We Are More Than Molecules
This is not quite the message I originally envisioned sharing in this issue of Creighton magazine. In fact, we also planned for you to receive your magazine in the mail, as always, and not online. The trajectory of the spring semester at Creighton University, which started out so strong and with such promise, quickly changed in March due to the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. Just as our fellow Americans, and, indeed, all citizens of the world, altered their daily lives to mitigate the rising human toll of the deadly disease, including its burden upon health care facilities, so too did our leadership team at Creighton.

We quickly established strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19. The health and well-being of our faculty, staff, and students, as well as visitors to our main campus in Omaha and our additional campuses in Phoenix and other locations, was our utmost concern.

Our undergraduate students were on spring break March 8-15 when the virus began spreading. We advised all who were at home to stay home, and those who had traveled to other locations to return home. Faculty and staff stepped up in creative ways and we began online education; it was essential that we stay connected, that we stay Creighton — which we are doing with remarkable creativity, generosity, and effect.

We had hoped to return this spring term yet to on-campus courses, but, unfortunately, the quickly evolving local and national realities did not allow that to happen, and we announced on March 20 that we would maintain online classes for the rest of the semester and we closed our residence halls to all but a limited number of students with extenuating circumstances.

I was heartsick that our students could not be with us and had to dramatically modify their lives, including those in life-transforming study abroad experiences and others in their final semester of their senior year, with all the meaning and emotion that engenders. For our graduating students, in particular, this really hurts.

When we made the extremely difficult decisions — in accordance with local, state, and national leaders and public health officials — to continue online classes for the rest of the semester and not host our traditional May commencement, I felt our community’s pain. But at once I also witnessed our resilience and resolve. Although our community is now virtual, we are as interconnected and sturdy as the bricks that line our campus mall.

In so many ways, the mall defines our campus. Leading to and from St. John’s Church, outlined in the statuary of our mission and identity, connected on the west-end by the Heaney Pedestrian Bridge, and to the east, leading to the riverfront, it is an architect of the kind of community we take pride in. Creating encounters of faculty, students, and staff multiple times a day, it is an extended campus-courtyard where handshakes, high-fives, and hugs recur. Conversation, question, demonstration, and recreation are commonplace, and friendships for life are founded. It will be active once again, that I am sure, and I look forward to seeing thousands of Creighton faces, focused, fervent, and friendly.

Please enjoy in this issue an abundance of good news and successes, including an exciting partnership we entered with Arizona State University (ASU) in February and the recognition ceremony honoring 2020 Alumni Achievement Citation recipient, Diane Morin Nelson, BA’67, and our Alumni Merit Awardees. I hope and pray you have a blessed Easter season and springtime, and that you and your families remain safe and healthy.

Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD
President
The School of Medicine’s new Department of Medical Humanities seeks to foster compassionate care and a deeper understanding of what it means to be human. The premise is that well-rounded health education leads to well-rounded clinicians.

**Voices**

“I want to remind you that there are seeds planted in you from the Creator of the universe that give each of us a unique purpose to change social conditions, fight injustice and make the world better.”

TRICIA BENT-GODFREY, PhD, a professor of social work and director of the Beinhocker Center for Social Justice at Creighton University, encouraged students to see this landmark partnership cannot happen in silos. Thrilled @MayorGallego: "Let’s get social!"

“We’re proud to join the nation in congratulating Creighton University on their recent Wall Street Journal recognition as a top 10 Midwest university. Excellence is earned, and we are grateful to Creighton for their commitment to students and community.”

DAVID DIERING, president and CEO of the Greater Omaha Chamber, after the Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education College Rankings named Creighton one of the top 10 big-city colleges in the Midwest.

“Genuine caring and authentic compassion have a tremendous healing power. And much of that power comes from knowing the value of the humanities.”

Creighton sophomore NIBRAS KHUDAIDA uncovered a few key prepared remarks before the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the Malala Fund. (Creightstory from the spring 2019 Creighton magazine, creighton.edu/creightonmagazine/magazineissues.)

**Let’s Get Social**

@CreightonPress: The Creighton Get Blue event was spirited @GoJays @BluejayMBB

@MayorGallego: The only way forward is together—innovation cannot happen in silos. Thrilled to see this landmark partnership between @ASU and @Creighton to boost health education opportunities to ASU students, while also addressing our health care professional shortage.

@MLanceFrazier: I don’t think students understand how meaningful it is to faculty when the student just stops by to chat or ask advice. I just had the most pleasant conversation with a student and my day is now exponentially better. It’s the reason many of us chose this profession.

@reillycgroves: I love Jesuit education that’s it that’s the tweet!:)

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**WE ARE MORE THAN MOLECULES**

The School of Medicine’s new Department of Medical Humanities seeks to foster compassionate care and a deeper understanding of what it means to be human. The premise is that well-rounded health education leads to well-rounded clinicians.
‘No Typical Refugee’

BY EUGENE CURTIN

A 20-year veteran of refugee rescue work — together with a refugee from South Sudan who brought a prosperous life for himself, his wife and his three children in Omaha — stressed a common theme among refugees today. His name is Danielle Vella, the keynote speaker at Creighton on Feb. 25. Stories have the power to move in Omaha — stressed a common theme in which she details some overwhelming statistics of 70 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes. She has built a new and prosperous life for herself, her husband and his three children, and has founded a nonprofit organization named Clothing for the Needy that ships clothes to African nations where he said the poor can still be seen walking around virtually naked.

“Every story is unique and is different, so the events that lead to that life-changing decision to drop everything and leave, and the events that happen afterward, are never the same.” This is one reason I wrote this book, to tell their stories with an understanding ear. Refugees, she said, are commonly eager to tell their stories, which can often be harrowing, as a way of dismantling stereotypes.

“The Jesuit Refugee Service has been accompanying and advocating for refugees and forcibly displaced persons around the globe,” she said. “It has been a journey through the tears of the boat people of Vietnam, the killing fields of Cambodia, the silent march of millions around the globe.”

Danielle Vella, the keynote speaker, spoke of her new book, ‘No Typical Refugee’; she has come to know the power that stories have the power to move, stressing a common theme in which she details some overwhelming statistics of 70 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes.

“We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life; we lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in this world.” Vella said. “We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the understated expression of feelings. Once we were somebody about whom people cared, we were loved by friends.”

“Refugees welcome the chance to set new language, which means the naturalness of

Why they left it, about the journey and about life at their destination if they have been lucky enough to reach it, which most, I believe, are not.”

One of those refugees, James Bol Chol, who arrived in the United States in 2007 after fleeing his native Sudan, told a story of survival during the wars that plagued Sudan before its partition into North Sudan and South Sudan in 2011. Chol was among the Lost Boys of Sudan, who worked as a translator for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security before being relocated to Omaha, where he has built a life which, he said, many Africans cannot dream. He has a house, three cars between himself, his wife and his three children, and has founded a nonprofit organization named for the Needy that ships clothes to African nations where he said the poor can still be seen walking around virtually naked.

“My daughter is in high school now,” he said. “She is a smart kid. When she came here, she spoke zero English. Now she is in 10th grade and will complete high school in three years. These are opportunities that refugees around the world are looking for: They are looking for something for their children, they are looking for a better life where they can go to work and support their families.”

Vella and Chol were introduced by Creighton President the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD, who praised the work of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and welcomed the participation in the evening’s events of Lutheran Family Services, which helps resettle refugees assigned to the Omaha area. “The Jesuit Refugee Service has been accompanying and advocating for refugees and forcibly displaced persons around the globe,” she said. “It has been a journey through the tears of the boat people of Vietnam, the killing fields of Cambodia, silent march of millions in Africa, the war and destruction in Iraq and Syria, unrest and instability in Colombia and then Venezuela, the gang violence in the northern triangle of Central America and the treacherous waters of the Mediterranean.”

“Throughout these 40 years of shared sorrow and shared pain, the road JRS has walked with refugees has also been filled with moments of reconciliation and great joy.”

Fr. Hendrickson said Creighton will continue to partner with JRS and its global mission, even while working with refugees on Creighton’s campus.

“This global phenomenon has local connections as we serve partners like Lutheran Family Services to welcome our newest neighbors who seek shelter and yarn for safety,” he said.

Danielle Vella

(root fot)
this year out to do fieldwork,” she says. “This sees them until later on when we went different conditions, but we didn’t truly talk about these patients and their dif
diological deficits.

The program began in spring 2018. All told, it has supported a new group of students every six months for nearly three years. “It’s an opportunity for students to gain awareness of the challenges, and the abilities, of patients dealing with neurological deficits,” Malick says. “It gives them a chance to learn a little bit more, earlier, and hopefully build confidence when they start providing treatment on their full-time clinical affiliations.”

