

Creighton's Magis Catholic Teacher Corps program expands to Phoenix



From shaping priestly vocations to ushering faith-filled teachers into the wider world, few concepts are as comprehensively present at Creighton University as the idea of “formation.”

This historical commitment to forming teachers in the ways of faith, so intrinsic to a Jesuit, Catholic education, begs the question: Who teaches the teachers? It's a question Creighton answers with its Magis Catholic Teacher Corps program, which, after proving its effectiveness over the past 25 years primarily in the Midwest, has now expanded to Phoenix.

The Magis program provides Catholic elementary and secondary schools with educators eager to continue the centuries-old commitment of the Catholic Church to faith, virtue and caring for others.

Four Magis students are currently volunteer teaching in Phoenix, and Colleen Chiacchere, who directs the overall Magis Catholic Teacher Corps program at Creighton, could not be prouder of them.

“These four Magis teachers represent the Creighton mission in action,” she says. “They are amazing first-year teachers; I can't emphasize that enough.

“They are among the most loving, faith-filled and service-oriented Creighton students. They have said yes to teaching the next generation. They have said yes to a career that requires well-formed, enthusiastic professionals to nurture young minds, hearts and spirits in our elementary and high schools.”

Photo left: Elena Simpson teaches fourth and fifth grades at St. Matthew Catholic School.

Photo above right: Peter Robles teaches math and computer science at Brophy College Preparatory.



The arrival of the Magis teacher program is further evidence of Creighton's commitment to serving Phoenix and the Southwest, Chiacchere says, a commitment most powerfully expressed by the opening in 2021 of a \$100 million, 195,000-square-foot Creighton health sciences campus in midtown Phoenix.

“All four Phoenix Magis teachers began the program in May 2025, spending a formative and fun summer in Omaha, before beginning their teaching in Phoenix Catholic schools,” she says. “They are a good mix of those coming to Phoenix, which means brain gain, and those from Arizona wanting to stay in Phoenix to teach.”

The two-year Magis experience is communal. Enrolled students live together, usually in campus housing or local community houses. They eat together and pray together while practicing the Ignatian concept of “seeking God in all things,” all while working full time as volunteer teachers and earning full scholarships to pursue one of five master's degrees in education: secondary teaching, elementary teaching, school counseling, educational leadership or educational specialist.

They are part of an expanding story. Founded 25 years ago, when the late Creighton graduate and philanthropist John Micek, BS'50, suggested creating a program similar to the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education, Creighton's Magis program now impacts between 1,500 and 2,000 grade school and high school students every year

in 20 to 25 schools. The program's 224 alumni currently serve 20 schools and nearly 2,000 students in Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Omaha and Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Currently, 28 students are advancing through the program.

Emeline Whaley, a graduate of Northern Arizona University and currently teaching second grade at St. Francis Xavier School, says the Magis program deepened her commitment to Catholic education and provided her with an early jump on earning her master's degree.

“Being a part of the Magis Catholic Teacher Corps in Phoenix has been an incredible experience that has equipped me spiritually, professionally and academically for the world of Catholic education,” she says.

“I work alongside faithful and dedicated colleagues while teaching God's most precious creation — my second graders. This community has deeply shaped both my identity as an educator and my vocation as a Catholic teacher.”

Jim Bopp, currently principal at Brophy College Preparatory, a Jesuit high school in Phoenix, knew the Magis program from his six years as principal at Omaha's Creighton Preparatory School.

“I saw in Omaha how the program fosters a deep commitment to Jesuit educational principles,” he says. “I appreciated the care and commitment they brought to the classroom — something that can only come from seeing teaching as a vocation.”



© Sam Wells teaches religion and social studies at St. Matthew Catholic School.

“Our Magis teachers arrived exceptionally well-prepared for the classroom – grounded not only in strong instructional practices, but also in a deep commitment to mission-driven education.”

CHRISTINE TAX
Principal, St. Matthew Catholic School
Phoenix

“When I became principal at Brophy, it was a priority of mine to start a Magis community here. I hope that with this first year of proof-of-concept in place, many other Catholic schools across Phoenix will recognize the value of Magis teachers, and the program will grow to meet the tremendous need we have here for quality Catholic educators,” Bopp says.

The arrival of Magis-trained teachers has been “a tremendous blessing” for her school, says Christine Tax, principal at St. Matthew Catholic School in Phoenix. Tax’s husband, Christopher, BSBA’01, is a Creighton alumnus, while their daughter, Kate, is a recent Creighton graduate and current student, and their son, Connor, will attend in the fall of this year.

“Our Magis teachers arrived exceptionally well-prepared for the classroom – grounded not only in strong instructional practices, but also in a deep commitment to mission-driven education,” she says.

“They bring a unique perspective, shaped by Jesuit values, which aligns beautifully with our call to ‘Encounter, Educate and Empower.’ Their presence enriches our students’ daily experiences, reminding us all of the importance of service, reflection and *cura personalis* – care for the whole person.”

The formation of teachers, Tax says, like the formation of students, is a responsibility she does not take lightly.

“Nothing brings me more joy than taking part in the formation of teachers,” she says.

“Because I believed so strongly in the Magis program, I went out on a limb nearly two years ago and reached out to see if we could bring this partnership to Phoenix.

“Today, I am incredibly proud to see that dream become a reality and to play a part in supporting these remarkable teachers as they begin their journey with us at St. Matthew.”

Although the 2025-2026 school year is the first for the Magis program in Phoenix, planning has been ongoing for two years. The impetus, says Chiacchere, came from Catholic educators in the Phoenix metropolitan area, where Creighton’s Department of Education found strong support for the program not just among Catholic principals but also from the Diocese of Phoenix.

The Phoenix Magis teachers live on Brophy Prep’s campus where they work closely with Brophy’s Alumni Service Corps program, engage in shared formation activities and participate in community formation meetings.

Chiacchere, together with Jill Harman, associate director of the Magis program, visits several times a year to provide guidance. Three University field supervisors in Phoenix coach Magis teachers in the classroom while a fourth supports community and spirituality formation.

“In addition to the four current teachers who will serve for two years at Brophy College Prep, St. Matthew School and St. Francis Xavier School, we are in close contact with

other Catholic schools in central Phoenix,” Chiacchere says. “We are planning to have several more Magis teachers in Phoenix for 2026-2027.”

Magis accepts applications from all students seeking to deepen their understanding of Catholic education. Students need not be Catholic, or even have an undergraduate degree in education. Indeed, the program originally was designed for students who did not possess an undergraduate degree in education. The passage of years, however, has seen the program embrace those who have studied education as undergraduates and, through Magis, wish to pursue an advanced master’s degree in either school counseling, educational leadership or education specialist areas.

It was during Elena Simpson’s junior year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where the Omaha native earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education, that she encountered Magis.

“I walked up to the Magis booth at a career fair and instantly knew this program was the place for me,” Simpson says. “Since then, it has been a whirlwind of saying yes to God’s invitations and realizing all that Magis has to offer, from forming me into an educator who centers her work around Jesuit and Catholic values of *cura personalis*, to giving me an amazing circle of friends I can lean on and learn from, to deepening my faith life in ways I never even thought possible.”

Today, she teaches fourth and fifth grades at St. Matthew School and is studying for a master’s degree in school counseling.

Both the students and the principals who benefit from their young teachers’ immersion in Magis training express a common appreciation for the program’s ability to promote reflection and growth beyond routine mastery of facts.

“As a school, we are intentional about cultivating an Ignatian spirit that emphasizes discernment, care for the whole person and a commitment to forming kids for and with

others,” says Ryan Watson, principal at St. Francis Xavier School.

Watson looks no further for evidence of these qualities than to Whaley.

“Emeline’s faith-filled presence, passion for students and professionalism were evident from the very beginning,” he says. “She brings not only strong instructional practices, but a deep understanding of vocation, reflection and service that aligns incredibly well with our Catholic identity.”

Peter Robles, a graduate of Macalester College in Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Sam Wells, a graduate of Regis University in Denver, round out the Phoenix Magis community for 2025-2026. Robles teaches math and computer science at Brophy, while Wells teaches religion and social studies at St. Matthew.

“Through Magis, I learned to see teaching not simply as the delivery of content, but as an act of accompaniment – meeting students

where they are, academically, emotionally and spiritually,” Robles says.

“The program’s emphasis on Ignatian pedagogy pushed me to design lessons that value reflection, discernment and growth, while holding students to high standards. That formation has been especially meaningful in my work teaching mathematics and computer science, where I strive to help students see problem-solving as a way of developing perseverance, curiosity and confidence.”