**Panel Discusses Climate Crisis**

Creighton faculty and students explored how the University can best respond to the current climate crisis at a panel discussion on Jan. 26 titled “Seeking Hope: Intentional and Ignatian Responses to the Global Climate Crisis.”

Panelists offered expert opinions before fielding questions from an estimated crowd of 25 students, faculty and staff. Many members of the President’s Council also attended as well as Creighton President the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD.

The event was moderated by Andy Gustafson, PhD, professor of business ethics and organizer of the annual Business, Faith and Common Good symposium in the Heider College of Business. Faculty panelists represented a variety of disciplines: marketing, physics, renewable energy, economics, psychology, law and philosophy.

All stressed the importance of political and civic engagement among the campus community and the need for hope to motivate change.

“The one thing that seems to promote action is having optimism,” said Lee Rudolph, PhD, associate professor of psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences, whose research focuses on cognitive processes underlying how people form impressions and judge others.

“Be fearful, but balance that fear with optimism, and I think we can get some good things done.”

**A Force for Dealing with Conflict**

Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised that Star Wars has much to teach us about conflict. It’s right there in the title, after all.

With the latest installment of George Lucas’ epic space drama, Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker, hitting theaters this past December, a Creighton professor says the beloved saga can illustrate key concepts in the field of conflict resolution... and not just for a galaxy far, far away.

“The whole world needs this,” says Noam Elbeter, professor of negotiation and conflict resolution in the Graduate School of the Knowledge and Skills involved in successfully managing conflict.

Elbeter, a lifelong Star Wars fan, is collaborating on a book, Star Wars and Conflict Resolution, that will feature chapters written by experts in academia and practice, using narrative elements from the series to introduce important themes in conflict resolution to a general audience.

“If we can somehow hitch the wagon of conflict resolution to the engine of pop culture, we feel we have the potential to reach people far beyond the classroom.”

In addition to trade wars and legislative disputes, Elbeter says, “Star Wars has workplace disputes, and particularly it has family disputes. There’s a little bit of the Skywalker family in every one of our families, and it’s a scary thing if we don’t know how to cope with conflict a little more effectively than the Skywalker family did.”

Creighton Offers New Majors in Data Science, Biochemistry, Criminal Justice

These majors introduced this year by Creighton University’s College of Arts and Sciences are boosting the University’s profile in the fields of data science, biochemistry and criminal justice.

All three were created in response to student interest and employer demand, according to the professors who helped create them, and all three are experiencing healthy levels of interest.

“There’s really a huge market out there for individuals with criminal...
Justice degrees,” says Rebecca Murray, PhD, associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. Criminal justice had previously been a track within Creighton’s Bachelor of Science in sociology.

“Criminal justice as a discipline has morphed into more than law enforcement training,” she says. “It’s much more data-driven, it’s much more analytical, and more and more agencies are looking for people who have a much broader background than just investigative training.”

A similar note is sounded by Aimee Schwab-McCoy, PhD, a statistician and assistant professor in the Department of Mathematics, who helped create the University’s new Bachelor of Science in data science.

“Companies left and right are building divisions or hiring data scientists to manage the volume of data that they have,” Schwab-McCoy says. “Every industry has a demand for data scientists. It can really be tailored to just about any interest.”

Biochemistry, which was previously a track, or subdiscipline, within the Bachelor of Science in Chemistry, is not only a sought after major for those seeking jobs in academia or the biotech industry; but for those aspiring to careers in the health sciences.

“Every class that’s required for students to take as an undergrad for medical school is found in this major,” says Juliane Strauss-Soukup, PhD, BSChm’93, professor in the Department of Chemistry, who helped develop the major: “Dental school wants you to have biochemistry. Pharmacy, too. Any of the health sciences. Biochemistry is the core of everything.”

Remembering Floyd Malveaux

Former Board of Trustees member and distinguished alumna Floyd Malveaux, MD, PhD, BS’61, died Jan. 9 at the age of 79.

Malveaux was a nationally recognized expert in the field of asthma and allergic diseases. His illustrious career was highlighted by nearly four decades at Howard University College of Medicine, where he led initiatives to address asthma morbidity among inner-city children. He also served in a leadership role at the Merck Childhood Asthma Network, Inc., and was a member of the faculty at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine for a time.

Malveaux served as a Creighton Trustee from 1997 until 2015, and thereafter as an emeritus member. In 2015, he was inducted into Creighton’s inaugural chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, and in 2017 received Creighton’s highest alumni award, the Alumni Achievement Citation.

“He demonstrated in his professional life and in his personal life, the importance of service to society, lifelong love of learning, the value of family life,” said Creighton President Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD. “He is the epitome of Creighton’s Jesuit Catholic ideals.”

Creighton Now Offering Engineering/Physics Dual Degree

Creighton enrolled its first class this fall in a new Engineering/Physics 3-2 Dual Degree program with Washington University in St. Louis. Graduates spend their first three years at Creighton, earning a bachelor’s degree in physics, then complete two years at Washington University for a bachelor’s degree in engineering. They also can earn a master’s degree in engineering with an additional year at Washington University.

“Then what do you do with those feelings? ... I take those on. What do you do with all that weight?”

In his case, lift it.

Br. Douglas, vocation director for the Midwest Jesuits and a member of the Jesuit community at Creighton, is an award-winning competitive powerlifter. He coaches students at the University and at Creighton Preparatory School, a Jesuit high school in Omaha, where he serves as assistant coach for the school’s state title-winning powerlifting team.

Weightlifting, Br. Douglas says, has given him opportunities to express his faith and to share Christ’s teachings with others.

“The powerlifting community is small enough that ... I see a lot of the same people. They know I’m a (religious) brother, and they will often come and talk to me about struggles they’re having with faith, or family or whatever it might be,” Br. Douglas says.

An Omaha native with degrees in social work and sociology from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, Br. Douglas first began lifting when he was 20. He’s found that the sport can be a vehicle to discuss important spiritual concepts with students, competitors and others, both in and out of the weight room.

“Especially with young college students, there’s this terrible pressure and a fear of failure. Well in weightlifting, we go to fail all the time.” Br. Douglas says. “Failure can be frustrating, but we don’t have to be devastated by it. I can take feedback in weightlifting in ways that I can’t in other parts of my life. If my coach tells me my elbows are flaring out on my bench, and that’s why I missed it, I don’t feel like a bad person because my elbows were flared.”

In the same way, he says, when we feel like we don’t measure up in some aspect of our lives, such as our relationships with others, we shouldn’t be too harsh on ourselves. We should examine the situation like a practical problem to solve.

Lifting also provides an example for how we can encourage and nurture friends and family spiritually, he says. In the gym, spotters are the Weight Room.

As a man of faith, Brother Patrick Douglas, SJ, is all too aware of spiritual problems in the world that are out of his control.

He sees them on the news. He hears them from people who ask him for prayers.

“When I have parents that are coming to me, asking me to pray for their sick baby who is hanging on by a thread, I do pray for them, and I do trust the Lord in that,” Br. Douglas says.

“Look to be a spiritual spotter in your relationships with a faith community,” he says. — BY BLAKE URSCH

“Look to be a spiritual spotter in your relationships with a faith community.” — BY BLAKE URSCH

“Look to be a spiritual spotter in your relationships with a faith community.” — BY BLAKE URSCH
Creighton Signs ‘Landmark’ Agreement with Arizona State University

By Eugene Curtin

Together, we look forward to providing the city of Phoenix, the state of Arizona, and, indeed, the southwestern United States, with the health care professionals the region will need as the new century advances.

By Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD

A landmark partnership between one of the largest public research universities in the United States and the soon-to-be largest Jesuit, Catholic health educator in the nation will answer a dire need for health care professionals in Arizona and in the southwestern United States.

A partnership agreement between Creighton University and Arizona State University (ASU) was signed Feb. 21 at a Phoenix gathering of leaders from both universities, including the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD, president of Creighton, and Mark Searle, PhD, executive vice president and provost of ASU.

The agreement will boost health education opportunities available to ASU students while establishing a student pipeline to Creighton’s $100 million Phoenix campus currently under construction at Park Central in midtown Phoenix.

“The partnership with Arizona State University is a landmark event,” Fr. Hendrickson said. “With this agreement, our Jesuit, Catholic University steps into a compelling new world. We have forged partnerships with other entities, in Denver, in Anchorage, the Dominican Republic, and more. But this unique agreement positions both of our universities for an unprecedented and exciting future, full of promise and significance.

“We are resolved that through our new Phoenix campus, Creighton University will become a major provider of health care professionals to this great city and state.”

“ASU is committed to advancing the highest quality education and use-inspired research, and to collaborating with forward-thinking partners like Creighton University to enhance accessibility and success for 21st century learners,” ASU President Michael M. Crow, PhD, said.

“Our significant partnership, we are excited to create new knowledge opportunities for students and to broaden our capability to generate positive and meaningful health outcomes for Arizona.”

Creighton alumna Sharon Harper, J.D., a member of the governing boards of both Creighton and ASU, and a passionate and active supporter of Creighton’s Phoenix campus, described the agreement as “a dream come true.”

“Two incredible institutions, both dear to me, have joined hands to provide a shining example of pioneering and revolutionary innovation in health science education,” said Harper, co-founder, chairman and CEO of Plaza Companies, a premier Arizona real estate firm. “This agreement will transform how we meet our health care needs in Arizona, and how we serve our students, our patients and the entire community.”

Under the terms of the agreement, ASU students will receive priority consideration for enrollment in three Creighton health sciences courts, with ASU students engaged in clinical rotations since 2005. In 2018, Creighton joined with Dignity Health St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center, Valleywise Health and District Medical Group, Inc., to form the Creighton University Arizona Health Education Alliance — one of Arizona’s largest providers of Graduate Medical Education.

Creighton’s Phoenix campus is expected to open in 2021. When completed, it will be home to a four-year medical school and will accommodate nearly 900 students, including future physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, pharmacists and physician assistants.

In return, students enrolled at the Creighton University Health Sciences — Phoenix Campus may engage in research activities at ASU facilities under the mentorship of ASU faculty while ASU faculty will provide basic science instruction for first-year medical students enrolled at Creighton’s Phoenix campus.

Creighton medical students and students in ASU’s School of Biological and Health Systems Engineering are currently collaborating on multiple research projects, ranging in focus from diabetes to hypophosphatemia, oncology, drug delivery, asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and more.

Eric Nguyen, a third-year Creighton medical student from Cerritos, California, who is working on a radiation oncology device, says Creighton medical students work cooperatively with ASU bioengineering students on all innovations.

“We identify clinical needs as we go through our rotations,” Nguyen said. “Then we combine the clinical and engineering perspectives to innovate and create novel solutions.”

Once a need is identified, technical help is provided.

“The med students understand the unmet clinical needs, and our students offer technical solutions,” said Vinc Puzic, PhD, associate professor of bioengineering at ASU, who oversees the student project teams. “They are all passionate about what they do, but the key is finding good projects.”

The partnership with ASU builds on the growing relationship between Creighton University and the city of Phoenix, where Creighton medical students have engaged in clinical rotations since 2005. In 2018, Creighton joined with Dignity Health St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center, Valleywise Health and District Medical Group, Inc., to form the Creighton University Arizona Health Education Alliance — one of Arizona’s largest providers of Graduate Medical Education.

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Creighton’s Phoenix campus is expected to open in 2021. When completed, it will be home to a four-year medical school and will accommodate nearly 900 students, including future physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, pharmacists and physician assistants.
Academic service-learning is an educational strategy that integrates community service into academic courses – for the benefit of student learning and community protection. It promotes interdisciplinary education and includes professors and students from some 120 countries. In 2006-2007, Flannery was a visiting fellow at the Center for Ethics and Culture at Notre Dame University. His connection with the center, now known as the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, continues to this day.

The Waite Chair in Jesuit Education was established in 2011 by Donald Waite, BSC’54, and his wife, Anna, to augment the Jesuit presence on the Creighton campus. The Waite Chair sponsors visiting Jesuits who pursue writing, research and teaching on law, philosophy, business ethics, healthcare and more; opens doors for learning across international borders and cultural divides.

Originally from Cleveland, Fr. Flannery entered the Society of Jesus in 1977. He began teaching at the Gregorian University in Rome, Italy, and served in the United States from 1992 to 1997. In 1997, he became a visiting professor at the Gregorian University. In 2006-2007, Fr. Flannery was a visiting fellow at the Center for Ethics and Culture at Notre Dame University. His connection with the center, now known as the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, continues to this day.

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**Follow Your ‘Drum Major Instinct’**

Tricia Bent-Goodley, PhD, a professor of social work and director of the doctoral program in the University of Oklahoma's School of Social Work, delivered the keynote address at Creighton’s annual Unity Prayer Luncheon in January, asking attendees to consider a quote from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. “Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major,” he said. “I say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for justice.”

King, Bent-Goodley said, is reminding us that we all have the “drum major instinct,” the desire to lead and spark change. But often, a yearning for recognition and acceptance from others clouds the idealism that motivated us in the first place.

Bent-Goodley said deep, honest self-reflection can provide fundamental clues to what we should value and prioritize. “I want to remind you that there are seeds planted in you from the Creator of the universe that give each of us a unique purpose to change social conditions, fight injustice and make the world better,” Bent-Goodley said.

The Unity Prayer Luncheon is the cornerstone of Creighton’s annual celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. King. The ceremony also included the presentation of the Drum Major Award by Creighton’s Martin Luther King Jr. Committee to Donna Polk, PhD, CEO of the Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition.

**In Silico Design of a Multivalent Vaccine against Candida Albicans**

**STUDENT RESEARCHERS**

Blake LaTendresse, second-year dental student, Overland Park, Kansas; and Laramie Lindgren, second-year dental student, Wahoo, Nebraska

**FACULTY MENTORS**

Shikha Tarang, PhD, assistant professor of oral biology; and Sonia Rocha-Sanchez, PhD, associate dean of dental research

**WHAT IT MEANS**

Dental students Blake LaTendresse and Laramie Lindgren assisted on groundbreaking research that identified and recommends a vaccine to better protect against Candida albicans, a deadly fungal infection commonly known as “oral thrush.” Candida albicans overgrowth is not uncommon in patients wearing dentures. Candida is associated with high morbidity and mortality, and is one of the most common systemic fungal infections. Specific triggers such as a compromised immune system, poor diet and stress can cause Candida to become virulent, resulting in life-threatening blood infections. The vaccine aims to elicit robust, long-lasting immunity, further research on the project will continue in the dental school.
Creighton Recognized for ‘Exceptional ROI’

The Princeton Review selected Creighton as one of the nation’s best value institutions in its 2020 edition of Best Value Colleges: 200 Schools with Exceptional ROI for Your Tuition Investment.

It also named Creighton among the top 25 schools “making an impact,” based on student ratings and responses to survey questions on community service opportunities, student government, sustainability efforts and on-campus student engagement. A survey by PayScale.com, asking each school’s alumni to rate the level of meaningfulness in their post-graduation careers, also was taken into account.

Schools cited in the 2020 Princeton Review edition were selected based on a comprehensive analysis of more than 656 colleges, weighing more than 40 data points. Data analyzed covered academics, cost, financial aid, graduation rates, student debt and more. Data from PayScale.com’s online compensation survey on alumni starting and mid-career salaries was also factored.

Creighton Names Sustainability Director

Nicholas McCreary, formerly the sustainability coordinator at Indiana State University (ISU), joined Creighton in March as director of sustainability and will work with a team in the Global Engagement Office to develop a campus-wide sustainability strategic plan.

“He will be an important leader in the continued transformation of our global engagement programs to focus on caring for our common home,” says René Padilla, PhD, vice provost for Global Engagement.

McCreary served as the sustainability coordinator at ISU since 2012 leading a multidisciplinary committee of faculty, staff and students to create the campus sustainability plan.

He also developed a Sustainability Fellows Program, through which students developed and implemented various sustainability programs on campus, from a residence hall food waste initiative to a learning community and campus celebrations. Under McCreary’s leadership, students started a reuse store, where items collected during residence hall move-out were sold to divert waste.

McCreary spearheaded a Sustainable Cities Initiative in which ISU partnered with the town of Sullivan, Indiana, to produce tangible and relevant sustainability outcomes for the community through service learning opportunities for faculty, staff and students.

In addition, he has experience converting urban spaces into permaculture food forests, managed the ISU community garden and taught courses on sustainability.

McCreary holds a Master of Science in Sustainability degree from Saint Louis University and a Bachelor of Arts in Earth Sciences, with minors in political science and philosophy, from DePaul University, and is accredited as a LEED Green Associate.

Then & Now

2020 is a year of distinction for the Heider College of Business, as the college marks its 100th anniversary.