Wells says he finds special meaning in the spirituality component of the program.

“I love being able to pull from the wisdom of Jesuit spirituality to help my students develop their relationship with God,” he says.

“I also love that the Jesuit tradition gives me the tools to grow in my own spirituality. It has allowed me to find God and see the good in each of my students.”



© Emeline Whaley greets one of her second-grade students at St. Francis Xavier School.

‘All of Us Have Confronted the Fragility of Human Life’

The Rev. John P. Schlegel, SJ, 2001

9/11 25 YEARS LATER

BY GLENN ANTONUCCI

AT 8:46 A.M. ON SEPT. 11, 2001, the first hijacked airliner struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City.

From that moment on, the world would be forever changed.

A quarter century has passed since al-Qaeda’s brazen attacks on the United States killed thousands, shaking America to its core and awakening a patriotism that would unite the nation – and, ultimately, help commit it to a far-flung war on terror.

In this 250th anniversary year of the United States of America, the events of 9/11 mark a seminal moment in American history. While the majority of today’s undergraduate students were not born yet, 9/11 remains a defining date in our national psyche.

For those who witnessed the horror of that day, there is a collective memory yearning to be passed down to future generations.

At Creighton University, as it was across the country, that fateful day fused shock, confusion, fear, sadness, anger and deep anxiety. And yet, on a day forever marked by a vicious and evil act that remains the deadliest terrorist attack in history, and in the days that followed, acts of kindness and compassion abounded.

Creighton remembers 9/11 in all of these ways, and more.



The Rev. John P. Schlegel, SJ, Creighton president from 2000 to 2011, at a campus gathering outside of St. John’s Church after the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001.

‘A LOT OF TEARS’

KURTIS MORRISON, BA’02, REMEMBERS watching events unfold on TVs in the Skutt Student Center, the bewilderment, the tears — “a lot of tears” — and the sight of Air Force One cruising high above the Creighton mall on its way to Offutt Air Force Base. He remembers parents, worried about the possibility of a forthcoming military draft, calling the school, too.

He would spend part of his day directing counselors to grieving students. There was worry for international students. Would the U.S. government send them home? Morrison, then the Creighton Students Union president, joined administrators in an impromptu gathering in a lecture hall to try to ease their fears.

Confusion was rampant. Students cried. “A lot were freshmen and sophomores in particular, many from small towns who hadn’t been to a bigger city before.” Did they need to stay away from big cities, they wondered?

“We didn’t know at the time what or who had caused it,” he recalls. “The uncertainty in the first few hours was absolutely wide open.”

He does not remember division.

“I can remember only one or two instances

of people lashing out and pointing fingers,” says Morrison, now a deputy attorney general in Colorado. “By and large, the University was incredibly welcoming and supportive.”

‘IT WAS ALL SO UNBELIEVABLE’

LYNN SAFRANEK, BA’02, REMEMBERS a succession of horrors.

“One tragedy after another unfolded, and you had no idea what might be next,” she says. “While we watched live news coverage of the towers, news would come in about Pennsylvania and D.C. There was concern Omaha would be a target because of Offutt Air Force Base.”

“It’s hard to describe the sense of unknown about that day and the ones that followed. It was all so unbelievable.”

Then the editor-in-chief of the *Creightonian*, Safrank and her newspaper staff set off to report on campus reactions. It gave them a way to channel their nervous energy.

“We had a purpose,” she recalls.

Rereading the coverage 25 years later — she now runs a communications consultancy in Chicago — she is reminded of how the outreach

“How Creighton responded was so instructive. To come together as the largest possible community. Don’t fracture. Don’t isolate. Come together even across differences. Express feelings. Ask questions.”

THE REV. DANIEL S. HENDRICKSON, SJ, PHD

Creighton quickly extended to students “provided that outlet for the whole community.”

She says she remains particularly impressed by the University’s collective efforts to meet students “where they were.” Among those efforts were “the Jesuits who simply made themselves present on the mall, in the student center and in residence halls to engage with students and be there for them.”

‘SEARED ON OUR MEMORIES’

CREIGHTON PRESIDENT THE REV. DANIEL S. HENDRICKSON, SJ, PHD, REMEMBERS Sept. 11, 2001, beginning with breakfast among colleagues in the private dining room of the Jesuit community. A philosophy professor at the time — he had two classes scheduled that day — Fr. Hendrickson was the first to leave the dining table and walked by a TV at the front entrance of Creighton Hall, near the Jesuit elevator. It was airing the news of the first tower being hit.

Like so many others, he thought it was an accident; a small aircraft.

“We came to see it was not,” he says, “and then the second tower was hit.”

The next memory is of a campus announcement, urging business as usual and relaying a decision to proceed with classes, a decision made in part to prevent students from isolating themselves in their residence hall rooms.

He remembers then-President the Rev. John P. Schlegel, SJ, leading the noon Mass at a packed St. John’s Church, foretelling that the events of the day would be “seared on our memories for the remainder of our lives.” He also recalls a multifaith prayer service later that evening that drew hundreds to gather around the front steps of the church.

The University, Fr. Hendrickson remembers, “responded in a very mission-focused way.” Foremost was the task to immediately care for students. Second, “to come together in our faith commitment, for each other and the world.”

“How Creighton responded was so instructive,” he says. “To come together as the largest possible community. Don’t fracture. Don’t isolate. Come together even across differences. Express feelings. Ask questions.”

Beyond campus, he says, 9/11 also was a realization of geopolitical realities: adversaries celebrating what had been achieved; America’s enemies executing an unprecedented, large-scale attack on the U.S. mainland. The triggering of a new era for our country’s sense of security. And, how our government’s reaction led to increased surveillance — and war.

‘END OF AN AGE OF INNOCENCE’

JOHN CALVERT, PHD, REMEMBERS leaving the house with his son and hearing the initial news reports on the car radio. The Jihadism expert and Creighton faculty member soon would be taking calls from national and international media.

He was careful with reporters not to rush to judgment, but he knew that morning al-Qaeda surely was responsible. He’d been following Osama bin Laden’s career for some time, aware that America was increasingly reviled by such extremists — “a slow and steady buildup of hatred toward this country.”

The 9/11 attacks were a wake-up call for Americans and a turning point in history, Calvert says. “There’s before 9/11 and after 9/11. We don’t live in the same world as before the event.”

Life certainly would not be the same for the history professor. He participated in a panel discussion on campus days after the tragedy, one of several question-and-answer sessions the University would hold, and would spend the next few years trying to explain, in media interviews, articles and widely acclaimed books, the origins and sociopolitical dynamics of radical Islamism. He worked for a time with the U.S. Army at Fort Leavenworth, educating military officers about Islamic extremism.

“There’s before 9/11 and after 9/11. We don’t live in the same world as before the event.”

JOHN CALVERT, PHD



“We have to remember these things. It’s an important part of the values of this country, part of the glue that holds us together.”

RET. COL. MASON SMITH, BA’66, MA’75

He remembers national solidarity in the wake of the attacks; a solidarity on campus, too. He remembers Muslim students traumatized and afraid they’d be targeted. While 9/11 did give rise to some Islamophobia in America, he says, it did not manifest at Creighton.

“We can talk about the security state, surveillance,” Calvert says, considering the legacy of 9/11, “but more generally, it was the end of an age of innocence. Never had America been attacked in its homeland. Pearl Harbor is put up as a comparison, but that was far away. This was right in New York City.”

‘I MISS HIM TERRIBLY’

RET. COL. MASON SMITH, BA’66, MA’75, REMEMBERS the initial uncertainty of the day. Then, disbelief. Then devastation.

His brother and fellow Creighton alumnus, Ret. Lt. Col. Gary Smith, BA’68, whose office was in Alexandria, Virginia — little more than a stone’s throw from the Pentagon — was unaccounted for.

Gary, then chief of U.S. Army Retirement Services, wasn’t supposed to be in that building on Sept. 11. When news of the terrorist attacks surfaced, his family made repeated calls to his office, eventually discovering that a Pentagon meeting had indeed been called, and he had been summoned.

“Still, you hold out hope,” Mason says.

Mason’s son called from Providence College seeking reassurance Gary wasn’t in danger. Mason said it was highly unlikely he was.

“Then seeing the images at the Pentagon, we knew there’d be a lot of casualties,” Mason says. “Boy, did I have to eat my words.”