“The vision of those who have come before has made the Heider College of Business the top ranked business school it is today. This year, we celebrate this history,” says Heider Dean Anthony Hendrickson, PhD. “Like all milestones, this is a time to reflect on the past and anticipate the future,” says Heider Dean Anthony Hendrickson, PhD. “The vision of those who have come before has made the Heider College of Business the top ranked business school it is today. This year, we celebrate this history.”

Heider College of Business celebrates 100th anniversary
Pothoff was selected on the strength of her desire to develop a “Pediatric Palliative Care Conversation Toolkit for the Chronically Ill,” which she says can be used to guide conversations between health sciences professionals and families of chronically ill children within the setting of an intensive care unit.

Once developed, the “toolkit” will be made available as an open-access service to health sciences professionals nationwide.

In addition to the grant funding, the leadership program provides participants with individual mentorship as they move toward fulfilling their goals, as well as collaboration with other scholars.

“My goal is to become a leading doctorally prepared nurse scientist who is integrated into an interdisciplinary clinical team,” Pothoff says. “I look forward to learning from my Sojourns colleagues across disciplines on how best to lead within and across our fields.”

3D printed Fetal Models Boost Maternal Bonding

A Creighton study has found that pregnant women given a 3D printed model of their gestating child nearly doubled their degree of maternal attachment as compared to expecting mothers receiving only the standard 3D ultrasound image.

John Coté, MD’97, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Creighton’s Creighton University Medical Center, collaborated on the research — which has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing.

Their study adds to existing evidence that found pregnant women presented with a 3D ultrasound fetal photograph instead of a standard ultrasound image also experience enhanced maternal bonding.

The study separated 96 pregnant volunteers into two equal groups. All completed the Maternal Antenatal Attachment Scale questionnaire, which asks a series of questions designed to assess maternal attachment to the developing fetus. One group was subsequently provided with a standard ultrasound image, while the other group received the same 3D image plus a 3D printed model.

Coté says the findings could be used to improve potentially harmful practices during pregnancy, such as smoking and drinking.

3D Ultrasound Images Offer New Perspective for Maternal Bonding

“The traditional ultrasound image represents an ‘umbilical cord view’ of the developing fetus,” Coté says. “When shown a rendering, the mother develops a different perspective on her baby while in the womb.”

The study showed that women who were presented with a 3D model of their child displayed significantly higher levels of maternal attachment compared to women who were provided a standard ultrasound image.

“This is just the tip of the iceberg,” Richardson says. “If we can get our students familiar with these 3D techniques and tools, they can take it to the next level. They are going to do things in 10 years we haven’t even thought of.”

Exploring Advanced Imaging Techniques

Creighton University medical students are exploring new ways of capturing the human body using the latest in 3D imaging technology.

Randy Richardson, MD, regional dean, Phoenix Regional Campus, School of Medicine, sees broad potential for these advanced imaging techniques in medical practice and education.

“It is a whole new area that, in my opinion, is going to someday be the standard of care,” Richardson says.

though doctors have long been using MRI and CT scans to make detailed images of the human body’s interior, they are now able to use that data in new ways. Some medical facilities are able to print patient-specific models of body parts on a 3D printer, allowing doctors to examine affected areas in greater detail.

For Creighton students, 3D imaging and modeling presents a new way of learning anatomy.

“...Instead of concentrating on telling, the faculty has time for one-to-one conferences with the students as we pull them off the unit at least twice a day to go through what they have learned about medications, goals and outcomes,” says Anne Schoening, PhD, project director for DEUs in the College of Nursing.

The DEU experience in Phoenix is provided through Creighton’s partnerships with St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center, St. Joseph’s Westgate Medical Center and Chandler Regional Medical Center, all within the Dignity Health system, and Valleywise Health Medical Center.

“I could just see the confidence grow in the students from day one to day 10 or 12,” says Ashley Jensen, RN, a clinical teaching partner at Dignity Health Chandler Regional Medical Center in Chandler, Arizona.

“Watching them progress as individuals as well as nurses was really exciting to see.”
Maybe you’ve been there. Exhaustion. Disaffection. Trouble concentrating, trouble working. The symptoms of professional burnout are all-too familiar to those who’ve experienced them. They seep into the day-to-day and bleed into the off hours, leading to feelings of dread and dissatisfaction.

But researchers at Creighton University, looking into the causes and effects of burnout in various professions, have discovered ways to fight it.

“An overarching concept, when you’re talking about someone’s burnout level, is to think of it as a bucket,” says Maggie Knight, BSBA ’01, DBA ’18, assistant professor in the Heider College of Business. “You’ve got a bucket that has to be filled with a certain amount of resources to get through your day. When you have a task at work or a conflict, that’s draining resources from your bucket. But your workplace can also be filling up the bucket at the same time.”

Awareness of occupational burnout has risen in recent years as professionals have begun discussing mental health more openly, Knight says. The condition is recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a psychological syndrome characterized by chronic feelings of work-related stress. Estimates of the number of Americans experiencing burnout vary, but a 2018 Gallup study of 7,500 full-time employees reported 23% felt burned out at work often or always, with another 44% reporting they felt burned out sometimes.

All of this eventually adds up. Employees experiencing burnout are typically less productive and more likely to leave their jobs. Some experts have estimated that U.S. industries lose $300 billion a year to workplace stress, Knight says.

Burnout plagues certain fields more than others. Cases have long been observed among teachers and social workers. Public accountants are also high on the list, Knight says, due to long hours, high workload and high-pressure client deadlines.

In recent years, the medical community in particular has made addressing burnout among physicians a key priority. According to the National Academy of Medicine, burnout is nearly twice as high among U.S. physicians compared to any other field.

“Recently, burnout has become more of a problem in the medical community because health care has become more and more complex,” says Prasanna Tadi, MD, assistant professor in the School of Medicine and a neurologist with CHI Health. “There is a lack of autonomy, and we are becoming more and more siloed. Before, we had a community of people to talk to. That’s going away.”

High workload is also a significant stressor, Tadi says. A current physician shortage is on track to double by 2025, which poses a problem for an aging population. Fewer physicians are working longer hours to meet the chronic medical needs of their older patients.

After personally experiencing burnout, Tadi says fighting the condition became his life mission. His work led him to be selected for several state and national programs aimed at promoting physician wellness. At Creighton and with CHI Health, Tadi also works to address burnout at the individual level. In addition to making and sharing wellness videos online, he oversees the CHEER study, a once-a-month 90-minute meeting where medical students gather to share experiences with each other.

In the program, third- and fourth-year medical students serve as mentors to first- and second-year students. Meetings are followed by CHEER emails that are used to recognize the personal and professional accomplishments of each student.

Similar strategies can be applied to combat burnout in professions outside of medicine, Knight says. In most cases, burnout arises due to some combination of three common “role stressors”: conflict between incompatible roles, ambiguity about role expectations and role overload. Employers can minimize the impact of these stressors by addressing them directly—responsibly managing employee workload, being explicit about work expectations and giving employees the resources to recharge, Knight says.

“Social support and supervisor support help,” she explains. “You should have a best friend at work. There is good evidence indicating that having a strong social network at work leads to higher employee well-being. The same is true for supervisor support. How your supervisor interacts with you, what kind of conflict management style he or she uses, all of this plays a big part in whether you feel these role stressors at work.”
This is a story about the power of stories — to connect human beings, to reach the places that stats, facts and figures can’t quite touch.

So, let’s begin with a story …

A few years ago, a baby girl named Grace was born with trisomy 18, a chromosomal disorder that comes with serious health problems. Most babies with the condition don’t survive birth. Grace, through the aid of heart surgery and other interventions, would live for five months.

Grace’s mother, Creighton English professor Brooke Kowalke, PhD, had once been the freshman advisor of Kate McKillip, MD, BA’09. The two had long since lost touch, but now McKillip was completing her residency at the hospital where Grace was being treated.

One late night, McKillip walked into the room and reunited with her former advisor at an intensely difficult moment.

“I remember thinking at the time, ‘What can I say that will help?’” says McKillip, now a palliative medicine physician with CHI Health and assistant professor in the School of Medicine. “What are the words?”

Fortunately, she found them. They came in the shape of stories.

By Micah Mertes

A new Creighton initiative explores the important role of the humanities in improving health education and care.

We Are More Than Molecules

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“Remember when Kate came into the room that night,” Kowalke says, “and she sat with me and told me stories about her own life, and they were so helpful. Most people are ready to run from this kind of situation. Kate made a point of meeting me where I was, which was sitting on a bed, holding my daughter, in what ended up being one of the last days of her life.”

Medicine couldn’t save Grace. But McKillip’s stories — her vulnerability, her compassion — helped Kowalke’s family through the worst time of their lives.

From this experience, McKillip learned that “a lot of the work we do in health care is not the work of physicians or medicine but the work of human beings. Since then, I’ve only gained a deeper understanding of how care should unfold when life is fading. Sometimes words help. Sometimes the silence between the words can be just as meaningful.”

Grace changed everything — for McKillip as well as Kowalke.

The two women have since stayed in touch and become close colleagues. Now they’re channeling what they learned from Grace’s story toward a major new effort at Creighton.

Kowalke, McKillip, and many others are helping to build the recently formed Department of Medical Humanities in the School of Medicine. The department plans to foster a higher level of compassionate care and ensure that generations of Creighton-educated physicians can find the right words to any story.

INTERCONNECTED

The School of Medicine’s Medical Humanities Department operates on a core Creighton value — that we are more than mere molecules, that there’s something within each of us that cannot be measured using the tools of science. And that something needs to be cared for.

What are the medical humanities? Well, they’re the humanities... but for medical students (and all those health sciences students).

The department will focus on the disciplines traditionally seen outside the scope of medicine — the breaking down of barriers that go beyond the physiological.

“We see this as one of the real challenges in 21st century health care going forward,” says the Rev. Kevin FitzGerald, SJ, PhD, PhD, the department’s inaugural chair. “We are going to need a much richer and more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be human and what it means to be ‘well’ in order to deliver the kind of care we desire to give.”

The idea behind the medical humanities is both as old as Aristotle and a relatively recent trend in higher education. It’s the idea that all human knowledge is fundamentally interconnected and should be taught as such. Or, as Albert Einstein put it, that “all religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree.”

Underlying this pedagogy is the belief that specialization has gone too far. That in countless cases the various disciplines of the arts, humanities and sciences have become walled off from each other. And that it’s time to tear those walls down.

Here’s the thinking as it pertains to medical care: A more well-rounded health sciences education leads to more well-rounded students — extremely busy, in the thick of learning all that science and tech, studying for exams, training in the clinic — be expected to make those other capacities.”

The Kingfisher Institute has its own mission aligns neatly with the new department. Kingfisher aims to integrate the liberal arts with professional education, to foster a higher level of compassionate care and, ultimately, to a deeper sense of compassion between health care providers and their patients.

And the key medium through which this connection is made? Stories. Through the humanities, physicians learn both how to tell (and contextualize) their own stories and how to more fully understand and communicate with patients.

On a related note: According to a study published in Science magazine, people who read novels are more likely to develop a cognitive skill called “theory of mind,” which places the reader in the headspace of a person with different beliefs, experiences and desires from their own.

Good books, then, can serve as empathy simulations, preparing physicians for the real thing.

This is the power of the medical humanities in microcosm.

A FOUNDATION

“In the School of Medicine, we’re in the business of character formation,” says Dean Robert “Bu” Dunlap, MD ’81. “The medical humanities are going to be essential to that. This new curriculum won’t be an add-on. It will be a critical part of the foundation of everything we do.”

“We don’t want Creighton to be known for doing the same thing as everyone else. We want to be bold, and this is a bold approach to medical education.”

The Medical Humanities Department will reflect Creighton’s commitment to the liberal arts as the foundation of its nine schools and colleges. The department itself will have a small staff but a long reach. It will team with faculty across all disciplines, drawing upon areas of expertise not traditionally associated with health care.

A few of the early course offerings for first- and second-year medical students:

- Death, Health and Diseases, which explores the inextricable ties between social conditions and health as illustrated by the work of Charles Dickens.
- The Art of Examination, in which students study works of art to boost their powers of observation and other skills to aid in understanding their patients.
- Narratives of Neurodiversity, in which McKillip and Kowalke teach students to better understand and communicate with patients of varying cognitive abilities.
- “I think our students are going to love the courses and get a lot out of them,” says Tracy Leavelle, PhD, associate professor of history and the inaugural director of the Kingfisher Institute for the Liberal Arts and Professions.

“We believe that in addition to having all the scientific and technical expertise that comes with a Creighton medical education, our students will also be enthusiastic about developing those other capacities.”

The Kingfisher Institute helped the medical humanities develop its curriculum, as Kingfisher’s own mission aligns neatly with the new department. Kingfisher aims to integrate the liberal arts with professional education, to show how the two complement and reinforce each other.

It goes back to that holistic approach to education — the breaking down of barriers between all areas of knowledge. This, Leavelle says, is the heart (mind and soul) of a Creighton education.

Fittingly enough, this rallying of the disciplines goes back to the teachings of Ignatius himself.

“What we’re doing here speaks to the Jesuit ideal of contemplation in action,” Leavelle says. “Because of our history and values and the vision of our leadership, Creighton has an opportunity to become a national leader in a publicly engaged humanities.”

BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES

Here’s a question: Why the medical humanities, and why now?

Here’s another: Why should medical students — extremely busy, in the thick of learning all that science and tech, studying for exams, training in the clinic — be expected to make...
NICOLE PIEMONTE, PHD

“I wasn’t sure if I wanted to be a doctor,” says Nicole Piemonte, PhD, assistant dean for medical education at Creighton’s health sciences campus in Phoenix, where she specializes in the medical humanities.

Too many physicians no longer see meaning in their work, she says. Their patients have become a factory line, every day a grind. The most profound goal of the humanities, Piemonte says, might be to give physicians a new perspective.

“Can we teach doctors compassion through communication skills and reading people better? Sure,” she says. “But what we’re trying to cultivate with the medical humanities goes beyond that.

“It’s an openness — a way of seeing and knowing ourselves, our patients and the world around us.”

LIVING PROOF

Iowa oncologist Richard Deming, MD’80, is living proof of how much the humanities can mean to a physician.

Deming, medical director of the Mercy Cancer Center in Des Moines, Iowa, is renowned for his compassion. To connect with his patients, he’s drawn upon his humanities education countless times.

“As I’ve had the opportunity to interact with thousands of cancer patients, I’ve learned the therapeutic value of just being present with them,” he says. “Genuine caring and authentic compassion have a tremendous healing power.”

Much of that power comes from knowing the value of the humanities.

“What I gained through my classes on spirituality, theology, philosophy, psychology and literature has had a huge influence on my success as a doctor. Each of these disciplines has provided me with the insight and vocabulary to connect authentically with patients and to provide healing.”

Now Deming wants to help Creighton create more physicians with a firm foundation in the humanities. He’s supported the new department by making a significant gift to create an endowed chair. The person in this role will help put Creighton students on the path to becoming empathetic and well-rounded physicians.

One Creighton medical student already well on her way is Pooja Varman.

Varman came to the School of Medicine from Columbia University, where she received a master’s in narrative medicine (Columbia’s equivalent to the medical humanities).

Varman started out as a “big math nerd” and had originally planned to go all in on the technical side of medicine. But over time — and after many late-night philosophical conversations with high school friends — she was drawn to the medical humanities, in particular the social and psychological determinants of medicine.

When she first interviewed for Creighton medical school, she quickly realized she was in the right place.

“I was in tears by the end of that interview,” she says. “It was such a powerful moment when I talked with the faculty member about the University’s value of curious personae. I could tell the School of Medicine cared about looking at the whole person and drawing out the connections between the humanities and how we take care of people.”

Varman now serves as one of the medical school’s premier champions of the humanities. If she ever feels clinical medicine start to drift away from her other passions, she reminds herself of this: “Who you are as a doctor and who you are as a person don’t have to be separate.”

Use the tools of the humanities to break down the barriers within.

Make all parts part of the same story.
With the rise in use of electronic cigarettes, especially among youth, researchers and clinicians – including those at Creighton – are sounding alarms on the negative health effects of vaping, from dental disease to altered lung function.

A Cloud of Danger

by Margaret Bumann
WHAT IS VAPING?

E-cigarettes come in a variety of shapes, sizes and designs, but work in the same way; the battery-powered devices heat the liquid, or “juice,” to make an aerosol that is inhaled and exhaled.

Chinese pharmacist Hon Lik is credited with patenting the first e-cigarette device, and creating it when his father was dying of lung cancer. The devices were first introduced to the U.S. mass market in 2007 as a way for tobacco smokers to replace or supplement nicotine.

At the time, they were not covered by existing tobacco regulations, and their popularity grew slowly. Then manufacturers began adding flavorings to e-cigarette juice, a practice recently targeted by the Food and Drug Administration, with varieties reaching the thousands — from blueberry cheesecake to mango, cinnamon, gummy bear, cookies ‘n cream and cotton candy. By 2014, a congressional report had already accused e-cigarette companies of marketing their flavors to youth.