Gary’s meeting, just minutes underway

when American Airlines Flight 77 punched a fiery hole in the Pentagon’s west wall, was in the direct path of the airliner. Though the 22-year Army veteran remained officially missing for months, in time it was confirmed that none of the meeting’s attendees survived.

“We were devastated,” Mason says. “So many things cross your mind. You hope it was instant, that adrenaline had kicked in and that he died before he knew what happened.

“We all missed him from that very moment. I miss him terribly.”

Mason and his wife, Judy Carroll, ARTS’67, remain in touch with Gary’s wife, Ann. They regularly reminisce about Gary. “We’ll talk, and his name will come up some way or another. We always remember his great sense of humor. He always had a joke,” he says. “We all shared so much together. It never gets easy, but you tend to remember the fun stuff as opposed to the tragedy.”

Mason — formerly Creighton’s Alumni Relations director — remembers, too, the outpouring of sympathy and support from many connected to the University. Those gestures said a great deal about the Creighton community, he says.

Now approaching the 25-year anniversary of 9/11, Mason and Judy are considering traveling to the commemoration planned in Washington, D.C. Now in their 80s, though, it’s harder to get around.

“We have gone in the past,” he says. “Those memorials are very important. We have to remember these things. It’s an important part of the values of this country, part of the glue that holds us together.

“We can’t forget about what happened. Any more than we can forget about Pearl Harbor or D-Day,” he adds. “We have a tendency to forget. We get busy, we get distracted, we lose our focus. And we kind of forget about the things that people have given up so that we can have what we have.”

© The Creighton community participated in one of many religious services held across the country as part of the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance on Sept. 14, 2001. The large gathering outside St. John’s Church prayed for the victims of the attacks and for world peace.



IMPACT

A Stronger Circle of Care

A new donor-funded program will deepen Creighton’s commitment to promoting the mental and spiritual well-being, resiliency and life skills of students in every school and college on campus.

The Fritz Family Office of Cura Personalis Services — established with a \$3 million gift from Lance, HON’23, and Julie Fritz — is a mission-driven initiative that will provide additional support, resources and programming for students. The gift also establishes the Fritz Family Endowed Director of Cura Personalis Services. The director will lead a cross-divisional team of case managers.

Cura personalis, which translates as “care for the whole person,” is one of Creighton’s core Jesuit values.

“True to our mission, Creighton provides a strong focus on the individual student,” says the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD, University president. “No matter what they are facing, our faculty and staff are ready and waiting, offering their time and talent to support the unique needs of all students. The Fritz family’s generosity allows us to scale this strength into

a centralized, University-wide effort, ensuring that our students have access to a team devoted entirely to every dimension of their well-being.”

The Fritz Family Office of Cura Personalis Services continues Lance and Julie Fritz’s philanthropic commitment to wellness initiatives in higher education. At Georgia Tech and Bucknell University — the latter their alma mater — the Fritzes have funded staffing and programs that support student



Julie and Lance, HON’23, Fritz

well-being and mental health. The catalyst for their support was seeing the pressures their own two children and their friends faced at college.

“It was clearly becoming more and more difficult for college students to navigate their

studies while also dealing with the onslaught of social media, the constant pressure of trying to make an impression, the stress that comes with that,” says Lance Fritz, who is the former chairman, president and CEO of Union Pacific. “All of that combined with just trying to grow up and become an adult, it looked extremely challenging, and our hearts were moved to give to programs that helped mental health and wellness.”

With the Fritz Family Office of Cura Personalis Services, and other programs the family has funded, the goal, they say, is to do the most good for the most students — not only the highest-performing and the most in need, but also everyone in between.

“We like that this is something where a huge portion of the student population will get to experience it every year,” says Julie Fritz. “It can benefit everyone if and when they need it. That makes it an extension of the community that Creighton represents, which helps students really feel like they’re a part of something and that they can make the connections they need.”

The Fritz Family Office of Cura Personalis Services will serve as one of the three pillars in the University’s Division of Student Life, along with Student Health Education and Compliance (which meets the physical needs of students, including healthcare and food security) and the Counseling Center (which provides mental health services to students, including crisis support, psychiatry and therapy). — **BY MICAH MERTES**

ALUMNI NOTES

Send Us Your News

Penned your long-awaited novel? Traveled around the world? Received that awesome promotion? Earned a prestigious honor? If so, we want to hear about it. Share your memories and milestones by emailing us at alumninews@creighton.edu.

74 Dr. Louis A. Gamino, BA, Temple, Texas, was designated by the Texas Psychological Association (TPA) as its Psychologist of the Year. Gamino received the award in November 2025 at TPA’s annual meeting in San Antonio. In March 2025, Gamino’s second full-length textbook for healthcare professionals, *Working with Bereaved Parents: A Practitioner’s Guide*, was released. His first book, *Ethical Practice in Grief Counseling*, was released in 2009.

76 Daniel E. Monnat, JD, Wichita, Kansas, of Monnat & Spurrier, Chartered, was listed among the 2025 top 100 Missouri and Kansas Super Lawyers. This is the 21st consecutive year Monnat has been on the list. In addition, Monnat & Spurrier was recognized in the 2026 edition of Best Law Firms in five practice areas: appellate practice, criminal defense-general practice, criminal defense-white collar, DUI/DWI defense and bet-the-company litigation.

77 John P. Heithoff, JD, Omaha, published his book, *Bold as a Bear: The German Quest for the Iowa Prairie*. By tracing his family’s westward migration and their settlement in Iowa, he explores their journey in depth. The book also aims to inspire readers to research their own immigrant ancestors.

80 Michael A. Jording, MD, BA, Newcastle, Wyoming, was named the 2025 Wyoming Medical Society Physician of the Year, recognizing his exemplary service, dedication to patients and lasting contributions to advancing medicine in Wyoming. A board-certified family physician, Jording has spent more than three decades providing compassionate, comprehensive care to communities in northeast Wyoming and is widely respected for his leadership, clinical excellence and commitment to rural health. In addition to his practice, he has helped shape health policy, served as president of the Wyoming Medical Society from 2006-2008 and mentored generations of physicians.

82 Harry W. Trombitas, MS, Dublin, Ohio, worked in the FBI for nearly 30 years, beginning in 1983, and served in Omaha, St. Louis, New York and Columbus, Ohio. His career focused largely on violent crime investigations, including serial murder, kidnapping, crimes against children, bank robbery, criminal profiling and threat assessment, and he also served as an FBI spokesperson before retiring in 2012. Afterward, he held positions including system vice president, security operations at OhioHealth; director of the Police Executive Leadership College;

and taught sociology at The Ohio State University. Encouraged to document his experiences, he turned a large manuscript into a four-book collection called *The Dark Places Series*. The books are titled *My Life as an FBI Special Agent: The Thomas Lee Dillon Case; My Life as an FBI Special Agent: Murders, Motors, The Mob, and The Money; My Life as an FBI Special Agent: Murder, Betrayal, and the Tragedy of Officer Bryan Hurst; and My Life as an FBI Special Agent: Final Cases, Lasting Impact*.

87 D. Bailey Stowers Wynne, BSPha, Duncanville, Texas, is in the final year of a PhD program focused on Alzheimer’s disease research in minority women. Since graduating from Creighton, Wynne has built a 35-year career as a pharmacy manager, director and critical care clinician. Alongside her clinical work, Wynne has remained active in public health leadership. She has served as board chair and member of the Northeast Texas Public Health District and was appointed by governors Rick Perry and Greg Abbott to the Statewide Health Coordinating Council, where she served for 12 years, helping assess and plan for the health needs of Texans. Most recently, Wynne was appointed by Gov. Abbott to the Texas Council on Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders for a six-year term.

89 Rev. James R. Golka, BA, Denver, was named by Pope Leo XIV as the sixth Archbishop of Denver and was installed in late March. The Most Rev. Golka assumed the pastoral responsibility for Colorado’s largest diocese and metropolitan see, which is home to more than 600,000 Catholics, 148 parishes and 31 Catholic schools. Prior to this appointment, he served as the Bishop of the Diocese of Colorado Springs.

96 Timothy J. Buckley, JD, Omaha, joined the law firm Gross Welch Marks Clare as a director. His practice areas include estate planning, probate, trust administration and appeals, civil litigation and municipal law.

98 Jacque Schmit Bendon, BSBA, Omaha, is the leader of an \$8.44 billion revenue group at Union Pacific Railroad as the senior vice president of marketing and sales-industrial products. Bendon and her team recently secured a large petrochemical win for the company.