VAPING AND DENTAL DISEASE

It is a well-known fact that cigarette smoking can contribute to periodontal disease and other adverse oral outcomes. E-cigarette companies claim that switching from smoking to vaping is a less harmful alternative, but that may not be true, according to a review of the latest research by two Creighton dental students.

Emily Johnson, BSCHM ’19, who is working on a Master of Oral Biology degree, says studies show that flavoring agents used in e-cigarettes produce a more acidic environment in the mouth, making the user more susceptible to irritable gums and gum disease.

In addition, she says, studies have found that for patients receiving dental implants, rejection is more likely in e-cigarette users compared to nonusers.

Dental student Emily Snodgrass says her review of the literature showed a similar negative correlation between vaping and dental health. “Propylene glycol is an irritant in the mouth and throat,” says Hardeep Chehal, DDS’15, a professor and board-certified oral and maxillofacial pathologist who holds the Dr. Oscar S. Belzer Endowed Chair in Dentistry.

Because vaping is still relatively new, we still don’t know the long-term consequences of using e-cigarettes, but cases such as this are a red flag, and “there are definitely similar cases being reported,” according to Chehal.

The photos are pretty gruesome. A 55-year-old woman in distress makes an emergency visit to a dental clinic. The inside of her mouth is blanketed with painful, peeling white lesions that look like burns. A former smoker, she was using electronic cigarettes for about two years, but only developed mouth sores after purchasing a new bottle of vape juice.

The diagnosis: oral lesions related to e-cigarette liquid.

It is difficult to know precisely what caused the dental patient’s mouth sores, but the most likely culprit is propylene glycol, which is commonly used in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and as a food additive.

E-cigarette juice is a mixture of propylene glycol, glycerol, a choice of nicotine levels, benzoic acid (a common food preservative) and food-grade flavoring.

“Propylene glycol is an irritant in the mouth and throat,” says Hardeep Chehal, DDS’15, a professor and board-certified oral and maxillofacial pathologist who holds the Dr. Oscar S. Belzer Endowed Chair in Dentistry.

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including the study on the medical consequences of vaping at Creighton and part of the CDC’s Cancer and Smoking and Disease Research Program, says health concerns over youth vaping include impaired brain development, nicotine addiction and e-cigarettes leading to cigarette and other drug use.

Like alcohol and heroin, nicotine affects the brain’s reward system. The CDC says that using nicotine in adolescence can harm the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood and impulse control.

When Rockman began studying vaping two years ago, with the help of undergraduate student Michael Franco, very little research had been done on the health effects of e-cigarettes. In fact, the duo had to build their own vaping chamber to study the effects of vaping on mice.

What have they found? Chronic exposure to vaping alters lung function. At least in mice; they have not conducted any human trials.

“We are finding that mice exposed to daily vaping are developing airways that are hypersensitive to contractile stimuli like allergens. This change can increase one’s risk for dangerous bronchospasms and respiratory distress,” Rockman says.

VAPING ALTERS LUNG FUNCTION

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VAPING AND SMOKING CESSATION

A GROWING BODY OF EVIDENCE, including the study from Rockman’s lab, confirms that vaping is far from harmless, but a question remains: Is it the lesser of two evils when compared to cigarettes?

“There is a lot of evidence that answers this already: it is not the lesser of two evils,” says Kate Nolt, MPH, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at Creighton, and co-chair of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Section Policy Committee for the American Public Health Association (APHA). “It is in some ways worse because we know it can cause acute lung injury in the short term.”

For decades, reducing tobacco use has been a major U.S. public health initiative. According to the CDC, cigarette smoking kills more than 480,000 Americans annually. In addition, smoking-related illnesses in the United States costs more than $300 billion a year, including nearly $170 billion in direct medical care for adults and $156 billion in lost productivity.

“There was, and still is, interest in the medical community about the possibility that vaping could be even more effective (than nicotine gum or patches)” in terms of smoking cessation, Rockman says. In addition to nicotine, it may supply the oral sensation and rapidity of action of smoking and thus be more effective in suppressing the urge to smoke.

HEALTH THREAT?

IN 2019, AN OUTBREAK OF SEVERE lung illnesses tied to vaping was experienced across the United States and accounted for nearly 3,000 lung injuries and 60 deaths, according to the CDC.

The CDC says most of these cases were linked to vaping products that: (1) contained tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active ingredient in cannabis; (2) came from sources such as friends or online dealers, and; (3) contained vitamin E acetate, which was found in product samples tested by the FDA.

“From my professional perspective, vaping is as much a threat to the public’s general health as regular tobacco products and anything else that is addictive, and should be prevented (or stopped, if started),” says Nolt, who was part of the group that wrote a policy statement from APHA following the rash of acute, vaping-related lung injuries in 2019. That policy statement supports tighter regulation and restriction of e-cigarettes, which is now occurring. Recent federal legislation, passed in December 2019, prohibits the sale of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, to anyone under the age of 21. In January, the FDA issued a policy prioritizing enforcement against certain unauthorized flavored e-cigarette products nationwide. At the time of this writing, however, the FDA guidelines did not apply to disposable e-cigarettes, which are sold in a variety of flavors.

“Your health is based on the decisions you make,” says Nolt, a behaviorist who specializes in prevention, treatment and addiction, and is the mother of two teenage sons.

“I’m shaking my head, realizing we have a lot of work to do to help young people understand their choices.”

**5 million**

U.S. middle and high school students use e-cigarettes, and more than 1 in 4 high school seniors reported vaping in the last 30 days

Source: 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey

**30 Creighton**

**SPRING 2020**

**31 Creighton**
The young man’s voice carried over the Nebraska wind. “If we would have our country continue to be the land of freedom, we must obey and uphold its laws, for they are the guarantee of liberty,” he said to a crowd gathered before him. “Obedience is the chief duty of the citizens; he who refuses to conform to the law, not only endangers the well-being of the republic, but by his refusal, he puts his own freedom in jeopardy.”

The man, a handsome young law student named Raymond J. Caffrey, was considered by many of his peers to be one of the best speakers on the Creighton University campus. So in May 1922, at a special ceremony celebrating the approaching Flag Day, Caffrey delivered a student address to an audience of peers, faculty and alumni gathered on the lawn north of the “Arts building,” now called Creighton Hall, in the modern-day Jesuit Gardens. As the pep band played the national anthem, a large silk American flag ascended the flagpole just south of the observatory.

“We gaze upon our flag with awe and admiration, the symbol of freedom as it floats aloft in this free land of ours—a republic of equal opportunity,” Caffrey proclaimed from the podium. “a republic in which the law restrains the hand uplifted against the welfare of fellow men.”

Creighton law student became FBI agent killed in infamous Kansas City Massacre

By Blake Ursch
His performance drew praise from the Creighton Courier which reported: “Throughout the performance, the speaker maintained an earnestness and sincerity that held the audience. Although a Nebraska ‘regular’ was blowing over the hill with a rush and a noise, not a single word was lost to the audience, so clear and distinct was the orator’s enunciation.”

Caffrey’s speech reveals a man already profoundly concerned with issues of justice, law and civic duty. His commitment to all three would be tested in the years to come as he and his fellow lawmen struggled to subdue a generation of celebrity criminals who captured the public’s imagination. It was a conflict that would eventually cost Caffrey his life.

On June 17, 1933, Caffrey eight years removed from law school and working as a special agent for J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI, was gunned down at the age of 36 alongside three other law enforcement officers and their prisoner at Kansas City’s Union Station. The infamous shootout, known as the Kansas City Massacre, was a watershed event during the so-called “public enemy era” of the 1930s, and its aftermath saw the FBI vaulted into national prominence.

The shooting centered on the transfer of a prisoner named Frank Nash to the federal penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas. Nash, who had been convicted of and pardoned for several crimes, was sent to live with his aunt in Omaha. Regina fell hard for him. In Jimmy Caffrey’s memoir, he records a family friend saying “she never saw a woman so crazy about a man.”

Despite his involvement on campus, Caffrey never received a degree from Creighton (though he did complete enough credit hours to be considered an alumnus). Still, according to the rules of the era, he was eligible to take the bar examination and was formally admitted to the Nebraska State Bar in June 1925.

But Caffrey had his sights set elsewhere. Three months after passing the bar exam, he moved to Florida, hoping to cash in on the state’s real estate boom. Regina soon joined him, and the two married.

After an unexpected economic downturn, the Caffreys returned to Omaha in 1927 and soon welcomed their only child, Jimmy. In November of that year, Caffrey, armed with his law education and a handful of references, applied for the position of special agent at what was then called the Bureau of Investigation, headquartered in Washington, DC.

His personnel file, which his son later viewed, contained several comments from character witnesses, including L.J. To Pelo, dean of the Creighton College of Law, who attested to the bureau that Caffrey was a skilled attorney for a young man of his age.

The bureau was impressed. In February 1928, Caffrey received a letter from director J. Edgar Hoover hiring him as a special agent.

“My dad, he didn’t really like to talk about it. At the time, he was 6 years old. For 70 years, he had been without his father. He said, once, that not a day went by that he didn’t think about his dad and what it would have been like to have a father.”

RICHARD CAFFREY
“Are advanced,” Jimmy writes of the shooting’s legacy. “I read very few of these stories and none of the books. The central fact is my father died. Learning more about his death would not change anything for my mother or me.”

To his own children, Jimmy rarely spoke of his father’s death. “All my dad would really say is ‘My father went to work that morning and never came home,’” Richard Caffrey said. “From a 6-year-old’s perspective, that about sums it up. They didn’t have modern psychology or grief counselors in those days. It was just ‘Suck it up. You lost your dad.’”

The widowed Regina Caffrey made ends meet by accepting a secretarial job with the bureau. Jimmy attended high school in Kansas City before enlisting in the Army in 1944. He received a bachelor’s degree in biology, finishing his studies at what was then Rockhurst College.

In 1947, perhaps intending to follow in the footsteps of the father who was taken from him too soon, or perhaps because of his deep Catholic faith, Jimmy enrolled in Creighton’s School of Medicine. He received a Master of Science in 1951 and his medical degree the following year.

“I always got the feeling that my dad was proud that his dad went to the law school and went to Creighton,” Richard said. In his memoir, Jimmy carefully recorded the few precious memories he had of his father. He remembered Caffrey sitting at the kitchen table, cleaning his .45-caliber pistol. He remembered that every morning, before he left for work, his father would give him a nickel for the ice cream man.

He clung to those memories as he and his wife, Charlotte, raised their own sons—all eight of them.

“He always said he felt like he was winging it. He’d say, ‘I’m doing the best I can to be the best father I can to you guys.’” Richard said. “And he did a fine job. All eight of us are college grads.”

and local Kansas City police officers, arranged to meet the prisoner and his escort at Union Station that morning. The plan was to move Nash to Caffrey’s waiting Chevrolet and drive to the penitentiary.

While officers escorted Nash off the train, Caffrey, Special Agent in Charge Reed Vetterli and police officers W.J. Grooms and Frank Hermanson surveyed the platform. With Nash in handcuffs, the group made their way through the lobby of the station to the cars parked outside, and ushered Nash into Caffrey’s car.

As Caffrey made his way around the car toward the driver’s seat, several men—at least one carrying a machine gun—emerged from behind parked cars and opened fire. Grooms and Hermanson were killed immediately. Vetterli, who was wounded in the arm, scrambled toward the driver’s side just in time to see Caffrey drop to the ground. He had been fatally struck in the head.

Inside the car, Nash and Oklahoma Police Chief Otto Reed, a member of the escort, were both killed.

An FBI investigation declared at least three men, attempting to seize Nash from police custody, responsible for the shooting: Vernon C. Miller, Adam C. Richetti and infamous gangster Charles “Pretty Boy” Floyd. Bolstered by Floyd’s celebrity and the ensuing crush of media coverage, Hoover’s bureau rose to prominence in the years after the tragedy. Before the murders, federal agents were limited in their authority, often subordinate to local police departments in arrests and engagements. After the massacre, however, Hoover’s agents won government authority to carry their own firearms and make their own arrests.

But in the decades since, several scholars have called the FBI’s conclusions into question. Hoover himself denied involvement in the massacre, even writing to Hoover personally to state his innocence.

“Many authors try to sort out often contradictory assertions. Several conspiracy theories are advanced,” Jimmy writes of the shooting’s legacy. “I read very few of those stories and none of the books. The central fact is my father died. Learning more about his death would not change anything for my mother or me.”

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United in Spirit

At the Interfaith Prayer Service in February, members of the Creighton community gathered in prayer at St. John’s Church to recognize and celebrate the many faith and spiritual traditions on campus.
Phonathon Dials Up Support, Memories

Five nights a week, in a windowless room in the Old Gym, a few dozen students make phone calls to Creighton alumni across the country and help raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for the University.

In the world of higher ed, phone programs are struggling. Some are calling them quits altogether.

Yet Creighton Phonathon is doing better than ever. For four consecutive years, the program has increased the amount of funds it’s raised for the University. This year, Phonathon hopes to meet its goal of $625,000 in annual donations — with thousands of individual gifts.

“I think it’s just a robot.” And she hung up on me.

“I ever made as a Phonathon caller, I was so excited to share her memories with me and it’s hard for her to travel. But she was so excited to have us call her and to understand how it all works, how things are paid for. It makes me not only want to tell more people about the importance of giving back to the University. I think it’s just a robot.” And she hung up on me.

“aranteed of the life and legacy of Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The secret to Creighton Phonathon’s success is the tremendously student callers, says Mason Harmon, assistant director of Annual Fund and Student Giving, and the director of Creighton Phonathon.

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“They tell their story, and they connect with alumni. They’re a great group.”

Creighton magazine spoke with a few student callers about their time at Phonathon and the importance of giving back to the University.

How did your first few Phonathon calls go? Durin’ Sandtand, sophomore, Heider College of Business, active in Greek Life. My first call I ever made as a Phonathon caller. I was so nervous that I couldn’t even read the words in front of me. I was talking to a woman, and I just hesitated and paused every few words.

And then I heard a guy on the other line ask what was I doing. (Laugh) It was that bad. But after a month, I was off script and talking about my own experience.

What are the best calls you’ve had? Ellie Rommelfanger, junior sociology major, regular volunteer for the Schlegel Center for Service and Justice. One of my favorite calls was with an alumna who had these amazing stories about the way things used to be and what campus used to look like. She lived down in Arizona and hasn’t been able to come to a lot of alumni programs because she’s older, and it’s hard for her to travel. But she was so excited to share her memories with me and hear about my experiences.

Patrick Foner, senior theology major with plans to become a Jesuit. I called this guy, and he was on a four-hour drive, and he was happy to talk. We had a really good conversation and talked about how he was invested in Creighton.

At the end of the call, he made a monetary pledge to the University and then he was like, “What if I also threw in a car?” He owns a car dealership and gave Creighton a car to auction off. That one caught me off guard.

Do you feel like working at Phonathon changes your view on giving? Kiera Mills(pictured above), sophomore, Heider College of Business, softball team member. Now that I’m part of Phonathon, I’m starting to understand how it all works, how things are paid for. It makes me not only want to tell more people about the importance of giving but also to give what I can to these programs and parts of campus. And it’s made me more into giving in general.

Send Us Your News

Tired of 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 alumni@creighton.edu. 

Dr. Melissa Butz, Alumnus of MTHS ’74, Galveston, is named chief operating officer of the University of Texas at Dallas.

Mary Kay Green, BA’65, JD, entered her two Omaha-based firms — Green, Mitchell & Seretis, and Troutman Sanders LLP, in The Woodlands, Texas. It is Monnat’s second year as a member of the U.S. Army on Sept. 3, 2019. He is captain of the army of Gross & Welch as a director. Gross’s practices is primarily focused on family law, divorce, custody, guardianship, and conservatorship, criminal defense and juvenile law.

Michael T. Driscoll, BA, New York, has been promoted to partner at the law firm Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP. Driscoll is a member of the firm’s 

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The secret to Creighton Phonathon’s success is the tremendous student callers, says Mason Harmon, assistant director of Annual Fund and Student Giving, and the director of Creighton Phonathon.

“There’s a script for their calls, but they make that script their own,” Harmon says.

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Wealth Advisors list for 2020. This named to the University of Lynchburg in December 2019.

Gabriel E. Lapito, BA, MPA, is a member of the firm’s financial services practice group. He assists clients ranging from emerging growth companies and startups to established national and international corporations with a variety of due diligence provisions and commercial contracts.