99 Dr. James A. Mello, MBA, Hershey, Pennsylvania, began a new role as senior director of data and insights at Milton Hershey School in Hershey. In this position, he leads efforts to strengthen the use of information and analytics to support continuous improvement, improve

decision-making and advance the school's mission to nurture and educate children in social and financial need to lead fulfilling and productive lives.

01 Daniel C. McLaughlin, BSBA, Omaha, is the assistant vice president of marketing and sales operations at Union Pacific Railroad. He is spearheading the commercial planning and integration of the merger process for Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern.

02 Hon. Amy Schwering Moore, JD, Ames, Iowa, was appointed chief judge of the Second Judicial District of Iowa. Moore was appointed to the district court in 2019.

04 Nancy I. Kelsey-Carroll, BA, Cleveland, was recently honored by the Indigenous Journalists Association with the first and second place awards for her columns published on *Cleveland.com*. Kelsey-Carroll writes mostly about the intersection of her multicultural identity and current events.

05 Robert A. McLean Jr., BA, New York, is a breaking news editor on the digital politics team at NBC News. **Grace C. Spulak, BA,** Bosque Farms, New Mexico, is the author of the story collection *Magdalena Is Brighter Than You Think* (winner of the

2025 Autumn House Press Rising Writer Prize).

08 Dr. Rachel M. Benzoni, BS, Omaha, received her PhD in science education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2025.

13 Theodore C. Graham, DDS, Talihina, Oklahoma, is a dentist at the Choctaw Nation Oklahoma Diabetes Wellness Center in Talihina. He serves patients with diabetes, providing treatment for oral disease, caries and periodontal conditions, along with essential education and care for members of the Choctaw Nation.

15 Emmylou A. Flanagan, OTD, Lincoln, Nebraska, is now credentialed as a certified hand therapist. Flanagan is an occupational therapist at Lincoln Orthopedic Physical Therapy. **Ashley A. Moore, JD,** Earlham, Iowa, was elected to partnership at the law firm Kutak Rock in Omaha. Moore is a member of the firm's insurance and risk working group. **Richelle L. Simmons, MS,** Annapolis, Maryland, is the vice president of technology for the AARP Foundation in Washington, D.C.

16 Nicole E. Ostertag, BSBA'12, MBA, Portland, Oregon, successfully summited Cho Oyu (8,201 meters/26,906 feet), the sixth highest mountain in the

world, and her first 8,000-meter peak. Cho Oyu is located on the border of Nepal and Tibet. Ostertag is the senior director of global business development at G3 Enterprises in Portland.

20 Gianna Basile, BSN, Omaha, joined the team at the Behavioral Health and Wellness Center at Children's Nebraska in Omaha. The new world-class facility opened in January 2026 and is the first in the region to provide the full spectrum of mental health services to meet the growing needs of children and adolescents in Nebraska and beyond. Basile is a psychiatric nurse practitioner on the inpatient behavioral health unit. She received her Master of Science in Nursing Practice from Vanderbilt University in 2024.

22 Addison C. McCauley, JD, Papillion, Nebraska, joined the law firm Woods Aitken in Omaha as an attorney in its labor and employment law practice group.

25 Jill T. Wierzbicki, EdD, Grand Rapids, Michigan, was awarded the 2025 Notable Leader in Education from *Crain's Business Journal*. Wierzbicki is president and CEO of West Catholic High School in Grand Rapids.

WEDDINGS

17 Alexandra "Ali" G. Maliha, BSEVS, and William R. Shields, Dec. 13, 2025, living in Saugerties, New York.

22 Brooke T. Borghello, BSN, and **Matthew R. Kocourek, BSBA,** Sept. 6, 2025, living in Millbrae, California.

BIRTHS

18 Brendan Vander Weil and **Stephanie Schumann Vander Weil, DPT,** a daughter, Catherine Mae, Dec. 6, 2025, living in San Marco, Texas.

19 Zachary J. Meneses, BSBA, and **Courtney Child Meneses, BSN,** a daughter, Mariana Hope, Aug. 2, 2025, living in Overland Park, Kansas.

23 Beau Beckwith and **Abby Braaten Beckwith, DDS,** a son, Truman Charles, Feb. 9, 2025, living in Albion, Nebraska.

DEATHS

43 Jean Rerucha Stewart, BA, Arcadia, California, Nov. 19, 2024.

46 Mary Jane Peters Labadie, SJN, Dearborn, Michigan, Nov. 7, 2025.

47 Theodore R. Jednak, ARTS, Fort Myers, Florida, July 16, 2025.

49 Isabelle Hanson Callahan, ARTS, Marcellus, New York, Dec. 17, 2025. **Vincent Seiker, ARTS,** Lincoln, Nebraska, Jan. 4, 2026. **James A. Snyder, ARTS,** Peoria, Illinois, Feb. 24, 2026.

50 Kathryn Kearns Costello, SJN, Punta Gorda, Florida, March 13, 2025. **Richard J. Deily, JD,** Silver Spring, Maryland, Jan. 19, 2026. **John D. Minton, BS,** Omaha, Feb. 5, 2026. **Beverly Morphy Otis, BUSADM,** Omaha, Dec. 13, 2025.

51 John R. Coupe, ARTS, Lincoln, Nebraska, Oct. 7, 2025. **William P. McDonald, BS,** Evergreen Park, Illinois, July 19, 2025.

52 Dolores Rothmeyer Lawson, SJN, Hayes Center, Nebraska, May 5, 2025. **Robert T. Muldoon, BSPHa,** Scottsbluff, Nebraska, Dec. 8, 2025. **Dr. Rita McMahon Price, ARTS,** Omaha, Jan. 19, 2026. **Marlene Toelle Weber, SJN,** Nevis, Minnesota, Oct. 1, 2025.

53 Lester V. Hausner, BS, Racine, Wisconsin, Sept. 7, 2025. **Mary Ann Rasmussen Wahl, SJN'52, BSN,** Urbandale, Iowa, Nov. 28, 2025.

54 Joan Connolly Haggerty, BSPHa, Colorado Springs, Colorado, Sept. 22, 2025. **Shirley Sohler Mendenhall, BSPHa,** Omaha, Oct. 28, 2025. **Richard W. Roach, MD,** Sunnyside, Washington, Nov. 14, 2025.

55 Julia Farris Davis, SJN, Raymore, Missouri, Sept. 21, 2025. **Agnes Colleen Stutesman Hohn, SJN,** Fullerton, California, Sept. 24, 2025. **Peter A. Palmesano Jr., BSPHa,** Elkhorn, Nebraska, Oct. 21, 2025. **Dr. Martin O. Slattery, BS,** Tucson, Arizona, Nov. 9, 2025.

56 James W. Kurzak, BS, Olathe, Kansas, Dec. 26, 2025. **James B. Smith, MD,** Port Gamble, Washington, Nov. 7, 2025. **Dr. Alfred L. Vampola, BS,** Fallbrook, California, Oct. 10, 2025.



ALUMNI PROFILE

A New Flight Path

How a retired Apache helicopter pilot from Utah found his next calling at Creighton

At the age of 50, **LT. COL. MATTHEW BADELL, MS'25, JD'25** – a former Apache helicopter pilot, linguist, ROTC commander, mobilization chief, battle captain and battalion commander – retired after 26 years in the U.S. Army.

Badell stayed busy during retirement, working as a phlebotomist, substitute teacher and varsity basketball coach.

"It was great," Badell says. "But after about two years, I went and ruined it."

Badell decided to become a lawyer. The only lawyer he knew was the one who helped him and his wife, Rose, with the adoption process of their three children. Badell told him, "I want to be like you. I want to help people put their families together."

That Brigham Young University (Badell's

undergraduate alma mater) was only seven blocks away from Badell's house in Provo, Utah, made it the obvious choice for law school. He applied there (and only there) but was waitlisted.

"I thought, well, did I get it wrong about what God wanted for me?" Badell says. "Then I got an email from Creighton."

Creighton's School of Law was extending its application deadline by one week. He called the law school's main line and left a voicemail asking whether they offered distance learning.

The next day, Badell received a call from R. Collin Mangrum, JD, SJD, A.A. and Ethel Yossem Endowed Chair in Legal Ethics in Creighton's law school. Mangrum told him about the GOAL program, a dual accelerated JD and master's degree in government organization and leadership (GOAL).

Spurred by Mangrum's encouragement, Badell submitted his slightly altered BYU law application to Creighton and was accepted soon after. At some point in the rush of everything that happened, he typed "Creighton University" into Google Maps.

Photo left: The Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD, left, congratulates Lt. Col. Matthew Badell, MS'25, JD'25, at the law school commencement ceremony in 2025. **Photo below:** Lt. Col. Badell during his time in the military.



"Oh, wow, I guess it's in Omaha, Nebraska." Badell moved to Omaha in May 2023, in time for his first day of class. A few months later, he and Rose bought a home in Bellevue, enrolled their two youngest children in Plattsmouth High School and became Nebraskans.

Badell graduated in 2025, earning his law degree and completing his master's in government organization and leadership.

"Looking back on the other side of it all now, I see God's hand in bringing us to Creighton," Badell says. "So many wonderful things to do and so many wonderful people to learn from. Creighton was the answer to my prayers."

Creighton's commitment to living for and with others reflected Badell's own values and actions.

One example: While serving as an Apache helicopter pilot in Afghanistan, Badell and his fellow pilots recognized the profound need for humanitarian aid. After returning to the U.S., they founded the Afghan Orphan Project, a 501(c)(3), to provide humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. The nonprofit adopted a village and a few orphanages, and paid for a boy's heart surgery, a girl's eye surgery and another girl's prosthetic leg and college education.

With his Creighton law degree, Badell wants to continue helping others however he can. (He's currently studying for the bar exam.)

"I've still got fuel in the tank, and I'm going to use it for something good." — **BY MICAH MERTES**

Are you true blue? 

Here are the lyrics to *The White and the Blue*

The White and the Blue!
Colors two, it is you we defend.
Fearless for you,
our might to the fight we will lend.
So: wave, colors, wave
We will fight on for your glory.
White and Blue!
We will fight till the fight is won.

Dentistry with Dignity

For many individuals, a visit to a traditional dental clinic comes with prohibitive challenges. Addressing those barriers is the mission of **TERYN SEDILLO, DDS'14**, Nebraska's only dentist formally trained in special care dentistry.



Some patients lack mobility due to advanced age or physical impairment. Others have intellectual disabilities, psychiatric concerns or conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and autism. Yet they still require exams, cleanings, fillings, extractions and other procedures.

After graduating from the School of Dentistry, Sedillo completed a general practice residency in special care at St. Barnabas Hospital-Albert Einstein Affiliate in New York City, then returned to Creighton, serving as an associate professor of special care and geriatric

dentistry until 2022. Only a few hundred dentists in the U.S. have completed a residency focused on special care.

Today she runs Dignity Dental Services, a mobile practice founded in 2016 that brings dental care directly to patients in their homes or care facilities, partnering with organizations including Summit Dental Health, QLI, Immanuel Pathways PACE and Mosaic.

Sedillo later expanded the model into the Dignity Dental Network and developed educational programming for students and

professionals on best practices for treating geriatric and special needs patients, based on the curriculum she created at Creighton.

Sedillo originally planned to become a pediatric dentist, but her New York residency changed her path.

"I received such a well-rounded education in general dentistry that I could do many things on my own that some of my fellow residents couldn't," she says. "I started receiving more challenging cases, more special needs adults. That soon became my focus. A decade later, this is the most rewarding career I could have imagined."

Sedillo quickly recognized the barriers these patients face.

"Special care dental patients require more time and lower reimbursement, and there's a lack of provider exposure and education," she says. "There's a gap between the number of providers and the number of patients."

Part of Sedillo's mission is bringing more dentists into the field through outreach and training. This summer, Creighton dental graduate **Megan Bengier, DDS'25**, who discovered a passion for special care during a rotation with Sedillo, will join the practice as its second full-time dentist.

"I fell in love with this on day one," Bengier says. "I immediately felt like this is everything."

— BY MICAH MERTES

OLYMPIC MOMENT: 'HE SAVED MY LEG'

When Olympic champion Lindsey Vonn suffered a devastating crash in the women's downhill at the 2026 Winter Games in Italy in February, the surgeon she credits with saving her leg was Creighton School of Medicine alumnus **Tom Hackett, MD'98**.

Hackett, an orthopedic surgeon based at the prestigious Steadman Clinic in Vail, Colorado, was at the Olympics as the team physician for the U.S. Snowboard Team and was also working with Vonn, who had torn her left ACL shortly before the Games. Vonn said her crash 13 seconds into her Olympic run severely damaged her left leg, leaving "pretty much everything in pieces."

Among her injuries, Vonn developed a serious condition known as compartment syndrome in her fractured left leg, a dangerous buildup of pressure that threatened permanent damage. Hackett performed a fasciotomy to relieve the pressure.

"Dr. Tom Hackett saved my leg," Vonn said in an Instagram post. "He saved my leg from being amputated. He did what's called a fasciotomy, where he cut open both sides of my leg — kind of filleted it open, so to speak — let it breathe, and he saved me."

Three weeks after her fifth surgery following the crash, the 41-year-old Olympic medalist was back on a stationary bike for rehab.

Hackett specializes in sports medicine and the surgical and nonsurgical treatment of knee, shoulder and elbow injuries. In addition to his work with Olympic athletes, he serves as a medical consultant to Major League Baseball's Colorado Rockies.



AP PHOTO/ROBERT F. BUKATY

57 William J. Bruning, BSBA, Olathe, Kansas, Sept. 24, 2025. **James F. Duesman, MD**, Columbus, Nebraska, Sept. 24, 2025.

58 Gloria Sweeney Champ, BS, Georgetown, Texas, Aug. 31, 2025. **Carol Dineen Connor, BS**, Omaha, Nov. 4, 2025. **Merlyn K. Davis, BS**, Gering, Nebraska, Oct. 27, 2025. **John F. Kotera, BUSADM**, Omaha, Dec. 11, 2025. **Martin C. Zaccone, BSPha**, Fort Dodge, Iowa, March 12, 2024.

59 Charles H. Diers, ARTS, Fremont, Nebraska, Jan. 2, 2026. **Joan Harmon McCarthy, ARTS**, Omaha, Feb. 9, 2026. **Margaret Haley Schlachter, BSMT**, Annandale, Virginia, Dec. 20, 2025. **Mary Clare O'Donnell Sheridan, ARTS**, Omaha, Sept. 5, 2025.

60 James P. Callaghan, DDS, Missoula, Montana, Feb. 17, 2026. **Thomas C. Christiansen, MD'56, MS**, Sun City West, Arizona, Sept. 2, 2025. **Barbara Fenker Juhasz, BSPha**, Edon, Ohio, Sept. 22, 2025. **Dr. Robert E. Kelley, BA**, Coralville, Iowa, Jan. 4, 2026. **Edward T. Regan, BSBA**, Elkhorn, Nebraska, Nov. 8, 2025. **John E. Schaffart Jr., BSBA**, Omaha, Dec. 27, 2025.

61 Ann Brannan Bell, BSMT, Omaha, Oct. 2, 2025. **John L. Duffy, MSEdu**, Elgin, Illinois, Dec. 24, 2025. **Kathleen O'Donnell McGreevy, BA**, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Nov. 17, 2025. **Jerry F. Olson, ARTS**, Springfield, Missouri, Dec. 23, 2025. **Ronald L. Poulblon, BSPha**, Sun City Center, Florida, Dec. 26, 2025.

62 Donald M. Angotti, MD, Fairfield, California, Jan. 28, 2026. **Terrance L. Fangman, DDS**, Omaha, Oct. 23, 2025. **Richard P. Gillogly, BA**, Worcester, Massachusetts, Dec. 24, 2025. **Reggie R. Kokes, BSChm'60, MS**, Casper, Wyoming, Oct. 5, 2025. **Ronald L. Nollette, BSBA**, Roseville, California, Dec. 14, 2025. **Martin J. Ostransky Jr., BA**, Gretna, Nebraska, Feb. 12, 2026. **Francis J. Paulus, BS**, West Des Moines, Iowa, Dec. 8, 2025.

63 Larry T. Bock, ARTS, Elkhorn, Nebraska, Jan. 8, 2026. **Dr. Mary Wolpert DeFilippes, BSPha**, Bethesda, Maryland, Jan. 6, 2026.

Ann K. Dunn, BA, Ashland, Ohio, Dec. 2, 2025. **Robert W. Ferraro, MD**, Waterbury, Connecticut, Jan. 28, 2026. **Joe W. Kiesel, DDS**, Palm Desert, California, Jan. 23, 2026. **Rita Kruml Johnson, BSN**, Flower Mound, Texas, Oct. 15, 2025. **James M. Kenny, MD**, Greenville, North Carolina, Dec. 11, 2025. **Mary E. McDonald, BSMT**, Louisville, Kentucky, Jan. 10, 2026. **Paul F. Ziska, ARTS**, Elkhorn, Nebraska, Jan. 28, 2026.