Shannon M. Bohn-Bleicher, BA/12, JD, Anchorage, Alaska, has joined the law firm of Stoll Reavis LLP in Anchorage as an associate. Bohn-Bleicher is a member of the firm’s environmental, land use and natural resources group, providing counsel to clients in matters of environmental compliance, land use and permitting. From 2017 to 2019, she served as a judicial law clerk to the Hon. Judge Frank Pfifer and then Judge Andrew Peterson of the Anchorage Superior Court, Anchorage, AK. She is a graduate of Creighton University School of Law, Omaha, NE, and earned her BS in business administration and communications from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

WEDDINGS

Melissa L. Hottey, BS, and Kevin E. Zientarski, BSBA, Nov. 9, 2019, living in Omaha.

Laura Jacobsen and Ryan D. O’Kane, Sept. 21, 2019, living in Circle Pines, Minnesota.

BIRTHS

Dan Maddock and Kathleen Malloy Madock, BA, Monument, Colorado, a daughter, Gemma Kathleen, June 23, 2018.

Steven T. Honeberry, BA, and Kelly Tangen Honeberry, BSN, Lakeville, Minnesota, a daughter, Hailey Annette, March 9, 2018.

Alex Pollock and Carly Russell Pollock, BA, Parkburg, Iowa, a son, Austin Oliver, June 1, 2019.

Matthew G. Wyatt, MS, JD, and Veronica Pizzo Wyatt, BS, El Paso, Texas, a daughter, Bajan Lynn, November 2019.

Together, we can make a real impact. Every dollar counts. Every gift adds up to make a difference in the lives of our students. Through the Creighton Fund, you can support scholarships, financial aid, improvements to the Creighton experience and much more.

Support our students today at: creightonfund.creighton.edu/giving
In an office in west Omaha, four Creighton alumni are implementing their Jesuit education to better the lives of the world’s aging population.

Jeff Huber, BA ’91, JAC’94, Erin Schmitz Albers, BA ’90, Katie Trutschnick Christenson, EdD, BS’12, MS’07, and Lenti Corbett, BS’15, are executives at Home Instead Senior Care, a nationwide provider of in-home care services for seniors. The Omaha-based company now serves 12 countries, providing 80 million hours of care for seniors worldwide.

“We have been heavily influenced by St. Ignatius’ calling as an organization,” CEO Huber says. “We’re using Home Instead as a platform to ‘set the world on fire.’

Home Instead, Huber says, has adopted a social purpose-strategy that embraces the ethos of making meaningful change in the world.

One such way is through Champions of Aging, a paid service-year opportunity for college students and recent graduates. The program, started in 2018, includes Creighton students who are learning to be advocates for an aging population.

Full-time participants (part-time opportunities are also available) spend 32 hours a week in the community serving the elderly, combined with eight hours of curriculum focusing on gerontology topics and reflection.

“They can be any major. Aging is going to affect all of our lives in one way or another,” says Christenson, director of Champions of Aging. 

Creighton’s partnership in the program developed out of a meeting between Huber and Creighton’s president, the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ. “From there the two agreed that the Jesuit mission aligned with that of Champions of Aging.”

“We saw the need for leadership in the aging space. There is an incredible deficit of geriatric professionals,” Huber says. “That’s where we conceived of creating the next generation of leaders to understand aging.”

“For the first time ever, there are five generations in the workplace,” says Albers, the company’s vice president of social purpose. “It’s fascinating looking at how to bridge that gap.

Students in the program also participate in Home Instead’s Ready to Care missions — simple acts of care that can include taking a senior shopping or meeting with a senior for lunch. Ideas are sent weekly to volunteers’ cell phones. Anyone can take part at readytocare.com.

“The concept is that it becomes part of who you are, to give, learn and serve,” says Albers. All four Home Instead executives say they were influenced by their education at Creighton.

“I feel driven by having a sense of purpose in my life,” says Corbett, executive director of the Home Instead Senior Care Foundation. “I found out how to verbalize that at Creighton. I felt that I had discovered a system I had been looking for.”

For Home Instead, the driving factor in making a difference in the lives of seniors is “a personal connection,” says Huber. “It’s the right thing to do, what we ought to be doing.

“We talk about magic, cure personalis. We try to live that out as an employer, as a change agent, as a responsible corporate citizen, by helping communities.” – BY EMILY RUST

Champions of Aging

Inspired by Creighton’s Jesuit values, four alumni executives are working to make a difference in the lives of seniors through an international company founded in Omaha

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Gradschool.creighton.edu

for Online Business and Education Programs

in the 2020 U.S. News & World Report Best Online Programs

RANKED NATIONALLY

Graduate School Profile

Nelson Mandela Elementary offers free education in a high-poverty, low-test-scores urban area and is driven by its mission to have all students performing at grade level in reading and math by the end of third grade. Statistically, if you are not on grade level by the end of third grade in reading and math, you are 70% more likely to not be on grade level as a high school graduate,” Toohey says. And that, she adds, leads to a multitude of future challenges in life.

The school’s guiding belief is that the most powerful way to change the world is through education. And Toohey, after she attained her doctoral degree in educational leadership from Creighton in 2013, had the privilege—or difficult job, depending on the day—of helping launch the school from the ground up. She joined Mandela Elementary in 2014, following five years at a Catholic all-girls school in Omaha where she held the same title, head of school. Prior to that, she worked in public education for 20 years. “Expansive learning is a huge deal for us. You don’t look back on your life and reflect on how you read Chapter 10 and answered questions 1 through 5. But do you remember learning African drumming and dancing and working together to make it work and why that was important to the culture,” Toohey says.

The school also focuses on the social and emotional development of its students. “We give kids a safe place,” Toohey says. “We’re a year-round school so that children can be in a safe space all day long. All year. We make sure our children know that every adult at school cares about them—not just about their academic growth, but their personal, social and emotional growth.”

About the time Creighton launched its EdD in Interdisciplinary Leadership, Toohey was feeling a desire “to really hone my leadership skills.” It was appealing that the online degree program was flexible. “With my schedule it was difficult to attend a class, for example, every Thursday night at 6 p.m. So, the flexibility was really attractive.”

Class Act

Experienced educator tones her leadership skills, brings lessons learned back to the Omaha school she leads

SUSAN TOOHEY, EDD’13, is making a difference leading a distinctive private school in Omaha.
DIANE MORIN NELSON, BA’67, a former first lady of Nebraska, was presented with the 2020 Alumni Achievement Citation, the highest all-University alumni award, at Creighton’s Evening of Honors on Feb. 7. The award recognizes exceptional women and men who demonstrate the Jesuit ideal of “women and men for and with others.”

Nelson graduated from the College of Arts and Sciences in 1967. She says her experiences at Creighton developed her leadership skills and gave her the confidence to go out into the world and make a difference.

“Creighton encouraged me to try new things and to get involved with my community,” says Nelson. “I learned there wasn’t a challenge I couldn’t take on. Every experience has strengthened my self-assurance and belief that I can make an impact.”

A passionate supporter of children, the arts and health care, Nelson has sought opportunities that allow her to fulfill her goals, inspired by the Jesuit mission to give back. She has served on a long list of boards, including those relating to the Omaha Symphony, Joslyn Art Museum, Clarkson Hospital, the Omaha Children’s Museum, Heartland Family Services and the Christian Urban Education Service, which provides students with instruction and family support in a faith-based environment.

Nelson and her husband, former Nebraska governor and former U.S. senator Ben Nelson, continue to dedicate their time to Nebraska’s children and communities. In 2016, Voices for Children in Nebraska named them an honorary family for their commitment to children’s health, safety and education.

“Michael Yanney, chairman emeritus of the The Burlington Capital Group, has partnered with her on numerous projects, such as a day-long arts festival held at the Joslyn Art Museum for local artists to exhibit and sell their art.

“There’s one thing I know for certain,” says Yanney. “When Diane takes on any project, I know it will be done with excellence. And she knows how to motivate others along the way. That’s leadership.”

Nelson says she gets her energy and passion from the volunteers and mentors with whom she works, and from her mother, Mary Chambers Morin, who also found fulfillment through putting others first.

“She instilled in me a duty to give back,” says Nelson. “And if you see it at home, it becomes part of your development.”

Nelson established the Terrence Gleason Endowed Scholarship at Creighton to honor her late husband, J. Terrence Gleason, BSBA ’66.

Nelson’s father, Edward Morin Jr., BS’42, was also a Creighton graduate, earning a business degree in 1942.

“I chose Creighton to continue our family tradition and to be a part of the Jesuit tradition of excellent education,” says Nelson. “Creighton taught me to persevere. It’s important to me that future leaders can follow their dreams.” — BY NICOLE JELINER, MA’15

The Alumni Merit Award recognizes outstanding Creighton alumni from each school and college.
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