64 Sheldon E. Dugan, BSBA, Chicago, Sept. 18, 2025. **Mary Wiederholt Hoden, MS**, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Dec. 29, 2025. **Dr. Robert P. Kemmy, BA**, San Antonio, Dec. 20, 2025. **Gerald L. Mahon, BS**, Sartell, Minnesota, Dec. 8, 2025. **Richard L. Whitaker, ARTS**, Omaha, Jan. 24, 2026. **Agnes Schwieterman Zielinski, BSN**, Canon City, Colorado, Nov. 22, 2025.

65 Ronald R. Allison, BA, Omaha, Oct. 29, 2025. **Robert J. Church, DDS**, Meridian, Idaho, Sept. 29, 2025. **Rev. Roland P. Freeman, BA**, Denver, Jan. 9, 2025. **John D. Leonard, BSBA**, Arlington Heights, Illinois, Jan. 27, 2026. **John J. McGill Sr., BS'61, MD**, Scottsdale, Arizona, Jan. 27, 2026. **John L. Schneller, DDS**, Custer, South Dakota, Feb. 4, 2026. **Carl W. Slocum, MD**, Lexington, South Carolina, Oct. 17, 2025. **Roger W. Snook, BSPha**, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Dec. 6, 2025. **Fred Werve, BA**, Laguna Niguel, California, Nov. 22, 2025.

66 Michael G. Brady, BSBA'63, JD, Scottsdale, Arizona, June 20, 2025. **Charles J. Knight, JD**, Marietta, Georgia, Sept. 18, 2025. **Peter B. Lieben, BA**, Omaha, Nov. 2, 2025. **Lourdes Salvador O'Leary, ARTS**, Omaha, Sept. 7, 2025. **Marion L. Sani, BSPha'59, MD**, Turlock, California, Jan. 16, 2026.

67 Judith Heebner Flowers, BS, Charlotte, North Carolina, Jan. 23, 2026. **Janice Heine Konrade, BA**, Abilene, Kansas, Sept. 15, 2025. **Dr. M. Sue Wedemeyer O'Dorisio, BS**, Olstrander, Ohio, Dec. 3, 2025. **John E. Warga, BSPha**, Dunedin, Florida, Jan. 3, 2026.

68 Joseph D. Anthofer, BA'65, JD, Omaha, Feb. 11, 2026. **Linda L. Cook, BS**, Spirit Lake, Iowa, Oct. 31, 2025.



FROM REBOUNDS TO ESPN

Chasing down rebounds for future NBA star Kyle Korver, BA'03, HON'19, inside an empty gym isn't a typical résumé line for a classics major. But for **Ashley Hotze O'Connor, BA'00**, a student manager for the Creighton men's basketball team, it was simply something she loved — the people, the competition and the front-row seat to college athletics.

She didn't expect the experience to shape her career. Yet a recommendation from former Bluejay coach Dana Altman helped her land an internship at the Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) office after graduation — the break that launched her into the business of sports.

Two decades later, O'Connor is vice president of programming and acquisitions at ESPN, overseeing partnerships with MLB, the NHL and Little League International. She and her team help shape schedules, finalize media rights deals and guide programming strategy.

Last year, O'Connor helped shepherd a landmark agreement when ESPN became the exclusive rights holder of MLB.TV, the MLB's out-of-market streaming service.

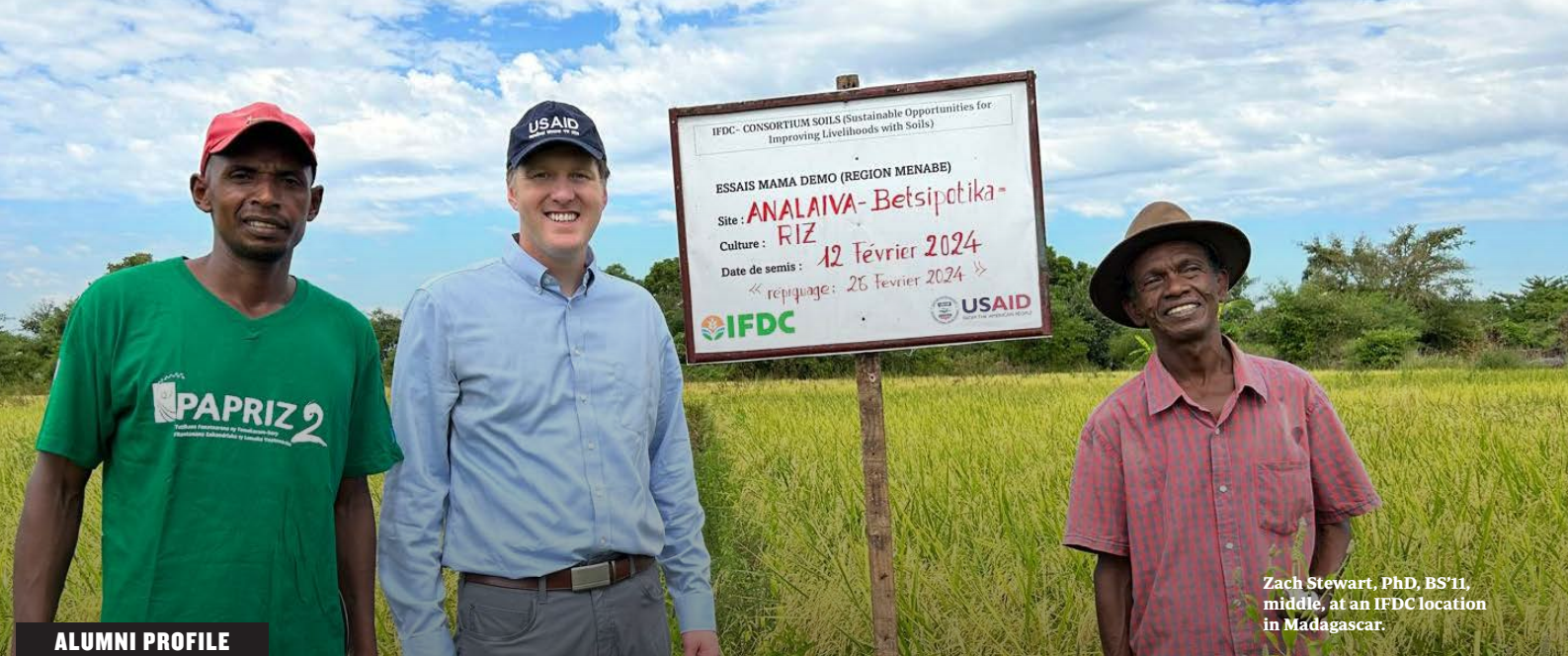
"Not to sound cheesy, but I really trace my career back to Creighton and Coach Altman," she says. "One door opened another, and everything fell into place."

After her MVC internship, O'Connor worked for the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference overseeing women's basketball and championship events, then returned to the MVC to run championships and coordinate officiating.

When she later moved to Connecticut, she sent out résumés and allowed an NCAA mentor to pass along her name. Soon after, ESPN called — even though she had never applied.

She joined the network in 2005 as a program coordinator working on college basketball, later moving to the NBA before rising through leadership roles. Her most recent promotion to vice president came two years ago.

Over the years, the industry has evolved — from cable dominance to streaming and mobile viewing — but O'Connor says the key is always thinking about what comes next, a mindset she began developing as a Creighton student. — BY JON NYATAWA



Zach Stewart, PhD, BS'11, middle, at an IFDC location in Madagascar.

ALUMNI PROFILE

From Ferlic Fellow to Global Scientist

ZACH STEWART, PHD, BS'11, has built his career from the ground up — literally.

The Creighton alumnus is vice president of research and chief scientist at the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to improving farm soils — and the lives of small farmers — worldwide.

“Soil is more than dirt; it’s life,” Stewart says. “Ninety-five percent of all the elements in our food come from the soil,” he continues, “and over half of all the food produced globally would not be present without fertilizer.”

Stewart’s passion for science, agriculture and humanitarianism has taken him around the world.

“I’m traveling to some place globally about 12 to 15 times a year, on some type of weeklong trip,” he says.

Established in 1974 and headquartered in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, the IFDC focuses heavily on sub-Saharan Africa and Asia and maintains a presence in 31 countries, with a team of scientists, agricultural experts, economists and other professionals worldwide.

Stewart, who grew up on a family farm in Harlan, Iowa, established in 1875, says a passion for science drew him to Creighton, along with the University’s academic rigor, values-based education and proximity to home.

“I could still get back to the farm and contribute and connect,” he says. As a senior in high school, Stewart was chosen for a Borlaug-Ruan International Internship, which prepares students for careers in science, agriculture and global development. He traveled to Kenya, where he studied malaria in mosquitoes.

That led to an interest in biology at Creighton. He participated in Creighton’s Ferlic Summer Research Fellowship, and, with professor Charles Brockhouse, PhD, studied *Onchocerciasis*, or river blindness, a parasitic disease transmitted through silk proteins of black flies.

“It was hands-on, molecular work that connected biology, chemistry

and human health,” Stewart says. “That experience was transformative. It opened my eyes to the intersection of science and service, to research as a vocation rooted in both curiosity and compassion.”

After graduation, Stewart earned a master’s degree in control of infectious diseases at the prestigious London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and a doctoral degree in soil science and crop physiology.

He was named a diplomat and senior technical advisor at U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), managing global programs in sustainable intensification and soil fertility across sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

As chief scientist at IFDC, Stewart, who offices in Manhattan, Kansas, leads a global team of researchers working to improve smallholder agriculture as a driver of reduced poverty, hunger and malnutrition. A smallholder farm is considered about five acres or less, and, in most instances, the food produced often both feeds their family and provides their livelihood.

“The conundrum is, while smallholder farmers produce about 50% of the world’s food, these farmers are also very food insecure,” Stewart says.

“Ninety-five percent of all the elements in our food come from the soil.”

ZACH STEWART, PHD, BS'11

The IFDC works to lift these farmers out of poverty by providing them with crop development skills and the latest in fertilizer technology. The IFDC also promotes environmental sustainability and crop resilience, advancing ecological best practices and addressing natural disasters like severe droughts, which not only affect food production, but often leave small farmers without food or a livelihood and lead to population instability, migration and conflict.

Stewart says his work has reinforced in him the importance of agriculture — at his family’s farm in rural Iowa, on the global stage and in our lives.

“When we strengthen soils, we strengthen lives. Healthy soils lead to healthy plants, which lead to healthy animals, which lead to healthy people — a ‘one health’ approach that connects everything ... from the ground up.” — **RICK DAVIS, BA'88**

69 John R. Addy, BS, Omaha, Feb. 19, 2026. **M. Douglas Ford, BSPha**, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, Nov. 28, 2025. **Daniel K. Jackson, JD**, Omaha, Jan. 23, 2026. **Thomas C. Reis, MD**, Lake Oswego, Oregon, May 4, 2025.

70 J. Michael Connolly, ARTS, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Sept. 18, 2025. **Larry R. Forman, JD**, Ralston, Nebraska, Dec. 8, 2025. **Richard J. Henkenius, BSBA'67, JD**, Omaha, Dec. 20, 2025. **James H. Irvine, ARTS**, Schleswig, Iowa, Jan. 6, 2026. **Dr. Mary Jane Maybanks Kelley, MA**, Johnson City, Tennessee, Dec. 6, 2025. **Maralee Battiatto Lombardo, BA**, Elkhorn, Nebraska, Dec. 19, 2025. **Michelle Hansell Tennis, BA**, Tavares, Florida, Feb. 16, 2026. **Roland N. Woodruff, MD**, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, Jan. 23, 2026.

71 Daniel L. Gordon, BSBA, Omaha, Oct. 24, 2025. **Wayne A. Hester, MBA**, Lincoln, Nebraska, Jan. 5, 2026. **Michael E. Kelley, JD**, Kearney, Nebraska, Nov. 16, 2025. **Jymeann “Jimmy” King, BSPha**, Washington, D.C., Dec. 4, 2025. **Mary Burke Neve, BS**, Winter Garden, Florida, Dec. 23, 2025. **Gerald C. Reck, MBA**, Bellevue, Nebraska, Sept. 6, 2025. **Bruce A. Rennie, BFA**, Jacksonville, Florida, June 7, 2025. **Danny J. Thornton, BA**, Wills Point, Texas, Sept. 5, 2025. **Raymond W. Vondrak, BS'69, MA**, Omaha, Oct. 11, 2025.

72 Clair D. Fennell, BA, La Vista, Nebraska, Oct. 29, 2025. **Hon. Robert W. Pratt, JD**, Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 28, 2026. **Susan K. Shay, BA**, Charleston, South Carolina, Feb. 21, 2026.

73 Everette H. Carroll, MA, Avoca, Iowa, July 9, 2024. **Wesley E. Hauptman, JD**, Omaha, Sept. 23, 2025. **Janet J. McCrae, MSGuid**, Omaha, Dec. 18, 2025. **John V. Morgan, BSBA'71, JD**, Fullerton, Nebraska, Nov. 11, 2025. **Jon L. Narmi, MBA**, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Dec. 30, 2025. **Mary C. Parker, BA**, Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, Jan. 27, 2025. **Joseph A. Shaughnessy, JD**, Phoenix, Nov. 2, 2025. **Cliff T. Vaudreuil, BA**, Moorpark, California, Oct. 8, 2025.

74 Thomas F. Flaherty, BSBA'72, JD, Omaha, Sept. 21, 2025. **Deneen Cochran Jack, BA**, Omaha, May 17, 2024. **Ronald P. Searcy, MBA**, Albany, Missouri, Feb. 3, 2026. **Donald E. Simons, BS**, Neola,

Iowa, Nov. 25, 2025. **John F. Thomas, BA'71, JD**, Omaha, Feb. 9, 2026. **Dale A. Whittaker, BSPhy**, Atlantic, Iowa, Sept. 22, 2025. **Mary Seward Wilson, BA**, Springfield, Virginia, Jan. 16, 2026.

75 Timothy E. Burke, BA, Omaha, Jan. 7, 2026. **Terrence T. Cimino, BSPha**, Omaha, Nov. 4, 2025. **Alfio Faro, BSPha**, Dallas, Georgia, Nov. 15, 2025.

76 Larry R. Beckerdite, BA, Bloomington, Illinois, Feb. 20, 2026. **P. Joan Edwards Berner, BS'54, MSGuid**, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Nov. 15, 2025. **Westell C. Phelan, MD**, Jacksonville, Florida, Jan. 2, 2026. **Richard K. Shearer, MBA**, Omaha, Sept. 5, 2025.

77 William Wade Collison, BS'73, MD, Prescott, Arizona, Aug. 18, 2025. **Jan Plucknett DeRoin, JD**, New Meadows, Idaho, Nov. 2, 2025. **Terrence R. Finney, MA**, Omaha, Sept. 21, 2025. **Timothy J. Gallagher, JD**, Dubuque, Iowa, Nov. 23, 2024. **Michael A. Gordon, MD**, Ottawa Hills, Ohio, Oct. 3, 2025. **James T. Howell-Burke, BSN**, Baltimore, Dec. 11, 2025.

78 Carol S. Bernhards, BSPha, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Dec. 4, 2025.

79 Mark L. Huerter, BSBA, Omaha, Nov. 17, 2025. **Thomas G. Kelly, JD**, Cheyenne, Wyoming, Sept. 6, 2025. **David G. Paquette, BS'72, DDS**, Luverne, Minnesota, Jan. 8, 2024. **Nicholas G. Patrinos, BSBA'77, MBA**, Omaha, Dec. 7, 2025. **Stephen L. Rosman, BA'75, JD**, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Jan. 15, 2026.

81 William P. Ellermeyer, BS'77, MD, Southlake, Texas, Nov. 14, 2025. **Michael S. Langenfeld, MD**, Omaha, Sept. 12, 2025. **Hon. Edward D. Steenburg, JD**, Ogallala, Nebraska, Dec. 7, 2025.

82 David A. Beavers, BSN, Lantana, Texas, May 18, 2025. **Richard E. Bordwell, BSBA'79, JD**, Clarion, Iowa, Oct. 4, 2025. **Abraham S. Chung, BSPha**, Orland Park, Illinois, Nov. 24, 2025. **David W. Niederee, MD**, Derby, Kansas, Dec. 7, 2025.

83 Glen D. Sanborn, JD, San Antonio, Oct. 8, 2025. **Marvetta Leseberg Volker, BSN**, Tarkio, Missouri, Nov. 6, 2025.

84 Joann L. Czywczynski, BSRT, Rapid City, South Dakota,

Oct. 14, 2025. **Letitia M. McCarthy-Clifford, BS'77, DDS**, Sioux City, Iowa, Dec. 28, 2025. **Dr. Corinne B. Phillips-Ward, BS**, McCook, Nebraska, Oct. 23, 2025. **Jeanne Higgins Spence, BSBA**, Elkhorn, Nebraska, Jan. 7, 2026. **Daniel J. Traub, DDS**, South Portland, Maine, Sept. 13, 2025.

86 Jerry F. Duggan, MS, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Nov. 26, 2025. **Terry Bauman White, JD**, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Jan. 19, 2026. **Ann Forsberg Hickey, BSPha**, Elkhorn, Nebraska, Oct. 10, 2025.

87 Scott E. Eich, BSBA, Naples, Florida, July 30, 2024. **Michelle Hadley-McGhee, BA**, Fort Worth, Texas, Nov. 24, 2025. **Sr. Jeanne A. Monahan, OP, MChrSp**, Glendale, New York, Jan. 24, 2026. **David F. Reed, MS**, Omaha, Sept. 3, 2025. **Paul E. Ziemba, JD**, Omaha, Feb. 1, 2026.

88 Richard J. Meyette, MChrSp, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Nov. 28, 2025. **Hon. Jonathan M. Tun, ARTS**, Honolulu, Sept. 12, 2025.

89 Robert A. Leahey, JD, Corpus Christi, Texas, March 7, 2025.

90 Eric G. Cordes, MD, Simi Valley, California, Nov. 30, 2025. **Matthew E. Morrow, MD**, Sandusky, Ohio, Jan. 29, 2026. **Sr. Karen K. Streveler, MChrSp**, St. Joseph, Minnesota, Jan. 20, 2026. **Rev. L. Dale Tripp, MS**, Normal, Illinois, Oct. 10, 2025.

91 Linda C. Schindler, MS, Omaha, Oct. 16, 2025.

92 Joann M. Burbach, BSPha, Papillion, Nebraska, Oct. 9, 2025. **John J. Degnan, BA**, Denver, Aug. 27, 2025. **Heidi Olson Holm, BSOT**, Oakland, Nebraska, Dec. 31, 2025.

93 John A. Caffrey II, BA'90, MBA, Frisco, Texas, Sept. 28, 2025. **Rev. Maurice J. Roy, MA**, St. Albans, Vermont, Feb. 20, 2026.

98 Benjamin A. Detweiler, DPT, Grangeville, Idaho, Jan. 11, 2026.

00 William O. Weber, MBA'87, MS, Frisco, Texas, Jan. 11, 2026.

02 Kelly Herek Dix, BSEVS, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Feb. 4, 2026. **Grant W. Mussman, BA**, Omaha, Sept. 9, 2025.

06 Dr. Katherine Germer Gogela, BSChm, Lincoln, Nebraska, Nov. 7, 2025. **Matt C. Tull, PharmD**, Garden City, Kansas, Jan. 21, 2026.

07 Adam L. Cockerill, BSBA'04, JD, Omaha, Dec. 2, 2025.

09 Jessie D. Menck, BSN, Omaha, Aug. 30, 2025.

12 Gina J. Huss, MD, Muscatine, Iowa, Sept. 10, 2024.

14 Matthew A. Philson, DDS, Pueblo, Colorado, Sept. 15, 2025.

22 Andrew Klein, JD, Omaha, Jan. 31, 2026.

IN REMEMBRANCE

We remember Creighton University faculty and Jesuits who have recently died.*

Shih-Chuan Cheng, PhD, professor emeritus of mathematics, College of Arts and Sciences, Oct. 20, 2025.

Donald V. Giger, PhD, adjunct assistant professor of medical microbiology and immunology, School of Medicine, Oct. 27, 2025.

John N. Mordeson, PhD, professor emeritus of mathematics, College of Arts and Sciences, Nov. 8, 2025.

Joseph M. Bolil, DDS, assistant professor of oral health promotion, School of Dentistry, Dec. 24, 2025.

Donald B. Gibbs, assistant professor emeritus of modern languages and literatures, College of Arts and Sciences, Dec. 24, 2025.

Kent J. Neumeister, JD, professor of law, School of Law, Feb. 5, 2026.

*Faculty and Jesuits who are Creighton alumni are listed in the Alumni Deaths section of the magazine.



HEATHER MCCAIN

Committed to Research

As Creighton continues to expand its research presence, student involvement remains central. As associate vice provost for Research and Scholarship, **Juliane Strauss-Soukup, PhD, BSChm'93**, works across campus to support faculty scholarship and undergraduate and graduate research. She reflects on Creighton's philosophy of research, the importance of student involvement and what lies ahead for the University.

What does your role involve?

As the AVP for Research and Scholarship, I oversee Sponsored Programs Administration, Research Compliance and the Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship (CURAS). I work with faculty on grant development while ensuring research involving human subjects, animals and chemicals follows federal guidelines. I also collaborate with CURAS to advance undergraduate research events, funding opportunities and conferences, and I support students as they complete and disseminate their scholarly work.

What role does research play in Creighton's identity?

Research is integral to everything we do as teachers and scholars. Our mission states,

"Creighton exists for students and learning," and faculty conduct research to discover new knowledge and contribute meaningfully to society. Research informs our teaching, and students benefit not only in the classroom but through individual research projects with faculty.

How does research at a Jesuit university differ?

Our researchers take *cura personalis* to heart and mentor their learners in many ways. A research mentor is not just an "expert in that field" — they are also an academic advisor, a life coach and a colleague. Many faculty approach their work with a lens of equality and justice, studying topics that align with Jesuit values and the betterment of society.

Why is undergraduate research so central at Creighton?

By getting involved in research as undergraduates, students learn outside the classroom, which is a high-impact educational practice. Being able to "do that experiment" you read about in class draws students into the process and becomes a pivotal step in their education.

The act of "doing" solidifies facts, hypotheses and results in a student's mind. Learning one-on-one with a faculty mentor is very different from being "1 of 40" in a classroom. The experience of being "1 of 1" in mentored research is a powerful differentiator, and the impact of working alongside a faculty mentor is priceless.

Some may not associate Creighton with research. What might surprise them?

We have experts across many disciplines. In the sciences, faculty study hereditary cancers, hearing loss, tick-borne Lyme disease and antibiotic resistance. In the health sciences, researchers examine new dental materials, diabetes health outcomes, rehabilitation programs and the use of artificial intelligence in healthcare. We also have scholars studying international and cyber law, economic trends, disability history, family and health communication and art and healing.

How is artificial intelligence shaping research and teaching?

Creighton's Center for Faculty Excellence recently hosted the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Symposium, where I led the "Research from All Angles" event on AI. Faculty from across campus shared innovative ways they use AI to educate students, test hypotheses and improve care.

AI is important to all aspects of what we do as educators, and at Creighton we are committed to teaching students the ethical use of AI in research and in the classroom.

What excites you most about the future of research at Creighton?

Creighton is committed to research, and we will continue to explore "big ideas" while providing opportunities for students to get involved. Since our designation as an R2 institution (a doctoral university with high research activity), we have demonstrated our strengths in the Midwest, and I hope to see that recognition extend nationally.

Your partner in lifelong learning.

Skills-based hiring is on the rise, and with it comes a new era of learning.

Meet your professional development goals and start applying new skills to your job within weeks—all from a trusted name in education. Visit lifelong.creighton.edu and explore:

- On-demand certifications
- Cutting-edge programs in leadership, healthcare, business *and more*
- In-person and online offerings

Continue to visit the site as courses are added often to meet evolving industry needs.

Continue your education at Creighton *and save.*



Alumni receive **15% off** noncredit individual offerings with the code **CULifelongAlum**.

Limit one discount per offering. Additional restrictions may apply.

Creighton
UNIVERSITY





Scholarships are foundational to our mission, crucial to our success and life-changing for our excellent students. The **Forward Blue** campaign is your opportunity to help a new generation of Bluejays join you as Jesuit-educated leaders serving our communities.

Learn more or make a gift at creighton.edu/forwardblue

FORWARDBLUE
A Bold Future for Creighton University



“Thanks to my scholarship, I’ve been able to pursue research, care for patients in need and take steps toward my dream of becoming an oncology pharmacist — a path inspired by my own family’s experience with cancer. I’m deeply grateful to be on this journey.”

ASHLEY DANG,
SCHOOL OF PHARMACY AND HEALTH
PROFESSIONS, CLASS OF 2026